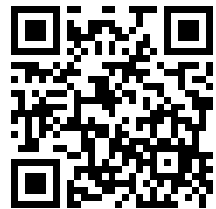

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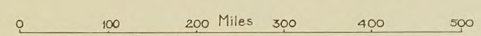
HISTORY OF
THE SECOND WORLD WAR
UNITED KINGDOM MILITARY SERIES

Edited by SIR JAMES BUTLER

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THE MEDITERRANEAN



THE
MEDITERRANEAN
AND
MIDDLE EAST

VOLUME V

The Campaign in Sicily 1943

AND

The Campaign in Italy
3rd September 1943 to
31st March 1944

BY

BRIGADIER C. J. C. MOLONY

WITH

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G.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS volume tells the story of the campaign in Sicily in July and August 1943, and of the campaign in Italy from the Allied landings in September 1943 to the end of the third battle of Cassino in March 1944. Thus the story is that of the first return by large Allied forces to the continent of Europe.

The plan of the United Kingdom Military Series of the official History of the Second World War allotted six volumes to the Mediterranean and Middle East theatre. This allotment has compelled us to adopt in this, the fifth, volume the rather awkward arrangement of including in a single volume the whole of one campaign and of a part only of another. The story of the campaign in Sicily does not fill a volume in the standard format of our series, while the story of the campaign in Italy requires more than one volume.

It is possible to regard the campaign in Sicily as an episode in itself and we have taken this point of view to the extent of giving this campaign no more than a very short general and strategic setting before telling the story of the operations. It is nevertheless true that the campaign in Sicily was a preliminary of the invasion of Italy and therefore has its place in the general and strategic setting of the Italian campaign. We give the wider setting of both campaigns in Chapter VI.

The campaign in Sicily introduced the land forces of the Allies to mountain warfare, and the campaign in Italy after early October 1943 acquainted them with mountain warfare accompanied by every severity that the harsh terrain and winter's rough weather could impose. After Hitler's decision on 4th October that his armies would stand on the defensive south of Rome a change came over the fighting. Before this decision the Germans had been using delaying tactics, offering very stubborn resistance as they slowly withdrew. After Hitler's decision they changed their tactics to protracted defence. They occupied positions which spanned Italy, which rested both flanks on the sea, and in which the defended areas increased steadily in depth. The Germans' determined defensive fighting caused them to incur heavy casualties which created a constant need for reinforcements. This fact favoured the Allies who regarded the Italian campaign strategically as a great holding attack, designed to tie down as many German formations as possible, which otherwise might be used to oppose Allied landings in France, or to reinforce the Russian

front. The changed German tactics altered the nature of the fighting in Italy. The Allies' slow advance ended and was succeeded by set-piece attacks to break through the well-defended German positions.

The change to protracted defence and set-piece attack in mountainous terrain makes it difficult to tell the story. Generally speaking, two Allied armies and two German armies were engaged and therefore operations were on a large scale. To take only the Allied side, plans were made in terms of armies, corps, and divisions. But although battles might be planned in terms of grand tactics the fighting followed another pattern because the mountainous terrain ensured that even a brigade's attack would soon break up into a number of separate engagements fought by battalions or their sub-units. It followed that the actions fought by a battalion, even by a company, sometimes had an effect upon larger issues which was quite out of proportion to their size. Sharp changes of scale therefore occur often in the story because to tell it only in terms of the actions of corps and divisions or even of brigades is to give a false impression of the fighting. It is remarkable how often regimental historians pick out this or that small engagement in Italy as one of the most distinguished and important fought by their regiments anywhere during the whole war. The general military historian cannot overlook this fact.

As regards air operations we have continued our practice, used in earlier volumes, of expressing the air power which was exerted in one mission or in a series of missions in terms of sorties flown. We describe the results of an air operation when good evidence exists of those results. Sometimes we try to estimate the effects of multiple operations over a period because cumulative effects can be observed at times although the details remain obscure. Air operations in direct support of land forces during the campaigns in Sicily and Italy were handicapped by a terrain of jumbled peaks, ridges, and ravines which made it extremely difficult to pin-point particular features from the air. Further, the troops of both sides were generally in very close contact, and flying weather was extremely, and rapidly, changeable. Air operations in direct support were constantly being postponed, cancelled, or carried out only in part, and these circumstances have made it difficult, often impossible, to connect particular air operations with particular tactical movements on the ground. In contrast, air operations against the enemy's airfields and Lines of Communication were continual and formed a pattern. The difficulties of telling their story arise from the fact that the operations were so often, and necessarily, repetitive. Again much of the interest and colour of all

air operations lies in the actions of single pilots or of individual aircrews, in the technical details of flight, and the tactical details of combat. The very size of the Allied air forces has compelled us to pass over in silence these interesting and colourful details.

Because our volume is a part of the United Kingdom Military Series we have thought it right to give almost all its space to the deeds and works of the forces of the British Commonwealth. The few words, in comparison, which we have given to Allies does not mean that we are ignorant of their achievements or that we rate these cheaply. This is true also of the many formations of our own forces which are unmentioned, especially of the administrative services, the merchant navy, and the merchant air services. The fortunes of the forces which directly engaged the enemy on land and sea and in the air depended upon the labours of an unseen multitude of men and women and upon their duty faithfully done.

It is a commonplace that armed forces cannot exist, let alone fight, without a continuous supply of almost every article and commodity known to man. This supply is but a part of the administrative side of war because this side includes the large organization which tries to provide for the diverse human needs of a host of men and women in uniform. We have tried to give at least a glimpse of this huge and complex subject.

We have relied for the facts of our story, as regards the Royal Navy, the British and Indian Armies, the Royal Air Force, and the forces of Canada and New Zealand, upon the evidence given by the documents of the time. As regards Canadian and New Zealand forces we have also relied upon the official histories of these forces. For the story of the actions of American forces and of those of other Allies we have been guided mainly by their official histories so far as published.¹ We hope that our treatment of our sources will appear in the telling of our story. In all matters we have tried to use hindsight sparingly, to avoid the land of Might-have-Been, and not to mistake our desks for the battlefield.

We have chosen the photographs mainly to illustrate topography.

¹ *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, Lieutenant-Colonel Albert N. Garland and Howard McGaw Smyth. Washington 1965.

Salerno to Cassino, Martin Blumenson. Washington 1969.

The Canadians in Italy, Lieutenant-Colonel G. W. L. Nicholson. Ottawa 1956.

Italy, Vol. I, The Sangro to Cassino, N. C. Phillips. Wellington 1957.

Official History of the Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War 1939-45: The Campaign in Italy 1943-45, Doctor Dharm Pal. 1960.

La Participation Française à La Campagne d'Italie (1943-1944), Colonel Pierre Le Goyet. Paris 1969.

Our maps more than ever appear in their true character of accurate illustrations and not as detailed topographical cartography. In particular it has not been possible to show the exact positions of troops in country so mountainous and broken, but the approximate positions, which are sometimes shown, have been carefully plotted.

We have to thank many persons who have helped our work whether by comment, or criticism, or by their books from which we have gained knowledge. Their number precludes individual mention but their kindness and help are freshly remembered. We alone are responsible for our mistakes and shortcomings.

We are indebted to Official Historians and their assistants: of Canada, Colonel C. P. Stacey and Lieutenant-Colonel G. W. L. Nicholson; of New Zealand, Brigadier M. C. Fairbrother and Mr. N. C. Phillips. In likewise to the U.S. Chief of Military History, Brigadier Hal C. Pattison and to Doctor Stetson Conn, to Mr. Martin Blumenson, Lieutenant-Colonel Albert N. Garland, and Doctor Howard McGaw Smyth, as also to Rear-Admiral S. E. Morison U.S.N.R. (Retired) formerly the official historian to the U.S. Navy Department. We have had much help from the Heads of the Historical Branches in the Service Departments of the Ministry of Defence, Rear-Admiral P. N. Buckley, Lieutenant-Colonel W. B. R. Neave-Hill, and Mr. L. A. Jackets; also from the Archivists, Librarians, and Keepers of the various records in the Cabinet Office, the Ministries, the Imperial War Museum and their staffs. We have benefited from the narratives of land operations compiled by Major F. Jones, Major G. McCabe, Brigadier W. P. Pessell, and of air operations compiled by Mr. T. Milne and Mr. W. M. Gould, and from special studies by Mr. G. R. M. Hartcup. On German and Italian documents we have had the expert help and invaluable studies of Mr. B. M. Melland and Mrs. N. B. Taylor. The maps have been drawn by Mr. D. K. Purle, Mr. A. E. Kelleway, Mr. M. J. Godliman, and Miss D. Haigh of the Cabinet Office Mapping Section. General research has been done by Miss Jean Burt, Miss D. F. Butler, and Colonel F. L. Roberts. In particular, Miss Butler has done most valuable work in preparing the maps, as has Colonel Roberts in preparing the index, and Miss D. G. Plant in secretarial matters and in her flawless typing of many drafts. To all these and the Editor for his unfailing support, advice, and encouragement, we wish to express our thanks.

September 1970

C.J.C.M.
F.C.F.
H.L.D.
T.P.G.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN AND
PREPARATION OF THE
INVASION OF SICILY
(January 1943 to July)

(i)

ON the 13th May 1943 the German and Italian forces in North Africa capitulated. Nearly three years earlier, on 10th June 1940, Italy had declared war on the United Kingdom; in January 1941 the *Luftwaffe* had arrived in the Mediterranean, and in the second half of February German troops had begun to disembark in Africa. Now, in mid-1943, the Allies held the North African coast from the borders of Spanish Morocco in the west, eastward to Cape Guardafui in Italian Somaliland; the Mediterranean was again open for regular through convoys of Allied merchant ships; and the Axis forces in Africa were dead or captive. The Allies were preparing to invade Sicily; in Italy Mussolini's rule was nearing ruin, while Hitler was planning to take military control of Italy, and was reinforcing the Balkans, because he did not know whether the Italians had the will or the resources to continue fighting. May 1943 brought what turned out to be the final Allied victory over the U-boats in the Atlantic. In Russia the Germans had lately lost much ground and many men before managing to stabilize their front. Germany was enduring growing Allied air attack and had to keep for home defence fighter aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery which were needed on other fronts. In many countries occupied by the Axis the Resistance was gaining heart and force. In the Pacific the Americans had won the initiative from the Japanese.

By June 1943 the Allies could be confident of ultimate victory unless Fate had in store unforeseeable disasters, or an improbable stalemate occurred. None the less the British and Americans (Russia is a case apart) had tremendous problems to solve. They had to breach the heavy defences of north-west Europe before land war could be carried to Germany. Japan seemed to be a very tough nut which would crack only under a prolonged succession of blows. There were signs that the shortage of ships and landing-craft would

curb and bedevil Allied strategy. In America, production and the employment of man-power were at full-flood, but in the United Kingdom both were very near high-water mark. Overtopping all was the fact that British and American strategic policies were not perfectly united. The Americans thought the Mediterranean theatre less important than did the British. The third Washington Conference (known as 'Trident'; ended 27th May) had not readily agreed that further amphibious operations in the Mediterranean should follow the capture of Sicily, and had not decided where to attack.

In the autumn of 1941 the British had contemplated an invasion of Sicily, to exploit the victory which they hoped to win by their offensive 'Crusader', or the Winter Battle, begun in the Western Desert on 18th November. But they had later judged the invasion to be impracticable. On 27th November 1942 the British Chiefs of Staff prepared an outline plan to invade Sicily. In December Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt, expecting an early and final victory in Africa, agreed to meet at Casablanca in January 1943 to shape future strategy. The meeting was primarily a military conference, and the British and American Chiefs of Staff considered closely whether—in the Mediterranean—to follow victory in Africa by invading Sicily or Sardinia.¹ The main points in the British argument were that this policy would compel Germany to disperse her forces, would perhaps knock Italy out of the war, and move Turkey to join the Allies. The Americans at first thought the proposals opportunist and irrelevant to an integrated plan to win the war. At length they were persuaded to agree mainly because of the great saving in Allied merchant-shipping which would accrue were the Mediterranean opened, and because it seemed that most of the forces necessary for the invasion could be found from those already in North Africa. Sicily rather than Sardinia was chosen because it clearly seemed to be the greater political and military prize. The British indeed were willing to suspend decision until all the hard, practical details of the alternative operations had been more closely examined, but for the Americans it was Sicily or nothing. General Marshall made it clear, however, that to accept Sicily did not imply assent to a series of operations in the Mediterranean.

The Prime Minister and the President approved the proposals of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.² After the final plenary session of the

¹ See Volume IV, Chapter IX. Our volumes are concerned only with decisions affecting the campaigns in the Mediterranean and Middle East. For an account of decisions affecting Allied strategy as a whole, taken at the Casablanca and later conferences, see *Grand Strategy, Volume IV (October 1942–August 1943)*, by Michael Howard, H.M.S.O. 1972.

² The Combined Chiefs of Staff were the British and American C.O.S. sitting together, but as the British C.O.S. were seldom in Washington they were represented there by the principals of the British Joint Staff Mission. The agreed terminology was that 'Joint' should denote the Inter-Service collaboration of one nation, and 'Combined' should apply to collaboration between two or more of the United Nations. In practice the United

Casablanca Conference on 23rd January the Combined Chiefs of Staff issued a directive to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commander-in-Chief, Allied Expeditionary Force in North Africa:

"The Combined Chiefs of Staff have resolved that an attack against Sicily will be launched in 1943, with the target date as the period of the favourable July moon (Code designation "Husky").

The Combined Chiefs of Staff have further agreed that the following command set-up shall be established for the operation:

1. You are to be the Supreme Commander, with General Alexander as Deputy Commander-in-Chief, charged with the detailed planning and preparation and for the execution of the actual operation when launched.
2. Admiral of the Fleet Cunningham is to be the Naval Commander and Air Chief Marshal Tedder the Air Commander.

You will submit to the Combined Chiefs of Staff your recommendations for the Officers to be appointed Western and Eastern Task Force Commanders.¹

In consultation with General Alexander, you will set up at once a special operational and administrative staff, with its own Chief of Staff, for planning and preparing the operation, including cover plans.

The provision of the necessary forces and their training in time for the assault on the target date given above have been the subject of exhaustive study by the Combined Chiefs of Staff and their Staffs. A Memorandum setting out the various considerations and the outline plan for the operation which formed the basis of this study is attached for your information. . . .

States C.O.S. came to be known as the Joint C.O.S. and the British remained the British C.O.S.

In January 1943 the holders of these appointments were:

British Chiefs of Staff

General Sir Alan Brooke (Chairman)
Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound
Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Portal
Lieutenant-General Sir Hastings Ismay

United States Chiefs of Staff

Admiral William D. Leahy (Chairman)
General George C. Marshall
Admiral Ernest J. King
Lieutenant-General Henry H. Arnold (United States Army Air Force)

British Joint Staff Mission in Washington

Field Marshal Sir John Dill
Admiral Sir Percy Noble
Lieutenant-General G. N. Macready

Air Marshal D. C. S. Evill (succeeded by Air Marshal Sir William Welsh)

General Ismay was Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defence (Mr. Churchill). He did not sign the reports of the C.O.S.

The Chief of Combined Operations (Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten; then Major-General R. E. Laycock) was a member of the C.O.S. Committee when such operations were considered.

¹ Western and Eastern Task Forces were the names given to the constituent parts of the invasion force, in the Combined Chiefs of Staffs' outline plan which was attached to this directive.

You are to report to them [i.e. the C.C.S.] not later than the 1st March whether any insurmountable difficulty as to resources and training will cause the date of the assault to be delayed beyond the favourable July moon. In the event of there being such a delay, you will confirm that the assault date will not be later than the favourable August moon. . . .¹

The Combined Chiefs of Staff added this rider: 'We have agreed that, without prejudicing the July date for the operation, an intense effort will be made during the next three weeks to achieve by contrivance and ingenuity the favourable June moon period as the date for the operation . . .' The President and the Prime Minister, for their part, wished to emphasize the . . . 'following points, which should be steadily pressed in all preparations: the importance of achieving the favourable June moon . . . and the grave detriment to our interest which will be incurred by an apparent suspension of activities during summer months.'

Before going further it is convenient to bring in the principal subordinate commanders. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had nominated as Deputy Commander-in-Chief General Alexander, who was the commander of the 18th Army Group engaged in the Tunisian campaign. On 11th February Eisenhower nominated as his land, sea, and air commanders:

Eastern Task Force

Lieutenant-General Sir Bernard Montgomery, commander of the 8th Army.

Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, Deputy Naval Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force.

Air Vice-Marshal H. Broadhurst, commander of the Western Desert Air Force.

Western Task Force

Lieutenant-General George S. Patton, commander of 2nd U.S. Corps (engaged in Tunisian campaign).

Vice-Admiral Henry K. Hewitt, U.S.N.

Colonel L. P. Hickey, U.S.A.A.F., commander of XII Air Support Command.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff concurred on 13th February.

There is no doubt that the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and General Eisenhower chose well. These officers were near the scene, and had as much up-to-date experience of waging war, especially in the Mediterranean theatre, as any who were available. But most of them, in particular Eisenhower, Alexander, Montgomery, and Patton, were deep in the day-to-day conduct of the campaign in Africa, and

¹ A 'favourable moon', broadly speaking, means that phase of the moon which gives the right amount of light for an operation which, for any reasons, it is impossible to conduct in total darkness or broad daylight.

would continue so to be until the middle of May.¹ In consequence no commander was able to give undistracted attention to planning and preparing in detail his part in the campaign against Sicily, and it proved difficult for the commanders most concerned even to meet for conferences.

To remedy these difficulties, which principally affected the land commanders, the Combined Chiefs of Staff had directed Eisenhower to set up a special staff for operational and administrative planning. Eisenhower set up this staff, as will be described, and a similar staff for each Task Force. But a staff, under the Allied system of conducting war, requires a firm plan delivered by a commander's authority, and thereafter a commander's decisions upon many matters. Only then can the staff issue orders and direct, promote, and ensure their execution. Eisenhower and Alexander had the outline plan of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, but neither, because he was preoccupied with operations in progress, was able closely to study this plan for himself and discover the points that he must resolve. Instead the document was issued as an outline, and was treated as a proposal for debate, and not as a commander's fiat. This circumstance explains the rather bewildering story which will be told of the high-level planning between February and May.

Preliminary studies for the Sicilian campaign had led the Combined Chiefs of Staff to take their broad decisions regarding it in the light of what was practical during a war in progress. The circumstance is important. The matter was not simply to launch against Sicily an Expeditionary Force already in being with all its transports, but to constitute an Expeditionary Force from various elements. There were so many other commitments and difficulties. To take some: the enemy in Africa had to be defeated (by 30th April, it was assumed); Eisenhower had to continue to maintain forces to counter at once any Axis threat which might develop in the Iberian peninsula and Spanish Morocco; warships and merchant vessels had to be withdrawn from current tasks for the invasion and returned, after it,

¹ A few incidents of the African campaign illustrate the point:

<i>February</i>	
14th-26th Approx.	Axis offensives in central Tunisia.
20th	18th Army Group constituted.
<i>March</i>	
6th	Battle of Medenine.
20th-27th	Battle of Mareth.
<i>April</i>	
6th	Battle of Wadi Akarit.
8th-16th	1st Army on the offensive.
22nd	Beginning of general offensive to destroy Axis forces in Tunisia.
<i>May</i>	
6th	Final assault on Tunis and Bizerta.
13th	Enemy resistance ceases in Africa.

to others. As regards merchant ships, the Ministry of War Transport required three months to assemble ships in the Eastern Mediterranean. To direct ships meant taking account of many factors. As the Quarter-Master-General at the War Office noted in May: '... world shipping position remains acute, and all theatres must continue to exist on bare minimum if we are to find necessary shipping to enable us to carry out large scale amphibious operations and maintain United Kingdom import position which is serious.'

It had been decided early that in the expeditionary force there should be a British component (Eastern Task Force) and an American (Western Task Force). Hard facts decided that the British elements must be found from three places, Middle East, North Africa, and the United Kingdom; and the American from two, North Africa and the United States. There were therefore main centres of planning in London, Washington, Algiers, and Cairo.¹ These were immensely far apart even by air, but perhaps almost too closely linked by wireless and cable. For good communications often favour debate instead of hastening decisions.

The system of command of a great inter-Allied force drawn from the sea, land, and air Services of two nations cannot be simple. The system for the invasion of Sicily, shorn of technical niceties and detail, was in outline as follows.

At the apex stood General Eisenhower as Supreme Commander. This was a new type of appointment in a European theatre and meant that General Eisenhower commanded all forces, naval, army, and air which were allotted to him.² Directly subordinate to him were a naval Commander-in-Chief, an Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, and an army Deputy Commander-in-Chief.

The naval Commander-in-Chief, Cunningham, commanded all naval forces allotted to the expedition. His area of command was the Mediterranean Sea from its western natural boundaries to a line joining Corfu and Benghazi; and a wide area of the Atlantic to the west of the Straits of Gibraltar. He was also responsible for all naval matters which affected the Mediterranean Sea as a whole. Therefore to some extent he controlled the naval Commander-in-Chief Levant, whose area of command extended eastward of the line Corfu-Benghazi.

The Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Tedder, held unchanged

¹ Approximate distances in sea miles are:

London to Washington	3,300
London to Algiers	1,500
London to Cairo (via the Cape)	12,000
Washington to Algiers	3,700
Washington to Cairo (via the Cape)	12,000
Algiers to Cairo	1,650 (by air)

²In January 1942 General Wavell had been appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied forces in the South-west Pacific area—'Abdacom', as it was styled.

the position which he had held since 17th February 1943 when the Mediterranean Air Command came into being. He commanded all air forces in the Mediterranean area, consisting of the Middle East Air Command, the Northwest African Air Forces, and the Malta Air Command. The Mediterranean Air Command therefore was responsible for all air operations in the Sicilian campaign.

Alexander's title, 'Deputy Commander in Chief', was ambiguous, but in practice his functions were clear. He was not a *Deputy Supreme* Commander. In fact he commanded all Allied land forces allotted to the Sicilian campaign. General Eisenhower delegated to Alexander overall control of the planning of the operations, and intervened only when he thought fit. He has described his own later function: '... From this time [12th July] I ceased to concern myself directly with the details of the Sicilian operations, although of course, its progress was a vital factor in future planning. With respect to this particular function my single concern became one of time, and of providing to Alexander everything he needed to insure speed.'

General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson was Commander-in-Chief, Middle East Forces. His responsibilities regarding Sicily were thus defined by the Prime Minister on 12th February 1943:

'In conformity with the requirements of General Eisenhower you will take all measures necessary for the mounting of that part of Operation Husky [Invasion of Sicily] which is launched from the area under your command. . . .

You will prepare for amphibious operations in the Eastern Mediterranean.'

Equally associated with General Wilson under appropriate directives, were his naval and air colleagues, and the three did their work as the Commanders-in-Chief Committee, Middle East.

It may be useful to give here a much shortened and simplified table of the main agents of direction, command, and co-ordination:

Combined Chiefs of Staff

Chiefs of Staff (British), Joint Chiefs of Staff (U.S.) and the Government departments, Service ministries etc. known colloquially as 'Whitehall' and 'Washington'.

Allied Force Headquarters (Supreme Commander, Eisenhower).

Force 141 (Land commander, Alexander) which became 15th Army Group.

Force 545 or Eastern Task Force (Land commander, Montgomery) which became 8th Army.

Force 343 or Western Task Force (Land commander, Patton) which became U.S. 7th Army.

The Eastern Task Force and the Western Task Force each had a naval component, and associated air forces, whose commanders were:

E.T.F.: Ramsay (R.N.)	Broadhurst (R.A.F.)
W.T.F.: Hewitt (U.S.N.)	Hickey (U.S.A.A.F.)

Naval Headquarters (Commander, Cunningham).

Mediterranean Air Command (Commander, Tedder).

Commanders-in-Chief Committee, Middle East:

General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson.

Admiral Sir John Cunningham.

Air Chief Marshal Sir William Sholto Douglas.

The exact channels followed by all the agents are complicated and probably of theoretical interest only. But the mounds of telegrams give a strong impression of one main difficulty of planning at a distance: trivial misinterpretation. So many signals are needed to remove an ambiguity or to resolve a trifling difference in point of view.

A word must be said of the staffs: Force 141 was set up at Algiers on 12th February; Force 545 at Cairo on 22nd February; and Force 343 at Rabat (later Mostaganem) on 23rd February. Alexander chose as Chief of Staff of Force 141, Major-General C. H. Gairdner, whom General Wavell released from an important post on his staff in India.¹ Eisenhower appointed Major-General Clarence R. Huebner Deputy Chief of Staff and senior United States representative at Force 141. Another American officer, Brigadier-General Arthur S. Nevins, became B.G.S. (Plans), Captain T. M. Brownrigg, R.N. was the naval representative, and Group Captain H. D. Jackman, R.A.F. and later Air Commodore R. M. Foster, R.A.F., represented the air forces. General Gairdner was directly responsible to General Alexander. This staff was inter-Service and inter-Allied. The staff of Force 545 in Cairo was similarly inter-Service but was wholly British because it served British forces. At the head of this staff were Admiral Ramsay, and Lieutenant-General M. C. Dempsey. Dempsey was actually the commander of 13th Corps but worked as Chief of Staff until the arrival of Major-General F. de Guingand from 8th Army on 15th April. The staff of Force 343 was all-American but want of space compels us to pass over its composition, and much besides that concerns American preparations.

¹ General Gairdner had been Deputy Director of Plans at H.Q. M.E.F. in 1941, had then commanded 6th and 8th Armoured Divisions, and had been appointed Director, Armoured Fighting Vehicles at General Headquarters, India in December 1942.

(ii)

At this point we may give, in outline, the composition of the land force with which the Allies invaded Sicily. The force was not constituted without a good deal of chopping and changing which was unavoidable but which added to the difficulties of preparing it. Very large naval and air forces also had to be assembled, but these will appear more conveniently at a point in the story which is closer to operations.

The main land forces are:

15th Army Group (General Sir Harold Alexander)

8th Army (General Sir Bernard Montgomery)

13th Corps (Lieut.-General M. C. Dempsey):

5th Division (Major-General H. P. M. Berney-Ficklin)

50th Division (Major-General S. C. Kirkman)

1st Airborne Division (Major-General G. F. Hopkinson)

4th Armoured Brigade (Brigadier J. C. Currie)*

* Of two armoured regiments.

30th Corps (Lieut.-General Sir Oliver Leese):

51st Highland Division (Major-General D. N. Wimberley)

1st Canadian Division (Major-General G. G. Simonds)

231st Infantry Brigade (Brigadier R. E. Urquhart)

† 23rd Armoured Brigade (Brigadier G. W. Richards)

1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade (Brigadier R. A. Wyman)

† Of two armoured regiments.

Reserve formations:

46th Division (Major-General J. L. I. Hawkesworth)

78th Division (Major-General V. Eveleigh).

7th U.S. Army (General George S. Patton)

2nd U.S. Corps (Lieut.-General Omar N. Bradley):

1st U.S. Division (Major-General Terry de la M. Allen)

3rd U.S. Division (Major-General Lucian K. Truscott)

45th U.S. Division (Major-General Troy C. Middleton)

Reserve formations:

2nd U.S. Armoured Division (Major-General Hugh J. Gaffey)

9th U.S. Division (Major-General Manton S. Eddy)

82nd U.S. Airborne Division (Major-General Mathew B. Ridgway)

The main reasons for chop and change in arriving at this order of battle were: the demands of the Tunisian Campaign; continual pressure by Mr. Churchill to advance the date of the invasion to June; Montgomery's desire to take to Sicily 'his own veteran divisions'; and changes in the plan.

These changes created a host of difficulties in preparing such a great amphibious expedition, in which all the forces and their equipment had to be fitted into ships and landing-craft in the exact and intricate order which would enable them to disembark straight into action on hostile beaches. Time was probably the most stubborn element in the problem. As a rough generalization it can be said that about 68 days' hard work was required to prepare a British division to embark in all respects ready for battle. From 22nd February, when Force 545 began to assemble, until the 'July moon' there were 137 days available. This seems a sufficiently wide margin but brute facts were to show that it was narrow.

In the beginning, in January, the 5th, 56th and 78th Divisions (in Middle East and North Africa), and the 1st and 4th Divisions (in the United Kingdom) were earmarked for Sicily. But 78th Division was engaged in the North African campaign and by April the 1st, 4th and 56th Divisions had become engaged also. Then, at various dates, the 50th and 51st Highland Divisions (in North Africa) and the 3rd Division (in the United Kingdom) entered the Sicilian order of battle. But the first two had to be disengaged from operations and refitted, and the 3rd Division was replaced by 1st Canadian Division because it became essential on political and military grounds, in answer to the demands of public opinion in Canada, that Canadian forces should move into battle in 1943.¹ By the end of April when the allotment of divisions to Force 545 became firm, some 70 days remained in which to complete a vast amount of detailed work.

Similar difficulties hampered the preparations of Force 343 (7th U.S. Army) whose order of battle did not become firm until 17th May.

(iii)

See Map 2

A military impression of the island of Sicily is necessary before we turn to the detailed plans for invading it.

Sicily is shaped like a triangle, and is somewhat larger than Wales. The eastern coast, Cape Peloro to Cape Passero, forms the base, some 120 miles long. The sides are the northern coast from Cape Peloro westwards to Cape Boeo, and the southerly coast from Cape Passero to Cape Boeo. Each side is about 175 miles long. The island lies 90 miles from North Africa (Cape Bon in Tunisia to Cape Boeo), and 55 miles north of Malta. It is separated from the Italian peninsula by the Straits of Messina, turbulent and swept by a six-

¹ The Canadian Army in Britain had provided the main part of the landing force for the attack on Dieppe in August 1942. This however had been a very large raid, not equalling a campaign in the public eye.



M.J.G.

knot current, but barely two miles across at the narrowest point. Across this strait lies Calabria, forming the 'toe' of Metropolitan Italy.

Sicily was united to the Kingdom of Italy in 1861. But a long and violent history has produced a race which lives very much to itself, and the union did not change its essential nature. Therefore most Sicilians were indifferent to the armies who made a battlefield of the island in 1943.

In general the country which was fought over was of the roughest kind—rocky mountains and hills, pierced by narrow, enclosed valleys and dry watercourses. Except upon a few roads, movement was by tracks or across country. In fact much of the campaign resembled a sort of mountain warfare—something new to most of the troops. The climate is like that of North Africa and in July a usual day-temperature is 75° Fahrenheit or a few degrees above and little lower at night; there is no rain to cool earth and rock, and lay dust; and an oppressive dry or moist scirocco may blow. There are many springs of water, but most rivers are dry in summer. Trees for shade or concealment are rare except in the northern highland. Malaria and sandfly fever are ubiquitous enemies. In a military sense Sicily is a 'big country' because a height which is nothing to a mountaineer (3,000 feet and somewhat over is a Sicilian mean) is formidable to the loaded infantryman, the gunner, the signaller, and the porter of ammunition, water, and rations. The terrain is varied, and difficult. There are terraced slopes and foot-hills, long swelling slopes and steep jagged ridges, crests large or small and often false, in jumbles or one after another, sharp pitches, corries, and spurs. These features do not occur everywhere at once, but in sum they demanded from troops a degree of physical fitness and hardness different from that required by fairly flat or rolling country. They were, moreover, perplexing to men not bred to hills or mountains.

Roads were of three classes. State roads were excellently built, all-weather, and fit for all transport. Provincial roads varied in quality, were usually macadam, and not above 19 feet wide. Communal roads were unsurfaced, narrow, and unfit for military mechanical transport. The map shows clearly the line of the main roads, east-west and north-south, and how important was Enna, at the island's centre, as a keypoint of the system. The nature of the country accounted for many features of the roads. Steep gradients and curves were common. Defiles abounded in hilly areas and where the coast road ran along the flanks of steep ground on the sea's edge. Towns and villages invariably created bottlenecks. Bridges were extremely important. All in all the possibilities of blocking roads were excellent. A motorist thinks nothing of an 'Irish' bridge or a chain of S-bends or a short bridge over a dry watercourse, and finds

a well-built highway above a blue sea to be charming. The military picture is dismal. For instance, blow down on the road a hundred tons of rock, sprinkle the debris with mines, drop salvos of shells and mortar bombs on it, and sweep it with machine-gun bullets. Then add a long crocodile of vehicles trying to pass, and the military picture takes shape. To complete it, consider driving the vehicles off the road—up steep boulder-strewn slopes, or across stone walls, or over terraces, or along a sunken, twisting track.

As the scene of this campaign Sicily can be divided into three large regions: south-eastern, south-central, and northern highland—to which is added the coastal fringe. The main mountain systems mark the divisions approximately. These are the backbone running east and west through the northern part of the island; the chain of flat-topped steep-sided hills—the Erei mountains—which runs south-east from Gangi by Enna and Caltagirone in south-central Sicily; and in the south-east the tableland of the Iblei mountains. The ranges of the northern chain are named from east to west: the Peloritani mountains, crystalline; the Nebrodi mountains, clay and sandstone; and the Madonie, limestone.

Almost a region in itself, known simply as La Montagna, is Etna, the 10,740-foot volcano. The lowest slopes are covered with orchards and gardens, olive trees and orange-groves; then comes a belt of low undergrowth and bracken, leading up through brushwood and thorny scrub to loose ash and lava blocks. The defensive strategy of the Axis in the campaign gave military value to this region which, normally, soldiers would take pains to avoid.

Between Syracuse and Catania a notable feature is the plain of Catania, twenty miles long by eight wide. It is the flood plain of the Simeto, Dittaino, and Gornalunga rivers—all obstacles—and is seamed with drains.

Sicily was a country where road-bound, mechanized forces were at a disadvantage, and where advantages lay almost wholly with a force which intended to delay and defend.

An invasion by sea must obviously pay great attention to coast-line and beaches. In our time the strength of defences has usually ruled out direct assault upon ports, and expeditions therefore head for beaches. In planning assaults by a great modern force so many considerations bear upon the choice of beaches that to list them, and balance them, makes the brain spin. The relation between beaches and the invaders' ultimate objectives directs attention to particular stretches of coast. Thereafter there are many things to be desired, and most of them conflict. The sea approaches should give sea-room and be free from hazards, natural or artificial. Deep water close in shore; good anchorages; prevailing winds which do not establish a lee-shore; absence of currents and heavy swell or surf; a recognizable

coast line; these are a few of many desirable attributes. The beaches as well as the coast, should be recognizable, wide to give broad fronts and deep to give room for men, vehicles, and stores, firm, moderate in slope, not boulder-strewn. But the beach which satisfies these, and many more demands, is useful only to the extent that nature gives it good exits for vehicles, tanks, guns, and men. High dunes, low cliffs, lagoons, mud-flats, marshes, all or any of these features, may make a good beach almost useless.

More than three-hundred miles of coast-line had to be examined before the invasion. Much of the examination required close reconnaissance which in peace had been a thing mentioned in manuals rather than a task actually done, and in war—as will be told—was to prove difficult and dangerous. The survey showed that Sicily did not offer a wide choice of landing-places for military purposes. About 32 main beaches were listed as possible, and about twenty-six were used.¹ Of these possibly two satisfied the requirements of being suitable for landing men, and vehicles, and having really good exits. This was the reality, which is very different from phantasies about throwing forces ashore at will.

(iv)

The Combined Chiefs of Staffs' outline plan of invasion proposed to use the following land forces:

<i>British</i>	<i>American</i>
Four infantry divisions	Three infantry divisions
Two infantry brigade groups	
Two armoured regiments	Two armoured combat commands
One tank battalion	
Two parachute brigades	One parachute brigade
Three commandos	Two ranger battalions ²

There were to be in reserve one British, and one American infantry division.

The plan, in the simplest and broadest terms, was to capture, almost simultaneously, the area of Catania in the east of the island and of Palermo in the north-west. Operations to reduce the whole island would follow, but the outline plan did not suggest what they might be. What were the main considerations which had suggested this plan as the best in the circumstances?

Intelligence estimated, correctly, that the garrison of the island, in January was eight divisions, all Italian, of which three were ordinary

¹ Exact enumeration requires detail too minute for this account.

² An American armoured combat command was, roughly, equivalent to a British armoured brigade; a ranger battalion to a British commando. 15th Army Group was stronger, as finally constituted, than as at first proposed.

field divisions and five coastal divisions. They forecast, reasonably enough, that by D-Day five more field divisions would be sent as reinforcements of which two or three might be German, making a total of thirteen with the coastal divisions. In the event there were one extra Italian and two German divisions, a total of eleven. The quality of the Italian troops was unlikely to be high, but it was wise to expect them to fight hard in defence of Italian soil. The Axis would be able to reinforce the garrison through Messina and Palermo at a maximum rate of one and a half divisions a week. The proposed Allied force, which was as large as could feasibly be found, and for which ships and craft could be provided, was adequate for its task, if it could be maintained. Therefore maintenance was a key consideration.

The Axis strength in the air, based in Sicily, Pantelleria, Sardinia, and Italy, excluding transport and coastal aircraft, was estimated to be 1,560 aircraft of which 810 were German.

The lay-out of the Sicilian airfields was highly important. These were in three main groups: Gerbini in the east; Comiso and Ponte Olivo in the south-east; and Castelvetrano, Milo, and Palermo in the west. All were within about fifteen miles of the coast. However, because of the short effective range of fighter aircraft, Gerbini, Comiso, and Ponte Olivo could not provide effective fighter cover for Castelvetrano, Milo, and Palermo, nor be afforded it by them. On the other hand, Gerbini, Comiso, and Ponte Olivo could support each other. If the enemy were able to use all airfields within range of the areas which the Allies proposed to attack, it was possible, in theory, for him to launch some 540 German and 190 Italian aircraft against the invaders during the first day of the invasion. This was a formidable prospect, and another key consideration.

At sea, the effective strength of the Italian surface fleet comprised, as far as was known, 6 battleships, 7 cruisers, and 30 destroyers. There were some 48 Italian and 20 German serviceable submarines to be reckoned with, and in Sicilian coastal waters E-boats would be a danger. The fleet might fight with determination to protect its country from invasion, and the Allied navies must be prepared for it to concentrate either in the Eastern or the Western basins of the Mediterranean. Admiral Cunningham considered that the Allied command of the sea would be overwhelming, but that the risk from the enemy's air forces in south-east and east Sicily was very great.

We return now to the Allies. It was certain that ports would be necessary to maintain the forces in Sicily because at this stage of the war maintenance of a large force across beaches was an untried technique. The landings in North Africa in 1942 had used it only for the earliest part of assaults, which had been virtually unopposed. The best opinion in early 1943, with little to guide it, doubted whether maintenance across beaches, particularly when heavy air

attack was to be apprehended, was a practical operation. The main ports of Sicily and their capacity to handle cargo, when damage to port equipment from bombing and demolition had been allowed for (for these calculations the African campaigns provided data) were:

Messina	4,000–5,000 tons daily		
Palermo	2,500	„	„
Catania	1,800	„	„
Syracuse	1,000	„	„

There were lesser ports such as Augusta and Licata whose capacity was estimated at 600 tons daily. Calculations showed that four divisions and associated air forces could be maintained through the group Catania—Augusta—Syracuse, and two divisions and associated air forces through Palermo. After a month's development the figures would rise to six divisions through the Catania group, and four through Palermo.

Messina was ruled out as a point to attack as beyond the range of fighter cover. The known coast defences made a direct assault on Augusta, Syracuse, and Palermo impracticable, but a direct assault on Catania was possible if some batteries were neutralized. It followed that assaults would therefore have to be made over beaches, and that maintenance would have to be across beaches until ports were captured, a period which must be short. The sum of considerations suggested that simultaneous assaults in the Catania—Augusta—Syracuse areas and the Palermo area would offer better prizes than an assault in one area. These were: the best rate of build-up by capturing four main ports; denial to the enemy of his main ports except Messina: the hope of inducing the enemy to disperse his forces to meet two landings. Anything that might puzzle the enemy was desirable because strategic surprise was thought to be impossible and much tactical surprise unlikely.

But what of air considerations? The east coast of Sicily south of Syracuse, the south coast, and the western end of the island were within range of Allied, single-engine, fighter cover which would have to come, to begin with, from Malta and Tunisia. But these coasts too were within easy reach of the main groups of hostile airfields in Sicily: Gerbini, Comiso, and Ponte Olivo, Castelvetro, Milo, and Palermo, let alone others in Italy. As the outline plan put it '... Before the operation can take place at all, the enemy air forces must be reduced to an extent that will ensure our air supremacy...' The plans which Mediterranean Air Command made to bring about this reduction will be described in their place. It was evident, however, that the land forces would have to capture the Sicilian airfields at a very early hour after the assault if the mass of shipping off shore were not to be exposed to a peril which the air forces by themselves could

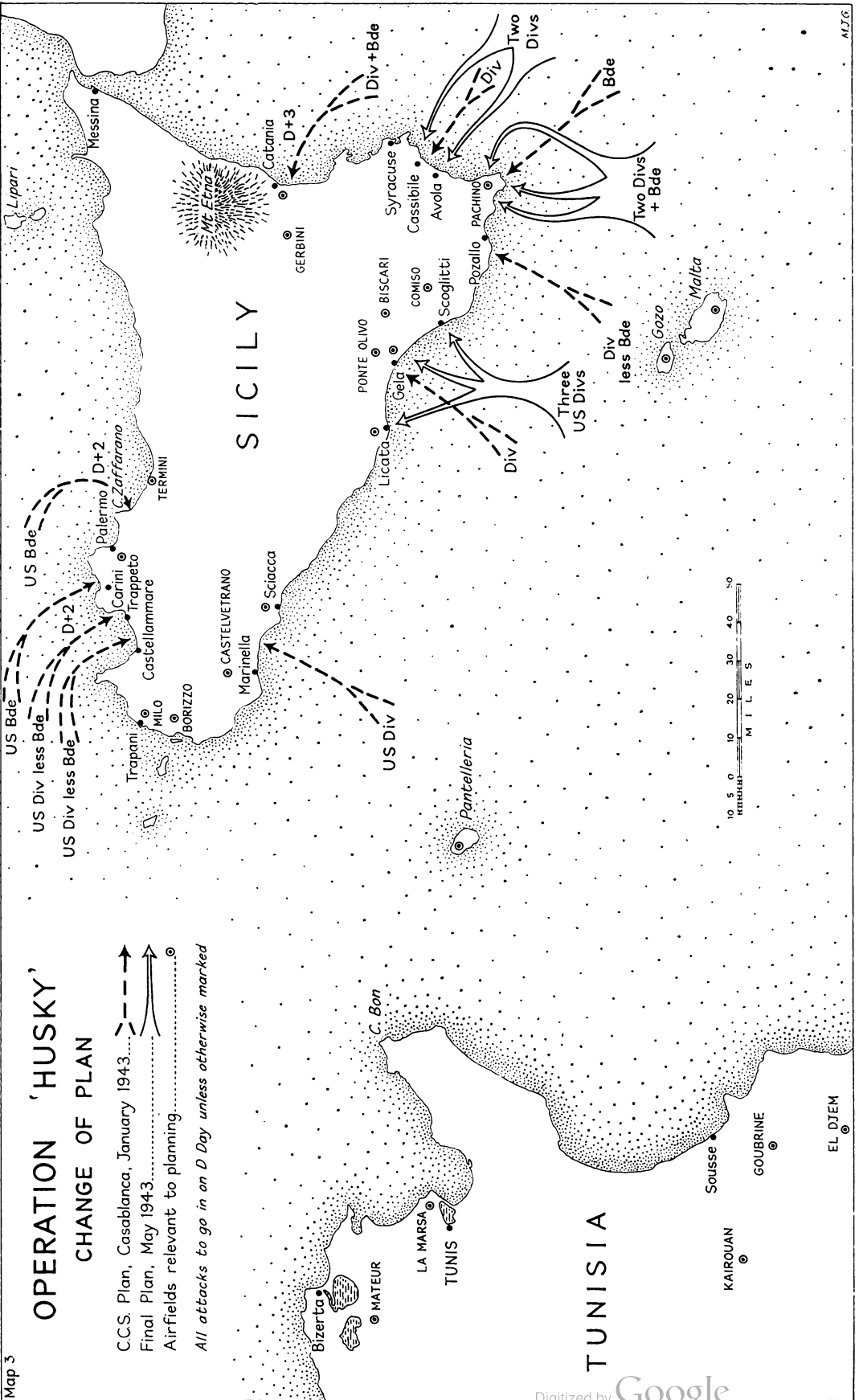
OPERATION 'HUSKY' CHANGE OF PLAN

C.C.S. Plan, Casablanca, January 1943.....→

Final Plan, May 1943.....- - - - -

Airfields relevant to planning.....⊙

All attacks to go in on D Day unless otherwise marked



not guarantee to neutralize. But early capture of ports, early capture of airfields, and some other essential aims might lead to a dispersion of the available land forces which would conflict with tactical concentration. And concentration seemed a pre-requisite if the land forces were to make certain of establishing firm footholds ashore. This dilemma was to bedevil the high-level planning.

A simplified form of the first phases of the outline plan is given below in tabular form. The objectives are in consequence loosely defined and it may seem that the capture of airfields was the principal aim. The capture of important tactical features was of course provided for.

See Maps 2 and 3

Day*	Force	Landing Area	Subsequent Objectives
D-Day	<i>British, or Eastern Task Force:</i> 1 Division 1 Tank Battalion	Avola	Syracuse, Augusta
"	1 Infantry Brigade	Pachino	Pachino airfield
"	1 Division (less brigade at Pachino)	Pozallo	Comiso airfield
"	1 Division	Gela	Ponte Olivo airfield
D-Day	<i>American, or Western Task Force:</i> 1 Division 1 Armoured regiment	Sciacca and Marinella	Castelvetro and Sciacca airfields
D + 1		NIL	
D + 2	<i>American, or Western Task Force:</i> 1 Division (less 1 Brigade) 1 Armoured Brigade	Castellammare	Milo airfield; Palermo
"	1 Division (less Brigade)	Trappeto	Palermo
"	1 Brigade	Carini Bay	Palermo
"	1 Brigade	Cape Zaffarano	Diversion
D + 3	<i>British, or Eastern Task Force:</i> 1 Division 1 Brigade	Catania area	Catania and airfields

* The symbol 'D' was at this time used to designate the first day of an operation. Days before the first day were expressed as D minus, days after as D plus, e.g. D-2, D+2.

On D-Day one British parachute brigade (less one battalion) was to be dropped to help in capturing Comiso airfield, and a second

British parachute brigade (also less one battalion) to help in capturing Ponte Olivo airfield. On D+3, three British parachute brigades were to drop to capture the Gerbini airfields.

In short, this meant that on D-Day three British divisions were to land at widely separated points on a stretch of coast 100 miles long, and one American division at a point some sixty miles west of its nearest British neighbour. Then on D+2 there would be another American landing on the north-west corner of the island, and on D+3 another British landing, 140 miles away on the east coast near Catania.

A copy of this plan was sent to Force 545 and Force 343 because Montgomery and Patton were to be responsible for planning their own assaults in detail. Alexander was of course responsible for overall planning, and on 28th February his Chief of Staff, Gairdner, made the 500-mile journey from Algiers to the headquarters of 18th Army Group in Tunisia to discuss matters—thus early came up the inconvenience which arose in bringing key men together. Alexander made some improvements in the plan. He suggested that both Task Forces might be concentrated against the south-eastern corner of the island. Divisions were not to be split up unless this was quite unavoidable. A reserve was to be constituted. The role of airborne forces was to be altered for the following reason. It was certain that the first landings would be made in the dark, and it was current doctrine that naval gun-fire could not give accurate support to troops in darkness. Therefore the main role of the airborne forces would change from capturing airfields to neutralizing beach defences, to help the troops assaulting from the sea. This decision made the airborne operations a main feature of the plan. The improved plan was recommended by Alexander, Cunningham, and Tedder, and approved in principle by Eisenhower at a meeting on 13th March.

Meanwhile General Dempsey had been in touch with Montgomery (in Tripoli), who very greatly disliked the plan. As Montgomery was preoccupied with preparing the Mareth offensive he deputed Dempsey and Ramsay to go to Algiers to voice his objections, which he summarized in a signal to Alexander, ‘. . . In my opinion the operation as planned in London [i.e. the outline plan of the Combined Chiefs of Staff] breaks every commonsense rule of practical battle-fighting and is completely theoretical. It has no hope of success and should be completely recast.’ As luck would have it, this signal did not reach Alexander until after the conference on 13th March.

High-level planning was not destined to have a smooth passage because Montgomery’s repeated objections ended in a deadlock that was not resolved until 2nd May. To pursue all the details is not

necessary if the main points of the argument can be made clear. Montgomery was convinced that the capture of Syracuse, Augusta, and Catania was vital, and that a greater concentration of force than the plan proposed was necessary to make capture certain. But because forces and ships and craft were limited, this greater concentration could be achieved only by dilution elsewhere. 'Elsewhere' meant the force deemed necessary to capture certain airfields which, it seemed, would have to be captured if the Allies were to get ashore at all.

Dempsey and Ramsay presented Montgomery's case to Cunningham, Tedder, and Gairdner on 18th March. Eisenhower, Alexander, and Montgomery were absent because the Mareth offensive was about to begin (20th March) in Africa. To meet Montgomery's requirement two divisions, instead of one, were needed for the landing at Avola on D-Day. Discussion suggested that the second division could be provided only by eliminating the landing (1 British division) at Gela on D-Day. But if the Gela landing were eliminated, the hostile airfields at Ponte Olivo and its neighbourhood would not be captured. What then? Tedder was asked to give his fully-considered view and gave it, in writing, on the same day. He was convinced that if the Ponte Olivo group of airfields were not captured or denied to the enemy, the assaults in south-east Sicily would be exposed to a risk from the air which was unacceptable. '... I understand that the Eastern Task Force Commander rightly regards the capture of the Eastern Ports as being vital and that he considers the extra division essential for this purpose... air superiority is equally vital, and in point of time must have priority since, unless air superiority is maintained over the landings during the first forty-eight hours the landings may themselves fail...'

Alexander accepted Montgomery's demand for an extra division but not the method of finding it, that is by scrapping the proposed British landing at Gela. Instead he proposed to Eisenhower to abandon the landing by an American division at Sciacca and Marinella, to make this division land instead at Gela, and to place the British division which should have landed at Gela at Montgomery's disposal. The American landings on D+2 with a view to capturing Palermo were to be temporarily postponed. Eisenhower accepted Alexander's suggestions on 20th March, but recorded serious objections, namely: the American divisions, for the postponed attack at Palermo, would be kept hanging about for an indefinite period; and when at length they did attack, the enemy's airfields at Castelvetrano and Sciacca would not have been neutralized because the American landings at Sciacca and Marinella would not have occurred. He directed therefore that ways and means should be examined of finding somehow an extra British division for Montgomery, in the hope that the Combined Chiefs of Staff would

somehow find the ships and landing-craft to carry it. For the scarcity of ships and landing-craft was a constant.

At this point there occurred some unusual protests. Brigadier-General Nevins, the American B.G.S. (Plans) of Force 141, in a formal minute, virtually asked Eisenhower to reconsider his decision, and a number of British and American staff-officers of Force 141, of more junior rank, protested to Gairdner against the proposed changes. These protests were quashed by Eisenhower and Gairdner. On 25th March the British Chiefs of Staff recorded their concern that the Palermo part of the plan might be postponed, and directed that an extra British division and the ships and craft must, willy-nilly, be found. At this moment some relief of difficulties occurred since close examination proved that an extra British division, though not yet named, could be found from North Africa, and that the problem of ships was not insoluble. The upset, however, had been serious, and on 1st April Wilson, in distant Cairo, cabled to the C.I.G.S. '... It would appear planning in Algiers is suffering from lack of a full time Commander on the spot, and instead is relying on snap decisions from those who are fully engaged with Vulcan [the Allied offensive in Tunisia], and you may wish to send someone out there to sort things out.'¹ Sir Alan Brooke decided to let things be.

On the assumption that the extra British division would be found Alexander and Montgomery decided on 5th April that the Eastern Task Force's (or British) part of the plan should be:

D-Day

- 1 Division from Mideast } to land at Avola.
- 1 Division from U.K. }
- 1 Brigade from Mideast to land at Pachino.
- 1 Division from North Africa or Mideast to land at Pozallo.
- 1 Division from North Africa to land at Gela.

For the American part, the landing at Marinella and Sciacca was cancelled, and the remaining landings were postponed from D+2 to D+5. The postponement was dictated mainly by the difficulties of allotting ships and craft.

On the 10th April Eisenhower approved and issued this plan. It was high time because the effects of no plan were being felt: naval and air staffs feared that radical alterations might have to be made in work already prepared; the Western Task Force had scarcely planned at all; and until it was known which British divisions would assault where, practical training for specific operations was impossible.

¹On 13th April Mr. Attlee minuted to the P.M.: '... In this instance have we anyone of directing mind and commanding will-power directly in control of the joint planners? Should not their deliberations be directed to essentials by some ruthless and forceful personality?'

However, General Montgomery's misgivings were not at rest, and moreover as early as 23rd March he had shown a determination that his part in the invasion should be shaped in his own mould '... Army Commander [Montgomery] intends to throw cloak of 8th Army name and prestige over operation and therefore intends use as many of his own veteran Divisions as possible, also 8th Army name not Eastern Task Force.' Montgomery regarded his army as a complete fighting and administrative team, a self-sufficient overseas expeditionary force.

On 7th April Gairdner flew to England to report progress to the Chiefs of Staff (returning to Algiers on the 21st), and on the 17th Major-General de Guingand, Chief of Staff of 8th Army, arrived in Cairo to become Chief of Staff of Force 545, thus enabling General Dempsey to return to his 13th Corps.¹ On 23rd April Montgomery flew to Cairo from Tunisia where his 8th Army had paused at Enfidaville. His object was to give a few uninterrupted days to the affairs of Force 545. The immediate result is best summarized by his signal, dated 24th April, to Alexander:

- ' 1. The fact that I have not been able to devote my SOLE attention to the Eastern Task Force problem has affected all the work here.
2. Planning so far has been based on assumption that opposition will be slight and that Sicily will be captured relatively easily. Never was there a greater error.² Germans and also Italians are fighting desperately now in Tunisia and will do so in Sicily. To go ahead on this assumption with all the consequent tactical repercussions such as dispersion of effort which is a feature of all planning to date will land the Allied Nations in a first class military disaster.
3. We must plan the operation on assumption that resistance will be fierce and that a prolonged dogfight battle will follow the initial assault.
4. I am prepared to carry the war into Sicily with the Eighth Army but must do so in my own way. The fight will be hard and bitter.
5. In view of above considerations my Army must operate concentrated with Corps and Divisions in supporting distance of each other. Pozallo and Gela landings must be given up and the whole initial effort be made in the areas of Avola and Pachino. Subsequent operations will be developed so as to secure airfields and ports and so on. The first thing to do is to secure a lodgement in a suitable area and then operate from that firm base.
6. Time is pressing and if we delay while above is argued in

¹ de Guingand was promoted Major-General in this appointment.

² The plan accepted by the Combined Chiefs of Staff stated the following proviso: 'We are doubtful of the chances of success against a garrison which includes German formations.'

London and Washington the operation will never be launched in July. Whole planning and work in Cairo is suffering because everyone is trying to make something of a plan which he knows can never succeed.

7. I have given orders that as far as the army is concerned all planning and work as regards ETF is now to go ahead on lines indicated in para. 5. There is no change in Avola landings. Pozallo and Gela are given up. 30th Corps assaults the Pachino Peninsula and the details of this will be settled by myself and Admiral Ramsay.

8. Admiral Ramsay is in complete agreement with me and together we are prepared to launch the operation and see it through and win. It is essential that the air plan should provide close and intimate support for Eighth Army battle and for this I must have Broadhurst and his staff and his experienced squadrons.

9. I want to make it clear that I shall require for this battle the whole of Eighth Army and that those formations not initially concerned will be assembled at Tripoli and be at my call as and when they can be brought forward. I also want to make it clear that the above solution is the only possible way to handle the ETF problem with the resources available. I am not able to judge the repercussions of this solution on the operation as a whole. Finally I must emphasise that the success of this operation depends firstly on obtaining supremacy in the air and that a good weight of air power is available for the intimate support of the initial assault and secondly on the fact that the operation will NOT be possible with the resources available if Sicily is developed before July into a heavily defended island strongly held by German troops.'

There were two assumptions in this signal that were not in accord with contemporary appreciations. The first was that planning had been based on the belief that opposition would be slight. In fact all appreciations had forecast stiff *German* opposition. Secondly Montgomery declared that the Italians would fight desperately in Sicily. The Combined Chiefs of Staffs' outline plan stated no more than that it would be wise to expect Italian troops to fight hard in defence of Italian soil. Be this as it may, Montgomery's signal swept aside the plan to which he had agreed on the 5th and replaced it by one which in eliminating the landings at Pozallo and Gela, eliminated also the capture or neutralization of the enemy's airfields at Ponte Olivo and Comiso. Alexander now held a meeting at Algiers on 29th April to discuss Montgomery's proposals. Cunningham, Tedder, Ramsay, Air Marshal Coningham, and Patton were present, as was General Leese, representing Montgomery who had returned to Tunisia and fallen sick with tonsillitis.¹ There was a close discussion. Cunningham

¹ General Sir Oliver Leese commanded 30th Corps in 8th Army.

said that Montgomery's plan concentrated the effort against the most strongly defended part of the coast, that there would be a large number of ships off shore with little or no air protection, and that the use of the airfields must be obtained if the Allied ships were to stay off the beaches. Tedder said that Montgomery's plan set the air aspect aside. Thirteen landing grounds would be left in the enemy's hands.¹ It would be impossible to neutralize these by air action alone, and Allied air forces based on Malta 'could not compete with the tasks expected of them'. Moreover, the Allied air force must have these airfields if it were to cover the operations of the Western Task Force, and without them air supremacy could not be maintained for even a few days. Alexander said that he accepted Montgomery's plan for the operation considered as a land operation only. He asked Cunningham and Tedder if they accepted the plan, and they replied that they did not. Thus the position was that Alexander partly accepted the plan, and that the principal naval and air commanders Cunningham and Tedder, who were subordinate and responsible to Eisenhower and not to Alexander, rejected it. The deadlock was British, and complete. General Montgomery was asked if he could suggest a way out of it, and proposed a further meeting. At this point Eisenhower, who had not been unmoved by the proceedings, stepped in and summoned one for 2nd May.

At this meeting there were present Eisenhower, Cunningham, Tedder, and Montgomery. Whereas Montgomery had been kept away from the meeting of the 29th by tonsillitis, the weather kept Alexander and Coningham away from this one by grounding their aircraft in distant Tunisia. Montgomery now produced an entirely new plan and argued it powerfully. This was to abandon altogether the attack in the Palermo area, and instead make the Americans land at Pozallo and Gela, while his own Eastern Task Force landed in the areas of Avola and Pachino as he had already proposed. He sent a signal to Alexander assuring him that '. . . Eisenhower and Bedell-Smith completely in favour. Consider proper answer would be to put U.S. Corps under me and let my Army H.Q. handle the whole operation of land battle.' On 3rd May Alexander arrived in Algiers, and Eisenhower, after a discussion with him, accepted the newest plan. This will be summarized below. It was a good plan because it achieved a great concentration of land force at the areas considered to be first in order of importance. But Tedder and Cunningham still had misgivings because the plan left, unthreatened, in enemy hands all the airfields in western Sicily, and in the east the important Gerbini group. Cunningham felt too that the new plan gave up a great asset—assault at numerous places. Alexander's main worry was

¹ When planning began it was known that there were 17 airfields and landing grounds in Sicily. By 10th July it was known that new construction had raised the figure to over 30.

about maintenance because the capture of the best port Palermo would now be deferred.

Moreover it is impossible to pretend that Anglo-American relations were unruffled. Nevins wrote to Patton 'Acceptance of the proposed plan will necessarily give the impression to all U.S. commanders and staff now acquainted with the published outline plan [i.e. that of 10th April] that U.S. participation has been completely subordinated to General Montgomery's views. This may appear inconsequential, but it is likely to have serious adverse effect on morale and co-operation . . .' Admiral Cunningham wrote privately to the First Sea Lord '... The Admiral (Hewitt) and General (Patton) of the Western Task Force are very sore about it . . .' General Eisenhower, however, as Supreme Commander, had made his decision, and it was his special gift to inspire loyal obedience. And this he did. It was one of Montgomery's unfortunate habits often to advocate and secure sound policies and courses of action in a manner that suggested to others that he was blind to every interest except his own.

General Gairdner now pointed out to Alexander that the events of the past weeks had thoroughly discredited Force 141 and that as he (Gairdner) was the Chief of Staff it would be best for the common cause if he resigned that appointment. Alexander blamed himself but accepted the resignation. Gairdner had shown loyalty, energy, tact, firmness, persuasion, and initiative in trying to make work the plan given to him. He had not had a commander, free from commitment to other active operations, to serve.

It was, more than anything else, this absence of a full time executive commander, free from other commitments, which bedevilled the planning and created the doubts, uncertainties and delays which so confused the issues. All the future executive commanders were heavily involved with the campaign in North Africa and only in their spare time could they think spasmodically about the shape of things to come. In the circumstances it was remarkable that an agreed plan was formulated at all and it was even more remarkable that, in the event, it proved to be a good plan.

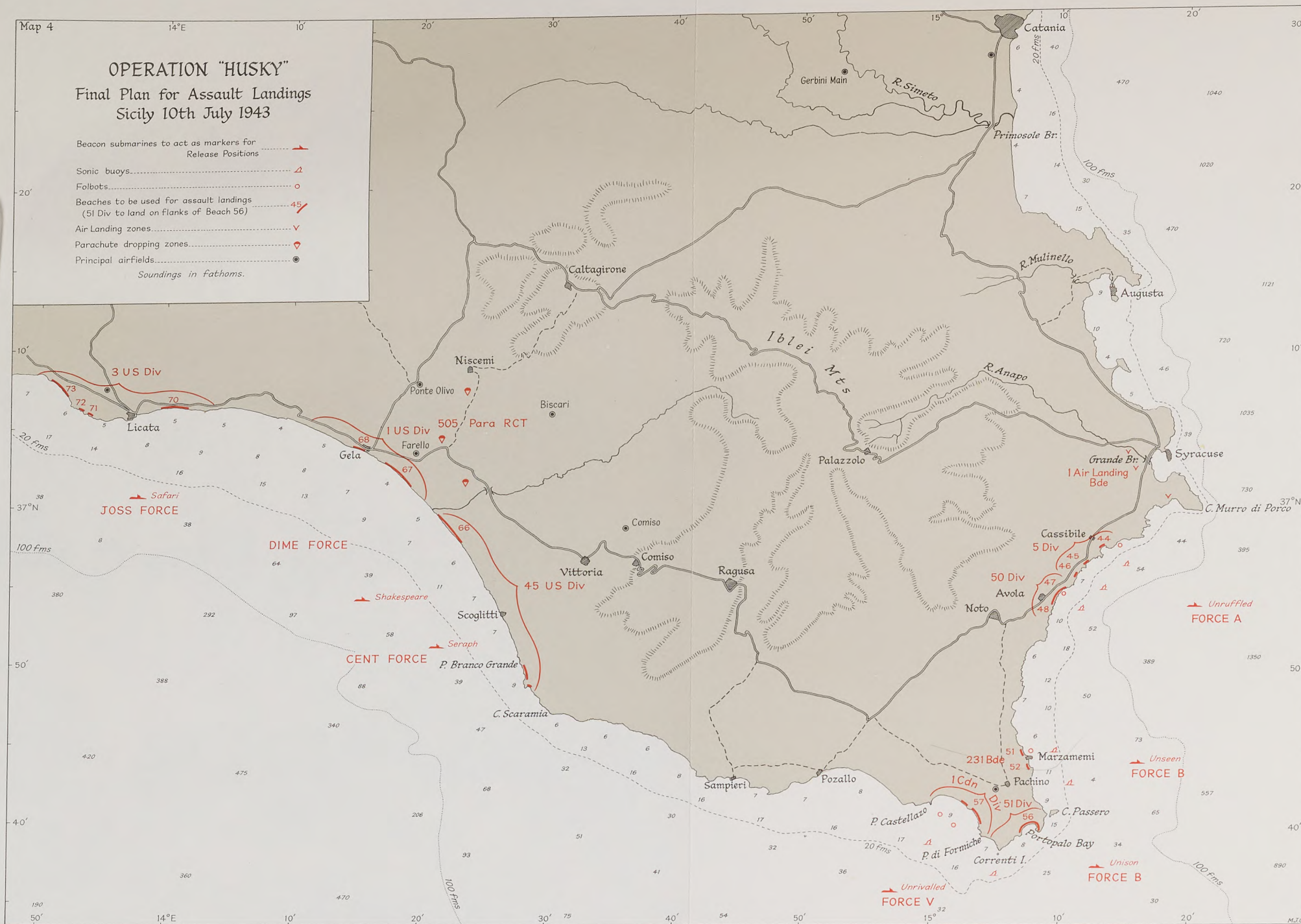
(v)

After General Eisenhower's decision of 3rd May the work of preparing the invasion found a new sense of direction. The work was not all plain sailing any more than it had been before, in Algiers and elsewhere. For example, on 13th April the Combined Chiefs of Staff had approved the 'July moon' (between 10th-14th July) as the date for the invasion. But since February an argument about the possibility of an earlier date had rumbled like a thunderstorm, with

OPERATION "HUSKY"

Final Plan for Assault Landings Sicily 10th July 1943

- Beacon submarines to act as markers for Release Positions ▲
 - Sonic buoys △
 - Folboats ○
 - Beaches to be used for assault landings (51 Div to land on flanks of Beach 56) 45
 - Air Landing zones ▽
 - Parachute dropping zones ∇
 - Principal airfields ●
- Soundings in fathoms.*



occasional peals from Mr. Churchill. Again, on 7th April Eisenhower had felt it to be his duty to warn the Combined Chiefs of Staff that the whole operation offered 'scant promise of success' if among the garrison were 'substantial, well armed and fully organized German ground troops', i.e. two divisions or more. Mr. Churchill at once denounced 'pusillanimous and defeatist doctrines, from whoever they come' to his own Chiefs of Staff, and remonstrances reached Eisenhower from the British, and the American Joint Chiefs of Staff. All these personages perhaps overlooked the fact that Eisenhower was affirming a proviso in the plan approved by themselves in January, and which had not been cancelled.

Then General Montgomery continued to behave in his least tactful manner. On 5th May he wrote to Alexander '... Only one commander can run the battle in Sicily in the new plan. It seems clear that Eighth Army should command and control the whole operation, with 2nd U.S. Corps included in Eighth Army...' The Americans had indeed intended that their highest tactical headquarters should be that of an augmented Corps. But when it became known that Force 545 would transform itself into 8th Army '... the difference did not sit well in Washington' and General Marshall decided that on D-Day Force 343 would become 7th United States Army. Again, on 14th May General Wilson, who had to plan for possible operations in the Aegean as well as carry out his tasks in preparing the invasion, complained to Sir Alan Brooke that 'Montgomery has already made it clear that he wishes to keep most of the present Eighth Army under his own hand indefinitely... Suggest a strong line is necessary in order to make my planning practicable and real... Meanwhile Montgomery's attitude makes things very difficult and if condoned will prejudice my planning and preparations for operations which... you hope we shall carry out in the near future.' But undoubtedly the machine in Algiers was running strongly where small staffs, with executive authority from their commanders, now represented 8th Army and W.T.F., and Eisenhower made it clear that he was arbiter.

See Map 4

The plan of 15th Army Group for the assault phase of the invasion, shorn of much detail, can be presented as shown in the tables on the next pages.

All the landings except those of the 51st Highland and 3rd U.S. Divisions were of the type known as ship-to-shore; that is, men and material were carried most of the way in ships, and transferred at the last moment, off the beaches, to landing-craft which had been ship-borne or had made the passage under their own power. The landings

8th Army

General Task: To assault between Syracuse and Pozallo. To establish itself on the general line Syracuse–Pozallo–Ragusa and gain touch with 7th U.S. Army. To capture the ports of Augusta and Catania, and the Gerbini group of airfields.

Formation	Sailing from	Area of landing	Tasks in outline
<i>13th Corps</i>	—	—	To capture Syracuse, then Augusta and Catania.
5th Division	Suez*	Cassibile	Consolidate local bridgehead. Capture Syracuse, and later Augusta and Catania in conjunction with 1st Airborne Division.
50th Division	Suez*	Avola	Consolidate local bridgehead. Protect left flank of 13th Corps. Later capture Augusta and Catania in conjunction with 5th and 1st Airborne Division.
<i>30th Corps</i>	—	—	To capture Pachino airfield. To relieve 13th Corps in Avola area. To secure the general line Palazzolo–Ragusa and gain contact with 7th U.S. Army.
231st Infantry Brigade	Suez*	Marzamemi	Consolidate local bridgehead.
51st Highland Division	Sousse, Sfax, Malta*	Astride tip of Pachino peninsula	To capture Pachino. To consolidate bridgehead in peninsula, and relieve 13th Corps. To capture Palazzolo.
1st Canadian Division	United Kingdom	Pachino peninsula between Punta Castellazo and Punta di Formiche	Capture Pachino airfield. Prepare for capture of Ragusa. Contact 7th U.S. Army in area Comiso airfield.
<i>Army Troops:</i> 1st Airborne Division:	Flying from:		
1st Air Landing Brigade	El Djem area	Grande Bridge	To capture Grande bridge over R. Anapo; later western suburbs of Syracuse.
2nd Parachute Brigade	El Djem area	Augusta	To capture crossing of R. Mulinello and northern outskirts of Augusta.
1st Parachute Brigade	El Djem area	Astride R. Simeto	To capture intact Primosole Bridge; co-operate with advance of 13th Corps.

* This column is a simplification. As an example: for 13th Corps, 32 ships embarked most of the troops at Suez; assault convoys sailed from Port Said and Alexandria. Vehicles etc. were loaded in 60 ships distributed between Alexandria, Haifa and Beirut.

7th United States Army

General Task: To assault between Cape Scaramia and Licata. To capture the port of Licata and the airfields at Ponte Olivo, Biscari, and Comiso. To establish contact with 8th Army. To protect the left flank of 8th Army.

Formation	Sailing from	Area of landing	Tasks in outline
2nd U.S. Corps	—	Gela to Sampieri	To capture the airfields at Ponte Olivo, Comiso, Biscari. To establish contact with 8th Army in area Ragusa.
3rd U.S. Division	Bizerta	Licata	To capture Licata port and airfield. Consolidate local bridgehead.
1st U.S. Division	Algiers, Tunis	Gela	To capture Gela airfield, and Ponte Olivo airfield.
45th U.S. Division	United States, then Oran	Scoglitti	To capture airfields at Comiso and Biscari. To establish contact with 8th Army.
2nd U.S. Armoured Division	Oran	As needed	In 'Floating reserve'.
<i>Army Troops:</i> 82nd U.S. Airborne Division	Flying from:		
505th Parachute Regimental Combat Team	Area of Kairouan	Gela	Seize ground east of Ponte Olivo, and block approaches from east and west.

of 51st Highland and 3rd U.S. Divisions were known as shore-to-shore; that is, the troops, and much of the material, were carried in the craft which would run them up on the beaches.¹ We may remark here (it is described in Chapter IV) the new and excellent 'amphibian' the DUKW—a powered boat in the water and a vehicle on land, for carrying stores or men.

In the very early stages of planning there had been a scheme to drop the airborne divisions in the toe of Italy to block the way of the enemy's reinforcements to Sicily. However, by April, Eisenhower and Alexander had become convinced that the vital role of the airborne troops was to soften the beach defences during the assault phase. Eisenhower wrote: 'The duties of the naval forces were primarily convoy and it was thought unwise to rely too much on naval gunfire to neutralize shore defences . . . Nor could we count on air power for the job, because its primary role was to be the

¹ Some medium-sized Landing Ships Infantry, as well as craft, were used for 51st Highland and 3rd U.S. Divisions.

destruction of enemy air power . . .' But it turned out that London and Washington could not provide more air transports and gliders than sufficed to lift at most three brigades at once. Because the landings of both Armies were to be simultaneous, the expedient of using the same aircraft in a shuttle service to lift more formations was ruled out. It was finally decided that the three brigades which could be lifted would be best engaged further inland against important points on the lines of advance.

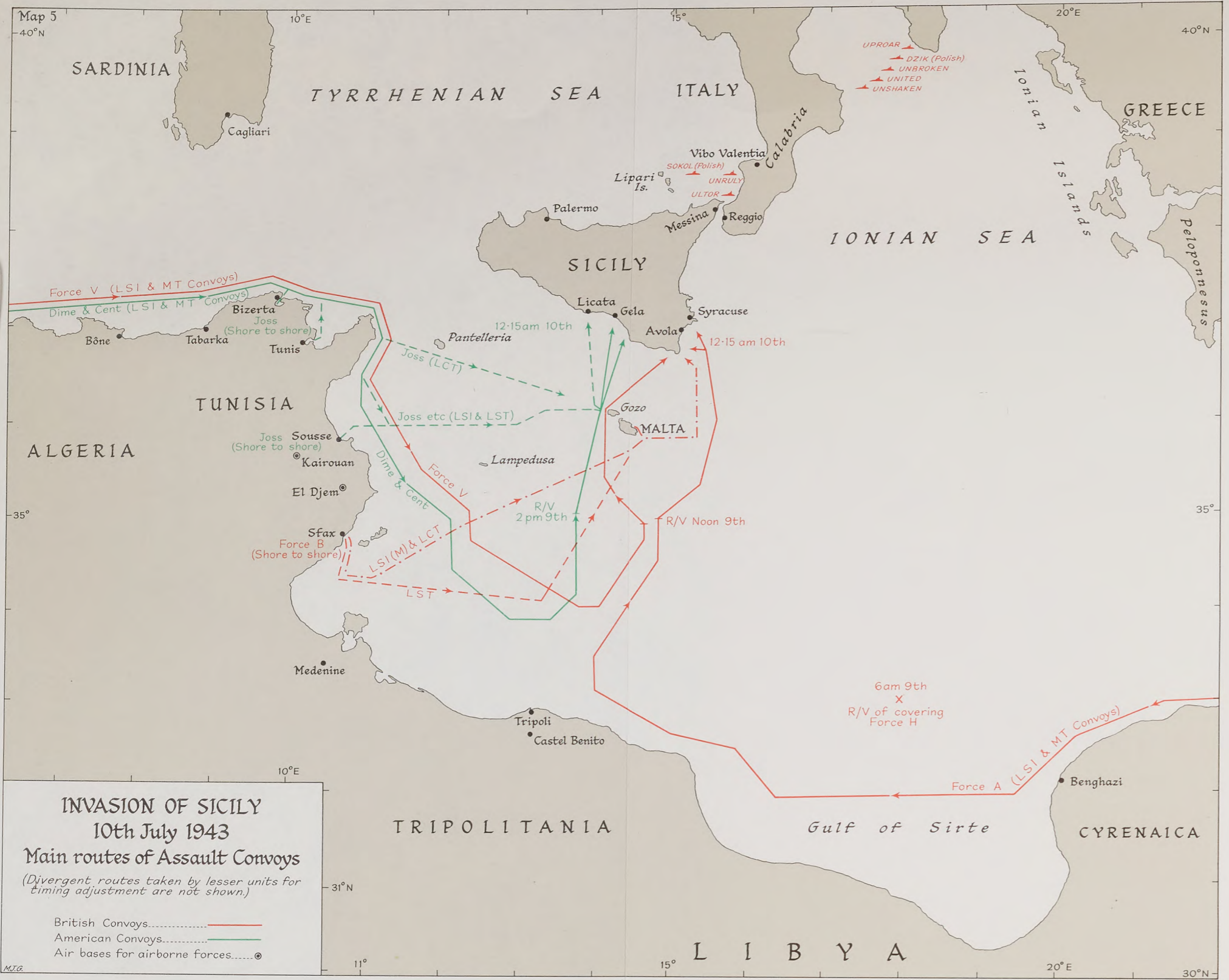
The problem of timing all the landings deserves a separate, short mention because it was intricate and laborious, and yet could not be solved in a way to satisfy entirely the desiderata of each of the three Services, or to produce entirely satisfactory synchronization. The airborne troops required moonlight to help their landings and the seaborne troops required darkness to help theirs. To suit both, as far as might be, D-Day had to fall during the period of the waxing moon, and Saturday, 10th July was chosen.¹ Tactical considerations set 2.45 a.m. on the 10th as the time at which the first landing craft must touch down (a time termed 'H' hour), if the troops were to have cover of darkness for the very hazardous final part of the run-in, disembarkation, and assault. The duration of the degree of moonlight held to be desirable to help airborne landings, with other factors, set six minutes after midnight on the 9th/10th as the time by which these landings should be complete. This was about 2½ hours before the landings from the sea would begin. The interval no doubt would serve the airborne troops in developing their attacks, but it was reasonable also to think that major landings from the air would cause the enemy to alert his coast defences.² At sea a half moon would be above the horizon as the assault convoys of ships were approaching the Release Positions, from which the landing craft would be dispatched to the shore. The moonlight would help accurate navigation but would prejudice the chances of concealing the convoys' approach from air or land observation. More serious a waxing moon meant that ships must lie off the beaches for some nights following the landings in moonlight which would grow brighter and last longer, and thus add to the danger from almost inevitable air attacks.

So much for the landings. The stages, first to last, of the operation to capture Sicily set out by Alexander were:

1. Preparatory. Naval and air operations to neutralize enemy activities at sea, and to gain air supremacy.

¹ Sunset on the 9th was at 8.23 p.m. (two hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time) and last light at 9.33 p.m. On the 10th moonset was at 12.31 a.m., first light at 4.39 a.m., and sunrise at 5.46 a.m.

² In September 1942 heavy air attacks, preparatory to the British operation against Tobruk from the sea as well as overland, aroused the enemy commanders' suspicions and caused them to alert their defences. See Volume IV, Chapter I.



2. Seaborne and airborne assaults to capture certain airfields and the ports of Syracuse and Licata.
3. To establish a firm base from which to conduct operations to capture the ports of Augusta and Catania, and the group of airfields at Gerbini.
4. The capture of these ports and airfields.
5. The reduction of the island.

We must now describe some aspects of the Allied naval plans. Admiral Ramsay's Eastern Task Force comprised three Assault Forces designated 'A', 'B', and 'V' and a Support Force, designated 'K'. Rear-Admiral Troubridge's Force 'A' was to carry 13th Corps from Middle Eastern ports to its beaches between Cape Murro di Porco and Avola. Rear-Admiral McGrigor's Force 'B' was to convey 51st Highland Division from Tunisia to the south-eastern end of the Pachino peninsula, and 231st Infantry Brigade, on the last lap of its passage from Middle East, to Marzamemi. Rear-Admiral Vian's Force 'V' was to bring 1st Canadian Division in an unbroken voyage all the way from the Clyde to the western side of the Pachino peninsula. Rear-Admiral Harcourt's Force 'K' was composed of four cruisers and six destroyers. Its first task was additional escort to the assault convoys during their final approach to Sicily. Then it was to be supplemented by monitors and gunboats, and to split into bombardment groups to support each British landing with gun-fire. Later, Force K was to protect the northern flank of the Eastern Task Force, a duty which, before Force K took over, was to be performed by a detachment of two cruisers and two destroyers (designated Force Q) from the main covering force, which has yet to be described.

The American Western Task Force (Vice-Admiral Hewitt) comprised a Control Force and three Attack Forces named Cent, Dime and Joss to correspond with the Americans' code-names for their landing-areas. Rear-Admiral Kirk's Cent Force was to bring 45th U.S. Division from the United States to Scoglitti, with a pause at Oran. Rear-Admiral Connolly's Joss Force was to carry 3rd U.S. Infantry Division and part of 2nd U.S. Armoured Division from Tunisia to Licata. Rear-Admiral Hall's Dime Force was to carry 1st U.S. Infantry Division and the remainder of the armoured division from Algiers to the Gulf of Gela. The armour was to land wherever needed.

See Maps 4 and 5

The main covering force for both Eastern and Western Task Forces was British, and consisted of six battleships, two Fleet carriers,

and attendant cruisers and destroyers under Vice-Admiral Sir Algernon Willis. It was constituted in three divisions. To begin with, the 1st and 2nd Divisions, together known as Force H, respectively were based at Mers-el-Kebir and Alexandria, and the 3rd Division—Force Z—at Gibraltar. Force H was to rendezvous at 6 a.m. on D minus 1 day (9th July) some 240 miles south-east of Malta, and then to operate in the Ionian Sea to cover the eastern flank of the assault on Sicily, and to perplex the enemy by threatening the west coast of Greece. This operation might prod a spot where the Axis was known to be sensitive. Meanwhile Force Z was to remain in the Western Mediterranean to cover the passage of assault convoys coming from the west, and later was to make a diversion against western Sicily with the object of containing enemy reserves. Force Z would be available too for a number of other contingencies, among them replacing casualties in Force H.

A strong force of submarines, whose dispositions are shown on

Class	British	American	Other Nations
Battleships	6	—	—
Fleet Carriers	2	—	—
Cruisers	10	5	—
A.A. Cruisers	3	—	—
A.A. Ships	1	—	—
Fighter Direction Ships	2	—	—
Monitors	3	—	—
Gunboats	3	—	2 Dutch
Minelayers	1	3	—
H.Q. Ships	5	4	—
Destroyers	71	48	6 Greek, 3 Polish
Escorts (Frigates, Sloops, Corvettes)	35 (2 R.I.N.)	—	1 Greek
Minesweepers	34	8	—
L.S.I.(L), (M) & (S) and L.S.T.(1)	8*	—	—
Major Landing-Craft	319	190	—
Minor " "	715	510	—
Coastal craft (MTBs, MLs & MGBs)	160	83	—
Submarines	23	—	1 Dutch, 2 Polish
Miscellaneous Vessels	58	28	—
Merchant Ships, Troop Transports and M.T. } Ships incl. L.S.T.(2)s }	155	66	7 Dutch, 4 Polish, 1 Belgian 4 Norwegian
Total	1,614	945	31 = 2,590

* Manned by Royal Navy.

Fleet Air Arm embarked in Fleet Carriers with Force H. Indomitable (Rear-Admiral C. Moody): Sqns: No. 807, 12 Seafire IIC; No. 880, 14 Seafire IIC; No. 899, 14 Seafire IIC; No. 817, 15 Albacore. *Formidable*: Sqns: No. 885, 5 Seafire IIC; No. 888, 14 Martlet II & IV; No. 893, 14 Martlet IV; No. 820, 12 Albacore.

Map 5, was to make offensive patrols to intercept the Italian Fleet, should it put to sea. Apart from this force, seven submarines (Map 4) were to act as beacons to guide the several groups of ships of the assaulting forces to their Release Positions off the beaches.

The number of ships, craft, and men engaged in the assault on Sicily had never been surpassed in a single amphibious operation. There were some 180,000 troops, and the naval forces are set out in the table on the previous page.¹

It is interesting to look at some of the matters which lay behind this impressive tally of ships. Sixteen days before the invasion Admiral Cunningham wrote to the First Sea Lord, Sir Dudley Pound ' . . . The thought of having, at short notice, to turn back and delay all those ships and landing-craft, over two thousand in all, is a bit hair-raising. However, we have plans for it . . .' At that moment an unseasonable four days' blow in the Malta Channel had brought uppermost in the naval commander-in-chief's mind a single contingency out of the hundreds which he and his subordinates had to foresee and meet, if the armies were safely to reach Sicily. The fact may suggest to the landsman how great an affair was the preparation, ordering, and sailing of this prodigious array. The seaman no doubt understands all this, almost as a matter of course, because of his professional training, experience, and habit. In June 1943 it may well have been the professional sang-froid of the seamen, and the uninformed assumptions of others, which caused Admiral Cunningham to remark in his letter ' . . . The soldiers seem to think that they will be landed at the exact spot they expect to be, that the weather will necessarily be perfect, and that naval gun fire will silence all opposition . . .'²

However, to get the soldiers anywhere at all, the sailors had to plan all manner of things in detail, and later carry out the plans. Some of the main things which had to be reckoned with were these. Tactical possibilities, which outside the Mediterranean were principally attack by submarines and aircraft; inside the Mediterranean the same, and mines as well, and perhaps action by the Italian fleet and E-boats. The routing of convoys, a problem which became more complicated as the numerous convoys drew nearer their destinations.³ The timing of convoys: it is enough to say that in certain

¹ Details of some types of Landing Ships and Craft in use in 1943-44 are at Appendix 3

² The reference to naval gun-fire may be compared with that on p. 27. However, Admiral Cunningham's letter conveys impressions; it is not an official document formally stating facts.

³ ' . . . The final approach phase for the naval task force ['Cent'] to the island of Sicily began at 1800 on 9th July while the convoy was steaming southwest of Malta . . . An hour and a half later, the convoy passed the Gozo landfall. The wind was blowing at about forty miles an hour from almost due north. Until just before 2100, owing to the scattered formations of landing craft of the other convoys in the immediate vicinity, Kirk's task force was forced into violent manoeuvres to clear the landfall and to pass through the areas so that the final approach leg could be reached . . .'

phases convoys would have to pass through predetermined positions in accordance with a synchronized time-table, and to remember that merchant ships differed greatly in speed and in capacity to work up speed, and that wind, weather, and the enemy respect no calculations. Sailing in company: in spite of four years of the convoy system, merchant ships could not obey signals or manœuvre together with the speed and precision of ships of war. Signal communications: a huge undertaking, important at any time, vital as battle approached.¹ The fuelling of lesser warships. And so the list goes on. It can be ended, summarily, at the landing-craft. If their arrival on the shore was not safe and timely, all forethought and earlier success would be thrown away, and an unsuccessful attempt to invade is usually final. The responsibility placed upon junior officers and seamen was terrific.

The indivisible air covers land and sea, and after the sketch of the activities on land and sea, we turn to the air plan.² This had three main phases. As soon as the enemy had been defeated in Tunisia there was to begin systematic bombing to prepare for invasion of Sicily by attacking the Axis air forces, and Italian industry and morale. The attacks were to be distributed so as to withhold for as long as possible any hint of where the invasion would be made. Until D minus 7 (3rd July) strategic bombing was to take for its targets the principal airfields in Sardinia, Sicily and southern Italy, industrial targets in southern Italy, and the ports of Naples, Messina, Palermo, and Cagliari (Sardinia). As part of a general programme designed to pin down Axis aircraft in areas far from Sicily, the United Kingdom's Bomber Command of the R.A.F. was to attack targets in north Italy and step up attacks on Germany. Middle East bombers were to make limited attacks on the Dodecanese and other Aegean islands. Strikes against shipping were part of the programme.

From D minus 7 to D-Day (3rd July to 10th July) the aims of the Allied air forces would be to disable whatever hostile air forces were

¹ Eisenhower to C.O.S. 19th June. 'In all amphibious operations there is a period during which the Navy is in complete control of the Land and Naval forces, and during which period complete dependence must be placed upon Naval communications. For this reason nothing less than perfection in Naval communications can be considered satisfactory . . .'

² It is interesting to recall some sentences in Mr. Churchill's famous directive of 5th September 1941 for land/air co-operation in the Middle East, and to consider what principles remained constant, and which had changed. ' . . . Nevermore must the ground troops expect, as a matter of course, to be protected against the air by aircraft. If this can be done it must only be as a happy makeweight and a piece of good luck . . . Upon the Military Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East announcing that a battle is in prospect, the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief will give him all possible aid irrespective of other targets, however attractive. Victory in the battle makes amends for all, and creates new favourable situations of a decisive character. The Army Commander-in-Chief will specify to the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief the targets and tasks which he requires to be performed, both in the preparatory attack on the rearward installations of the enemy and for air action during the progress of the battle.

It will be for the A.O.C.-in-C. to use his maximum force on these objects in the manner most effective . . .'

likely to oppose the landings, and to assail the enemy's land, sea, and air communications with Sicily. The principal targets were airfield bases of the German Air Force, and the attacks would, it was hoped, bring his fighters to battle and cause them heavy losses. Day and night attacks upon communications would swell to maximum as D-Day approached. Beach defences were to be left alone so that surprise might not be prejudiced, but radar installations in Sicily and Sardinia were to be attacked. Just before the landings, specially-equipped aircraft would try to baffle the radar stations within whose scrutiny the areas of assault happened to be.

After the landings the principal aim would still be to deny the air to the enemy, and his airfields in Sicily would still be the principal bombing targets. But the greater the success of the armies, the fewer would be the airfields left in enemy hands, and as more airfields fell into Allied hands, the heavier would grow the air attacks upon the airfields still held by the enemy. The interests of land and air forces were all but identical.

All through the invasion the protection of shipping would be a very heavy commitment for the air forces. D plus 1 would be a particularly dangerous day, because by then the enemy should have grasped where the main Allied concentrations were, and should have been able to muster his air forces against them. Therefore it would be necessary on D plus 1 to take fighters from offensive roles to protect shipping, and in other ways to take advantage of the flexibility of the several air forces, engaged under Tedder's sole command, to adjust the general programme to particular, temporary demands. In general N.A.C.A.F. would be responsible for protecting ships from North African ports, and No. 201 (Naval Co-operation) Group R.A.F. of M.E.A.C. for protecting ships from Middle Eastern ports. Shipping lying off the beaches would be under the protection of day- and night-fighters from Malta and Pantelleria, supplemented by twin-engine day-fighters based on Tunisia until single- and twin-engine fighters were established in Sicily. The arrangements for off-shore shipping would be altered when single- and twin-engine fighters were established in Sicily.

The control of fighters in this amphibious operation called for careful arrangements. A Forward Fighter Control was to be established in each Headquarters Ship (e.g. H.M.S. *Bulolo*), and a Fighter Direction Ship, fitted with V.H.F. and long-range radar, was to be stationed in each assault area to provide information, not to control. Three ship-borne Ground Controlled Interception Stations, for the forward control of night-fighters, were to lie off shore until G.C.I. stations could be sited on land. Forward Fighter Controls were to be established ashore as soon as possible to replace those in the Headquarters Ships. Finally, fighter sector operations rooms were to be

established in the areas of Gerbini, Comiso, Sciacca–Castelvetrano, and Palermo. By that stage, mobile radio units (M.R.U.s) capable of height and direction finding, and of longer-range radar warning than the radar units which had been installed earlier, would be forming the foundation of the radar system in each sector.

There is in an assault a special problem for anti-aircraft defence. Here the broad measures to control the fire of A.A. guns were as follows. By day all aircraft, flying below 6,000 feet and which were not clearly recognized as friendly, were to be fired upon. By night all aircraft, flying at whatever height and which were not clearly recognized as friendly, were to be fired upon except when Allied night-fighters were operating over convoys and beaches, in which case A.A. gun-fire was to be restricted to targets below 6,000 feet. Merchant ships were forbidden to fire at any time upon aircraft unless these were engaged by warships. These measures unhappily proved to leave room for error.

The air plan provided for many tasks other than those which we have noticed. There were to be regular reconnaissance patrols in the Tyrrhenian and Ionian seas, and special photographic cover of the Italian Fleet. At night 'Air to Surface Vessel' (radar) patrols were to observe enemy ships and to report attempts to slip out of port. Intruder operations were to be carried out by night against enemy aircraft near their bases, against rail traffic in southern Italy, and rail and road traffic in Sicily.¹ Certain operations, to drop saboteurs and aggressive prowlers in southern Italy and parts of Sicily, were to be undertaken, with co-ordinated bombing.

¹ The definition of intruder operations became elastic. An intruder aircraft was a 'lone wolf' which looked for victims in a prescribed hunting ground, e.g. an intruder would stealthily join enemy aircraft which were orbiting their base at night, open fire, and slip away, perhaps to return later. His aim was to inflict casualties and create jitters, and his hunting grounds grew to include roads, railways, assembly areas, and so on.

CHAPTER II
THE ALLIES LAND IN SICILY
(July 1943)

(i)

OUR view of Axis affairs in the Mediterranean theatre, during the three months which followed the defeat of the German and Italian forces in Africa, is perhaps over-simplified by the knowledge that Mussolini fell from power on 25th July 1943 with consequences also known. But the German High Command had no foreknowledge of Mussolini's catastrophe, and the leading men among the Italians seem, until about mid-July, to have been threading a labyrinth of political and military intrigue, none knowing exactly what might befall. It is not our business to follow the Italians into their labyrinth, nor to try to share German perplexities. Our attention must be limited to those matters only which most directly affected the enemy's military plans, preparations, and operations in the theatre.

First we may remark a few broad features of the German strategic scene. Hitler and his High Command paid far more attention to the Mediterranean theatre comprising Italy, the islands, Greece, and the Balkans than they had paid to the campaign in Africa. But the campaign in Russia stood first in their minds, and its demands constantly bore upon the affairs of all other theatres. Russia moreover, was an *OKH* theatre (which meant that in it the High Command of the German Army had control), and this fact was a cause of stress, because in all other European theatres *OKW* (the High Command of the German Armed Forces) had control, and thus was able to go over the head of *OKH* in army affairs.¹ After the defeat in Africa German suspicions and fears about Italy's reliability as an ally came into the foreground. A strong group at *OKW* felt less and less confidence in all things Italian, even to thinking that the Italians were preparing to leave the war, and might be scheming to 'work their

¹ Under this curious system Russia had been an *OKH* theatre since July 1940, the Western Theatre passed from *OKH* to *OKW* in March 1941, and the Balkan Theatre in July 1941. Africa and Italy were formally, if not in fact, an Italian theatre controlled by *Comando Supremo*. Hitler was Supreme Commander of all German Armed Forces, and in December 1941 assumed the particular appointment of Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

passage' (to borrow a Churchillian phrase) with the British and Americans by military treachery. While Mussolini still held the reins, Hitler did not go so far, for he preserved a regard for the office and person of his fellow Dictator, believing that upon both depended the future of the Axis alliance.¹

On the Italian side the people were tired of war. The general morale of the forces was wretched. Mussolini's daemon no longer drove him or others, his health was declining, and his moods varied greatly. He could be by turns calm, sensible, self-deluding, suspicious, apathetic, or valiant with the valour of an Ancient Pistol. Among the highly-placed Italian officers the long-standing dislike of the Germans was growing, best exemplified by Ambrosio who tried hard to be master in his own house, whether by pretending that Mussolini took the decisions regarding it, or by habitual, uncomradely argument with his German opposite numbers. Underlying all there was profound political-military intrigue. Very briefly and in the aspect most relevant to our story, the anti-Mussolini party wished the King, Victor Emmanuel, to depose Mussolini and to appoint a military government headed by Badoglio. Badoglio was in touch with Ambrosio, who took the attitude that he was a soldier, and would not fall short of his military responsibilities nor exceed them, although he believed that Italy should leave the war. There were countless ramifications among the politicians, the 'old men' and 'new men' of differing interests; and regarding the Crown Prince, whose influence with his father was canvassed among military and political Tadpoles and Tapers such as Castellano, Ciano, Bastianini, and others. Victor Emmanuel received proposals and suggestions in silence or with objections. However, during June and early July the pot came near boiling-point, and by about the middle of July all parties were agreed that Mussolini must be thrown out. The King made up his mind to remove him and bring in Badoglio.

We must now look at the foreground of some high-level events, against the background blocked-in above. Both Germans and Italians knew that the Allies would take the offensive, and that a defensive strategy alone was practicable for the Axis. But the Italian and German aims diverged. Mussolini still believed that his country must make common cause with Germany, but his commanders, while ready to defend their homeland, wanted also above all to save it from ruin, perhaps in the last resort by striking some sort of bargain with the Allies. The German view was, in actuality, Hitler's view

¹ In April 1943 Hitler had offered to provide equipment, in particular tanks, for the new Italian M. Division, which was being raised near Rome by recruitment from members of the Blackshirt Militia and which it was thought would have a primary loyalty to Mussolini. The tanks and some other equipment were in fact sent although general Italian requests for equipment were refused.

because he dominated his entourage. Hitler had almost an obsession against yielding any territory which German forces had occupied. He and his advisers agreed in wishing to keep the war as far from Germany as possible, but they did not exactly agree on where the outer barriers should be. In May Hitler ordered a review of the situation in the light of his conviction that 'the southern periphery of Europe, whose bastions were the Balkans and the larger Italian islands, must be held'. From this time there appears a very important factor: the plans and preparations of the German High Command in the Mediterranean theatre were not directed solely towards defending it against Allied invasion, but also towards ensuring that Germany would keep control of it if Italy collapsed. The policy for Sicily tended to become overlaid by this larger question. Sicily indeed, was, for the Allies, the main object of preparations for attack; for the Axis it was simply one of several areas which had to be defended. In May Hitler looked on Sardinia as the most threatened of the Italian islands, while Mussolini, Ambrosio and Kesselring were inclined to think that Sicily's turn would come first. The German High Command was also concerned for the Aegean and the Peloponnesus, because it expected the Allies to attack these either at the same time as, or after, their landing operations in the Western Mediterranean. The British deception, planned in London and known as 'Mincemeat', certainly deepened this uncertainty when it was staged in the middle of May. The corpse of a 'Major Martin', a liaison officer, was planted close inshore north-west of Cadiz. It carried letters and documents, brilliantly faked to establish the credentials of the dead man and to dispel suspicions of a 'plant'. The corpse bore a letter from the C.I.G.S. to Alexander, and others to Cunningham and Eisenhower, which told of operations being planned against Greece and Sardinia. This plant caused a flurry of appreciations and deceived or confused many, including Hitler. It did attract the enemy's attention to the 'wrong' end of the Mediterranean, a distraction which helped to keep the real Allied plans secret. It did not, as will appear, affect the strength of the Axis land forces in Sicily on D-Day. *OKW's* anxiety about the Balkans and Greece may seem puzzling because these territories were notoriously bad campaigning grounds. But bauxite, chrome, copper, and Rumanian oil were very important in German eyes, and the Germans felt that while Italy could be reinforced fairly easily, and 'sealed off somehow' if need arose, this could not be done in the Balkans and Greece.

There were many workaday obstacles to the not very co-operative Axis attempts to work out a defence policy. By the spring of 1943 the Axis did not enjoy even parity with the Allies at sea or in the air in the Mediterranean theatre. On land, Mussolini first refused German

reinforcements, then in June accepted some, possibly because of continual pressure applied to Ambrosio by von Rintelen and Kesselring. Then in June the Italians presented a 'shopping-list' of the order of 2,000 aircraft, equipment for eighteen tank battalions, eighteen anti-tank battalions, and seventy field, and flak, artillery batteries. Keitel saw the size of this list as a wily Italian move to provoke a German refusal, which the Italians would then use as a pretext for leaving the war. There was a haze of dislike and mistrust and the Germans were often puzzled and thwarted. Moreover as regards land forces, *OKW* had by this time no disposable, trained reserves: always Peter somewhere had to be robbed to pay Paul elsewhere. From the end of May the Germans' chief concern became their secret plans to take military control of Italy (operation '*Alarich*') and the Balkans (operation '*Konstantin*') in the event of an Italian collapse. The first '*Alarich*' plans proposed the transfer to northern Italy of as many as seven divisions from Russia and six from France, over and above the six which by agreement with Mussolini were already in or en route to the southern half of Italy and the islands at the end of May and in June. Field-Marshal Rommel was to command.

The reappearance of this famous soldier excuses a short digression. Rommel had left Africa on 9th March before the battle of Mareth and, sick and temporarily on the shelf, had followed in bitterness of spirit the catastrophe which engulfed his comrades in Africa. On 9th May Hitler recalled him, and he received rather hazy directions for his new task, but for many weeks had little to do except collect a staff including some 'Africans' like Alfred Gause, his former Chief of Staff, and to deal with paper-work. On 4th July he is at Rastenburg, in Hitler's entourage, and we find him picking wild strawberries in the woods, and writing to his wife '. . . at the moment it is quiet everywhere, the calm before the storm.' In fact when the storm broke over Sicily Rommel was to get no chance of riding it. He appears here for the sake of *auld lang syne*, and because his appointment is additional evidence of Hitler's temporary disfavour for Kesselring on the strange grounds of suspected pro-Italianism, colossal optimism, and softness.

To return to '*Alarich*' and '*Konstantin*', it was clear that the land forces for either must come from France and Russia, and some divisions were earmarked, upon Hitler's behest. But the German staffs did not take enough account of their master's visionary gyrations. They believed that Hitler had decided in mid-May that he would, if Italy collapsed, subordinate the interests of all other theatres to the defence of the Mediterranean. But Hitler, since March, had been imagining an offensive, 'a beacon to the world', to consume a Russian salient, some 75 miles deep, 120 miles wide,

north of Kharkov. On 18th June he decided to light the beacon during the first week in July. The offensive failed swiftly and utterly and seriously weakened the German defences on the Eastern Front. It also robbed 'Alarich' and 'Konstantin' of the 'Russian' formations earmarked for them, and the general scarcity of reinforcements reduced 'Konstantin' to a paper exercise, although its objects were not abandoned. 'Alarich' retained its 'Western' formations and by the time of the Italian surrender in September there were eight German divisions ready in northern Italy.

Meanwhile, by the end of June German military organization in Italy was only slightly less haphazard than in May. The Italians awaited an attack somewhere, without any very impressive defensive measures. *Comando Supremo* spent much time during June in arguing about details with its German opposite numbers. Relations between the Germans and Italians 'at field level' were as poor as could be. We pass now to matters that more directly concern Sicily and to Axis arrangements in the island.

The first of these matters is the complicated system of Axis commands, which we will follow to the end of the Sicilian campaign. We must look at the German-Italian system, and that established by the Germans for their own forces, but we can leave aside the Italian domestic system since this was a conventional chain from the Armed Forces High Command (*Comando Supremo*) downwards.

In the central Mediterranean (though not in the Balkans) *Comando Supremo* was the highest directing headquarters for the armed forces of the Axis Allies because Mussolini was, formally, the supreme director of the war in this theatre. In theory, Hitler and the German High Command only 'presented their views' to the Duce and to *Comando Supremo*, using Field-Marshal Albert Kesselring as mouth-piece, and also General Enno von Rintelen, *OKW's* Liaison Officer to *Comando Supremo* and Military Attaché in Rome. In practice, the German leaders imposed their will on the Italians, and although German Army formations in the Central and Western Mediterranean might be placed under Italian command for tactical purposes, they remained for all other purposes subordinate to Kesselring in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief South (*Oberbefehlshaber Süd* or *OB Süd*). Kesselring had held this appointment since October 1941, and as he was an Air Force officer he also commanded *Luftflotte 2* until June 1943. This formation's new commander, Field-Marshal von Richthofen, was technically subordinate to Kesselring but in practice acted independently, dealing directly with *OKL*. This state of affairs was officially recognized on 7th September when the *Luftflotte* Command in Italy was placed directly under Göring. Until that

time relations between Kesselring and Richthofen were not always harmonious.¹

Liaison with the Italian Air Force was maintained by a German Air Force general attached to the Italian air headquarters. This post was held by General Ritter von Pohl until the end of July 1943, when he was given command of the German A.A. artillery in southern Italy and succeeded in his liaison duties by Colonel Veltheim. The staff of German Naval Command, Italy, was subordinate to *OB Süd* but had been 'assimilated' to the Italian naval command since March 1943. German naval operations in the Mediterranean were the more complicated since the German naval High Command (*OKM*) continued to lay down the principles for the conduct of naval warfare in these waters.

By the time of the Sicilian campaign this elaborate and doctrinaire Axis structure was crumbling wherever Germans and Italians had to work together. It contrasts poorly with the broadly simple British-American system. In this the Combined Chiefs of Staff stood at the head of an organization which had the formal appearance which befits the conduct of great affairs among Allies. But they and their subordinates worked in a cordial and down-to-earth way, and constantly improved their methods in the light of common sense, experience, and mutual confidence.

In Sicily, at the time of the Allied invasion, the C.-in-C. of the Italian 6th Army was responsible, as earlier, for the defence of the island. From February 1943 until the beginning of June he was General Mario Roatta, later Chief of Staff of the Army. He was succeeded by General Alfredo Guzzoni, since November 1940 Assistant Chief of the General Staff of the Italian Army. All Italian Army formations and units were under Guzzoni's command, as were some naval and air force units. But 'Fortress Areas' (*Piazze Militari Marittime*) were under the command of Admirals subordinate to a Naval Headquarters which was independent of 6th Army, that is to say *Comando Militare Marittimo Autonomo della Sicilia*.² Anti-aircraft defence was the duty of a separate commander directly responsible to the Ministry of War.

Headquarters 6th Army and the two Italian Corps H.Q., 12th and 16th, had tactical command over the German Army formations in the island.³ In June Hitler appointed a Liaison Officer with 6th

¹ The German Air Force possessed important ground forces, for example parachute divisions, and the Hermann Göring Panzer Division. In Italy and Sicily G.A.F. ground forces were under command of General Student's *Fliegerkorps XI*, a formation subordinate to *Luftflotte 2*, yet they took their orders from Kesselring. Flak units were the exception to this arrangement.

² The Fortress Areas were: Messina—Reggio Calabria; Augusta—Syracuse; Trapani. Palermo and Catania were not Fortress Areas, and were under the control of 6th Army.

³ *Fliegerführer Sicily* was outside this chain of command because he was subordinate to *Fliegerkorps II*, the commander of which was directly responsible to von Richthofen at

Army, Lieutenant-General Fridolin von Senger und Etterlin who arrived on 26th June. The appointment was partly owing to a German plan quietly to gain greater operational control of German formations which anywhere were serving under Italian commands. von Senger was never authorized to direct the operations of German troops although empowered to control their administration. He made reports to *OB Süd*, but during the early stages of the campaign took it upon himself to issue some operation orders.

In early July there were in all about 200,000 Italian and 32,000 German Army troops and 30,000 German Air Force groundsmen in Sicily. About half the Italian total was accounted for by the Aosta, Assietta, Napoli, and Livorno divisions (strengths were of the order of 11,000–13,000 men in each division) and G.H.Q. troops, the remainder by coast-defence troops and services. Of the German formations, the Hermann Göring Panzer Division had about 15,500 men, but its two infantry regiments mustered only three battalions between them. 15th Panzer Grenadier Division had some 16,000 men.

The morale, equipment, and training of the Italian formations was mediocre. Many of the troops were Sicilians and too close to families and friends who were dejected and wearied from shortage of food and steady bombing. Many men in the coast-defence formations were elderly. Habits, unmilitary to say the least, were common.¹ The Aosta, Assietta, and Napoli Divisions, and the coast-defence units, had never been in action but the Livorno Division had been trained, in 1940, as an Assault Landing Division. Field artillery weapons were mostly antiquated, anti-tank and automatic weapons were scarce, and there was much horse-drawn transport. The coast-defence divisions were worse armed than the four field divisions. Thus in 206th Coastal Division, which held a front of 90 miles from Syracuse to Cape Scaramia—in the area of the 8th Army's landings—there were 56 field guns, 34 mortars, and 690 light and medium machine-guns. The mobile troops were little fitted to justify their name. The 'Mobile Groups' were formed round companies of obsolescent tanks (Italian CV3 and captured French R35), or of self-propelled 47-mm guns, with sometimes a troop of light artillery and some anti-tank weapons. The 'Tactical Groups' usually consisted of a Bersaglieri or Blackshirt Militia Battalion, or a tank-company, with a few guns, and sometimes some machine-gunnery and motor-cyclists.

The two German divisions were good. The Hermann Göring

Lufflotte 2. Before an inter-Service Command for the Messina Straits was established, all German A.A. units in Sicily were under command of an Air Force officer, Major-General Stahel.

¹ For example, at Lentini on 14th July, 124th Field Regiment R.A. captured some Italian tanks. There was a cache of oranges in the chamber of the gun of one of them.

Panzer Division was weak in infantry, but two of its tank battalions had (9th July) in all 99 serviceable tanks, including 13 Tigers. The third tank battalion was equipped with assault guns. 15th Panzer Grenadier Division had first been formed from reinforcement units and details, as *Division Sizilien*, and was not a standard Panzer Grenadier Division. It included Panzer Abteilung 215 with about 60 Pzkw III and IV tanks, and a Werfer unit of 36 projectors, probably of 15-cm. The German artillery amounted to about 140 field pieces, and there were plenty of anti-aircraft guns.

The Fortress Areas, or main fixed defences, were of fairly good quality, with emplaced guns of varying modernity and with organized systems of fire control. There were few permanent field-works. The general 'defence-line' was sited well inland, behind wire obstacles, and all roads leading into the interior of the island were blocked. The evidence concerning mines is conflicting, but enough were used to be treated with respect, and anti-personnel mines were found increasingly as the campaign went on.

Beach defences were scattered pill-boxes, entrenchments of various types, and wire obstacles. Artificial underwater obstacles seem to have been wanting. It was with pleasure that an Intelligence Officer of the Highland Division saw, in an air photograph, a party of women bathers at one of his assault beaches, and deduced correctly that neither off shore nor on it would there be mines, chevaux de frise, dogs' teeth and so on. In fact the enemy seems to have expected only delaying action of his coast-defence troops. Roatta and Guzzoni had reported gloomily on the island's defences; and the Italian view of the proper defensive tactics differed from the German.

The Italians believed that the Allies would land on a broad front, and that they would not be able to determine the main thrust-lines for some time. The coast-defence forces therefore were to resist to the utmost, and the 'mobile reserves' were to be held back, until they could be launched in counter-attack at points which were seen to matter. The Germans believed that they should attack the enemy decisively while he was coming ashore for then he was most vulnerable. Reserves therefore should be held close to the most likely landing points, for quick use.

These differences were partly resolved by agreement that one German division should be disposed to defend western Sicily, and one in the east and south-east. Guzzoni wished to keep 15th Panzer Grenadier Division in the east and to concentrate the Hermann Göring Division in the west but was overridden by Kesselring. On 26th June *OB Süd* came to Sicily with von Senger and advocated the opposite because the Hermann Göring Division was the more strongly armoured and could therefore be better used in the more 'tankable' terrain in the east. Neither Guzzoni nor the commander



of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division was enthusiastic for the switch, but Kesselring prevailed, though he agreed that the Panzer Grenadier Division should leave a reinforced infantry group because the Hermann Göring Division was weak in infantry.

See Map 6

Guzzoni considered Catania–Gela to be the most likely area for assault; Kesselring expected two main assaults in the south-east, and named Catania, Gela, Agrigento, and Trapani also. Map 6 shows the final layout of the Axis forces. The coastal divisions and brigades are spread round the coasts on huge fronts. 16th Corps has its H.Q. at Piazza Armerina, in south-central Sicily, with Livorno, Hermann Göring, and Napoli Divisions, spread out from west to south-east. H.Q. 12th Corps is at Corleone in west Sicily, and west of it lie Aosta, Assietta, and two-thirds of 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions. Thus Guzzoni had grouped his most mobile German division, the Hermann Göring, and his best Italian division, the Livorno, in what appeared to be the most threatened sector. But in the event the German divisions fought as a string of battle groups during the first phase of the campaign. The 6th Army's composition, in outline, on 10th July was:

12th Corps (General Mario Arisio):

- Aosta Division
- Assietta Division
- 202nd, 207th, 208th Coastal Divisions
- Three 'Mobile Groups'
- Four 'Tactical Groups'
- Two-thirds 15th Panzer Grenadier Division

16th Corps (General Carlo Rossi):

- Napoli Division
- Livorno Division (from Army Reserve 10th July)
- 206th, 213th Coastal Divisions
- 18th and 19th Coastal Brigades
- Five 'Mobile Groups'
- Four 'Tactical Groups'
- Hermann Göring Panzer Division
- One-third 15th Panzer Grenadier Division.

The next development occurred on 13th July. Hitler was now preparing to send two more German divisions to Sicily. A superior German headquarters seemed necessary and H.Q. 14th Panzer Corps was sent over and began its duties on 18th July. Its commander was General Hans-Valentin Hube, who was formally subordinate

to H.Q. 6th Army.¹ However, the Germans besides being suspicious of Italian troops in general, believed that those in Sicily had now virtually collapsed. On 14th July Hitler sent to Kesselring verbal and very secret 'special instructions'. 14th Panzer Corps was to take full control of all operations in close co-operation with von Senger; the Italian command was to be 'unobtrusively excluded'; any reliable Italian formations were to be split up and taken under German command.

The German commanders in Sicily did little to hide their contempt and disregard of their allies, but nevertheless preserved bare appearances. von Senger, limited after Hube's arrival to his duties as a liaison officer, was fairly tactful. At conferences decisions were taken, seemingly in concert, which the Germans had already decided upon. On 16th July Guzzoni, tactful also, delegated to Hube full tactical command of any sectors where there were German troops and conceded this principle for the future. On the 22nd Hube proposed bluntly that he should take command of the whole front. Guzzoni demurred but on the 30th agreed—it will be remembered that on the 25th the Fascist regime had collapsed. On the 30th too the General Staff of the Italian Army authorized Guzzoni to entrust the command of the whole front in Sicily to Hube, and the formal transfer occurred on 2nd August.

One other important German appointment must be mentioned. On 14th July Kesselring made Colonel Ernst-Günther Baade German Commandant, Messina Straits.² The principal units under his command were all the A.A. artillery in the Straits, 771st Engineer Landing Battalion, and part of 616th Naval Artillery Regiment. Under his orders by the end of July were the German Naval Officer in Charge, Sea Transport, Messina Straits, Fregattenkapitän von Liebenstein, and the German Naval Commander, Messina Straits Defences, Kapitän zur See von Kamptz. On the 19th July the organization of 6th Army became in outline:

12th Corps (General Francesco Zingales, from 12th July):

Aosta Division

Assietta Division

202nd, 207th, 208th Coastal Divisions* and 136th Coastal Regt.

¹ Hube had joined the German Army in 1909, and had served with troops during World War I. He commanded 14th Panzer Corps in Russia from October 1942. In March 1943 this Corps H.Q., under his command, was given the task of re-forming and training, in France and the Low Countries, certain formations which had survived the disasters of Stalingrad.

² Baade had served in Africa and had commanded a regiment of 15th Panzer Division in 1942. By the end of 1942 he was on the staff of the German General, Rome, and by May 1943 he was in Sicily to organize the miscellaneous German Army units there.

16th Corps (Rossi):
 Napoli Division†
 Livorno Division†
 206th, 213th Coastal Divisions*
 18th† and 19th Coastal Brigades.

14th Panzer Corps (Hube):
 15th Panzer Grenadier Division
 29th Panzer Grenadier Division (in transit)
 Hermann Göring Panzer Division
 3rd and 4th Parachute Regiments, 1st Parachute
 (Fallschirmjäger) Division.

Notes

* 206th, 207th, 213th Coastal Divisions were by this time divisions only in name.

† Napoli Division one only in name: the other formations referred to were very greatly reduced in strength and fighting value. 'Mobile Groups' and 'Tactical Groups' were probably absorbed in higher formations.

(ii)

The air forces' part in the Sicilian campaign had begun before the end of the campaign in Africa. Those engaged in the continuous war at sea indirectly paved the way for the invasion of Sicily, and the strategic bombers which attacked airfields in and within range of Sicily, directly so. And on the ground in Africa preparations had gone ahead long before. For example many new airfields in Africa were made, and captured airfields were taken into use, to suit the requirements of the invasion. Some of the period of preparation for Sicily coincided with the culmination of air operations in the African campaign. Thus air commanders and staffs were as busy as could be, air forces were moving here and there to re-group, and it was difficult to collect the key officers of the three Services at widely separated centres of planning. It is not surprising that there were some naval and army complaints that it was hard to get firm and precise information of what air support to expect.

Flexibility and concentration were main principles of Air Marshal Tedder's planning. The land front in Sicily was narrow from the airman's point of view, and if the best possible use was to be made of air resources, it was necessary to treat them as a single air force. For this reason Tedder did not give separate tactical air elements to the Eastern and Western Task Forces, and he disregarded the boundaries between the 8th Army and 7th U.S. Army.

The diagram on pages 72-73 shows the deployment of the air forces for the invasion just before 10th July. Excluding coastal

MME—C

aircraft and air transports, they amounted to 3,462 aircraft of which about 2,510 were serviceable.¹ This diagram and total represent an immense programme of movement of units, equipment and stores: from the United Kingdom and the United States, and in Africa from the main maintenance areas to loading ports, to say nothing of all the activities to do with the refitting of many squadrons. Malta gives an example. The island was to be the principal base for fighters during the invasion until alternative airfields in Sicily had been captured and made serviceable. This meant expanding and improving the radar coverage and providing communications, airfield space, and accommodation to maintain and operate thirty squadrons of single-engine aircraft. American engineers, it is true, built an airfield on neighbouring Gozo in the amazingly short time of seventeen days in June. But Malta was heavily burdened nevertheless because, besides her garrison, she was due to house, for varying periods, several Headquarters and a division of troops, in fact a necessary multitude of people and things.² It was in June that King George VI was spending a fortnight with his sea, land, and air forces in North Africa, and on 20th June he visited Malta in the cruiser *Aurora* (not since 1911 had the Sovereign landed in Malta). On 15th April 1942 the King had awarded Malta the George Cross, but that he should come to the island was valued as a high honour and a sympathetic encouragement.

The total air array of the Axis did not match Mediterranean Air Command. At the beginning of July there were in Sardinia, Sicily, and all Italy about 1,750 aircraft (excluding air transports and coastal aircraft) of which about 960 were German. Since the middle of May the Germans had very considerably strengthened their air forces in the Mediterranean, but because the *Luftwaffe* believed that Greece and Crete were the likeliest Allied objectives these areas had benefited rather than the triangle Sardinia-Sicily-Italy. Moreover, though all the German bombers in the Central Mediterranean were based in Italy, only half were within effective range of Sicily, because the rest were disposed with an eye to Sardinia, Corsica, and southern France. In early July about 775 operational German aircraft were within effective range of Sicily (and 63 more bombers were on the point of arriving), of which 289 (143 serviceable) were in the island,

¹ These figures include three Royal Canadian Air Force Wellington squadrons on loan to Northwest African Strategic Air Force, and twelve American Liberator squadrons on loan to U.S. Ninth Air Force. All the squadrons came from the United Kingdom.

² On 2nd December 1942 Malta had reverted from the direct control of Middle East. The Governor and Commander-in-Chief became supreme commander in the island, but in general was to be guided by the policies of the Middle East Defence Committee. Subject to the position of the Governor, Service commanders in Malta were to remain under command of their respective Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East. This is a bald summary of complicated detail.

as were 145 (63) Italian aircraft. Three-quarters of these 434 (206) aircraft in Sicily were fighters and fighter-bombers.¹

The principal tasks of the Allied Air Forces during the preparatory period (mid-May to the first week of July) were to bomb the Axis airfields and communications, and to reconnoitre the whole Mediterranean area. The Northwest African Strategic Air Force and the Northwest African Photographic Reconnaissance Wing therefore deserve first mention. N.A.S.A.F.'s activities, in tabular form, were:

16th May to the night 5th/6th June	Normal strategic operations without special application to Sicily.
6th June to 12th/13th June	Operations mainly to help Northwest African Tactical Air Force in its attacks upon Pantelleria and Lampedusa; some sorties against Sicilian airfields.
13th June to 2nd/3rd July	Again normal strategic operations, but directed mainly against the Axis air forces.
3rd to 9th July	Systematic attacks upon the Axis air bases nearest the areas chosen by the Allies for landings in Sicily. ²

Bombers of Middle East Air Command and Malta Air Command also took a small part in this programme. As had become customary the American Fortresses, Mitchells and Marauders bombed by day, the Fortresses being of particular value on account of their larger bombloads. The British Wellingtons of N.A.S.A.F. (including, from 1st June, the squadrons of M.E.A.C.'s No. 205 Group R.A.F.) bombed by night and sometimes American Liberators from M.E.A.C. joined in by day. During the first phase the targets, excluding those in Pantelleria and Lampedusa and shipping and ports, were mainly

¹ There were other important changes in *Luftwaffe* command in the Mediterranean area after the fall of Tunisia. On 1st June when Richthofen took over command of *Luftflotte 2* its area of responsibility was reduced to Italy and the Central Mediterranean only. The newly-formed *LuftwaffenKommando Südost* (of *Luftflotte* status), with General Martin Fiebig in command, took over south-eastern Europe including Greece, Crete, Rumania and Croatia, and *Fliegerkorps X* was transferred to it.

To strengthen the headquarters staffs within *Luftflotte 2* energetic and experienced officers were brought in and new subordinate commanders appointed. General Alfred Buelowius took over *Fliegerkorps II* from Harlinghausen. Lieut-General Alfred Mahneke took over from General Osterkamp as *Fliegerführer Sicily* (his Italian counterpart being General Monti). Colonel Dietrich Peltz became Commander of the Mediterranean Bomber Force (*Fernkampfführer Luftflotte 2*), a new command under *Fliegerkorps II* comprising all the bombers in Sicily, Italy and Southern France. It was Peltz who introduced concentrated bombing at night, the maximum number of bombers available concentrating their attacks within a short space of time against a single target. At the end of the Sicilian Campaign he was succeeded by Colonel Walter Storp.

To restore efficiency and morale, and to speed up the supply of fighter aircraft and pilots, Major-General Adolf Galland, 'Inspector of Fighters and Ground Attack Aircraft', was detached from *OKL* to the Mediterranean area.

² The sorties flown by the Mediterranean Air Command, during the periods outlined above, are set out in the tables on pages 74-75.

airfields in Sardinia, and in western Sicily: Castelvetro, Borizzo (Trapani), Sciacca, and Comiso in the south-east; and in southern Italy the Naples group and Grosseto, and then Grottaglie and Foggia which were the main targets for M.E.A.C. In the second phase the sorties flown against airfields which were mostly in western Sicily and none in Sardinia, were barely one-eighth of those against these targets in the previous phase. In the third phase Catania in Sicily got its share, and in the fourth Gerbini, Comiso, and Biscari in the east were attacked, also Sciacca, Borizzo, and Milo (both near Trapani) in the west. These targets, during the fourth phase, occupied over four-fifths of the whole bomber effort, although some sorties were flown against the principal airfields in Sardinia.

Specific results of all these operations are, as always, hard to come by, but heavy loss and damage can be claimed confidently.¹

A general picture of results in Sicily is of this sort. Airfields were continually damaged and air operations, say of fighters in defence, and of reconnaissance aircraft, were continually interrupted. Moreover because the civilian labourers, who were supposed to repair the damage, became increasingly terrified or apathetic as a consequence of bombing (though the attacks were not directed at their homes and lives), repair-work became slovenly and spasmodic. Palermo was greatly damaged, much railway rolling-stock was destroyed, and traffic in general became unpredictable. As a specific example of success, American Liberators from Middle East, on 9th July, destroyed the *Luftwaffe's* central telephone exchange at Taormina. A more damaging blow to the enemy's air defence, at a better moment for the Allies, is hard to imagine. In the week before D-Day too, as further examples, N.A.A.F. and M.E.A.C. flew 1,000 sorties against the Gerbini airfields, one attack, on 5th July, being by 100 Fortresses and 136 Mitchells and Marauders. 624 sorties were flown

¹ *Axis aircraft destroyed or damaged on the ground*

The Italian figures given below are derived from certain contemporary, and in some instances contradictory, German and Italian reports. Other reports refer only to 'several' or 'numerous' Italian aircraft losses. The Italian figures are therefore incomplete and represent only those losses about which we can be reasonably certain.

The German figures do not include 12 aircraft destroyed and 13 damaged on the Sedes (Salonika) and Eleusis (near Athens) airfields in Greece by Liberators of the U.S. Ninth Air Force from M.E.A.C. on 24th and 27th June.

	German		Italian	
	Destroyed	Damaged	Destroyed	Damaged
Sardinia	23	8	11	9
Sicily	58	31	55	88
Italy	39	27	39	6
Location unknown	2	—	—	14
	122	66	105	117

To this account must be added the enemy aircraft destroyed in the air by the bomber aircrews and escort fighters. It is impossible to assess the exact numbers and they have been included in the totals of enemy losses given elsewhere, but they were all grist to the mill.

against Comiso and Biscari. By 10th July indeed only Sciacca and Milo airfields, in all Sicily, remained altogether serviceable. Half the enemy's aircraft in Sicily had been forced to leave the island. The consequences will be noticed later. In sum, the enemy's air force, communications, and morale were being steadily ground down by the implacable persistence of successful air attack. On the ground, the arrival of the enemy's troops may be almost a sort of relief but his aircraft come and go, come and go, with malignant monotony.

The result of the three-Service operation against Pantelleria was the fortress-island's swift fall. The British had been on the brink of assaulting this island, 120 miles west of Malta, in January 1941, but had given up the operation as impracticable, and then greater events had elbowed it aside. But the Allies, with the invasion of Sicily in prospect, wanted Pantelleria as an extra base for fighters, and saw no reason why the enemy should keep a radar outpost and a vantage-point from which to attack Sicily-bound convoys. Between 8th and 10th May a formidable three-day air attack had been made on the island to prevent its use in the enemy's plans for evacuating Tunisia, for he was believed to have such plans. On 18th May the bombing began again and from 6th June was progressively stepped up, all the squadrons of N.A.S.A.F. (except the Wellingtons), N.A.T.B.F., and the specially reinforced U.S. XII A.S.C. taking part and multiplying the attacks which from 7th June were almost continuous. Between 6th-11th June 5,324 tons of bombs were dropped on Pantelleria in 3,712 bomber and fighter-bomber sorties.¹ Cruisers and destroyers bombarded, and on the 11th assault convoys from Sfax and Sousse, under Admiral McGrigor, arrived, bearing an assault force from 1st British Infantry Division (Major-General W. Clutterbuck).² After a heavy air and naval bombardment the island was summoned to surrender. There was no immediate answer, the troops landed, and then the Governor, Admiral Pavesi, capitulated. On the 12th Lampedusa and two smaller islands were captured.

Pantelleria was a brain-child of Mussolini's, conceived in 1937, as a counter to Malta much as the British in the 19th century had conceived Alderney as a counter to Cherbourg. By 1943 the island had acquired strong fixed defences and was garrisoned by the Brigata Mista Pantelleria, detachments from Guzzoni's 6th Army amounting to 12,000 men. The Allied bombardments virtually stupefied the garrison.³ The island's fall caused the Germans no lasting concern

¹ In all, since mid-May 6,400 tons of bombs were dropped in 5,218 bomber and fighter-bomber sorties. In April 1942 the enemy, at the height of his attacks on Malta, had dropped 6,700 tons of bombs in 9,500 sorties. The main target area on Pantelleria was eight square miles.

² Ground Controlled Interception stations installed in L.C.T.s accompanied the assault convoys to control the fighters protecting them. So successful was this first use of seaborne G.C.I. stations that the technique was adopted for the invasion of Sicily.

³ Italian sources declare that only 35 men were killed.

but confused them about Allied intentions, and still further lowered their opinion of Italian fighting value. Mussolini was shocked and furious, but *Comando Supremo*, though gloomy, was realistic. Ambrosio did not change his opinion that Sicily was the first big Allied objective. He regarded Pantelleria as giving a foretaste of Allied tactics, but was apparently unable to produce any new ideas to meet them. A tactical argument, with many platitudes but without conclusions, went on between Italians and Germans.

We pass from bombing to reconnaissance, the province of N.A.P.R.W. which demonstrated the excellence of the camera as an instrument of war.¹ Each port which harboured enemy warships was photographed daily, and even the meanest port at least once weekly. Information of air dispositions is significant only if gathered from a wide area within the same short space of time, because air forces can change their positions so quickly. Therefore each week, within four hours, the airfields in Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Italy, and the western Balkans, were photographed. There was special reconnaissance of harbours, industrial areas, and the Axis L. of C. areas in general, to serve the needs of the bombers. 10,000 square miles of Sicily were photographed with special coverage of beaches and beach defences, and the war-diaries of many army units preserve copies of fine vertical and oblique photographs, a fact which shows that these were usefully distributed and widely appreciated. 1,086 sorties were flown from north-west Africa and Malta on land reconnaissances between 16th May and 9th July.

A special air operation in this period requires separate mention. On the night 20th/21st June 60 Lancasters of R.A.F. Bomber Command in the U.K. attacked Friedrichshafen on Lake Constance. The aircraft flew on to Algiers in North Africa, there refuelled, and on the night 23rd/24th June 52 of them bombed Spezia and then flew on to England. This was the first shuttle-bombing raid by R.A.F. Bomber Command. Its further attacks on northern Italy in July and August will be noticed later.

The Italian records known to us tell virtually nothing of the Italian Air Force during the period which we have been considering and German records are sketchy. German bombers were used mainly against Allied shipping in the Western Mediterranean, and in the ports of Algeria and Tunisia. A rare, and successful diversion was a destructive raid on 28th June against the airfield on Pantelleria, recently occupied by the Allies.

The German fighters were occupied mainly in defence of Sardinia, Sicily, and southern Italy, but took the offensive on at least two

¹ A detachment of N.A.P.R.W. also operated from Malta in close association with No. 248 Wing (coastal duties) which included No. 683 P.R. Squadron—the unit responsible for photographing damage caused by Allied bombing.

occasions in countering Allied raids on Pantelleria, and increasingly against Malta. German reconnaissance aircraft covered wide areas of the Mediterranean but they describe the results as 'patchy' owing to the strong Allied fighter- and anti-aircraft defence.

Between 16th May and dusk on 9th July 323 German aircraft were destroyed by the Allies. Except for the figure of 105 Italian aircraft destroyed on the ground Italian losses were conjectural but certainly heavy. The Allies lost some 250 aircraft, but it must be remembered that the Mediterranean Air Command was carrying the war into enemy territory, and in the period given above flew 42,227 sorties. The next phase of air operations is associated with the actual Allied landings in Sicily.

(iii)

On 5th July the 1st Canadian Division, bound for Sicily from the Clyde, passed Gibraltar, and this chapter can return to the sea and the invasion convoys. At about this time the responsibility borne by Admiral Cunningham and Air Chief Marshal Tedder was tremendous because only the naval and air forces could ensure the safe and timely arrival in Sicily of the expedition. General Eisenhower's responsibility of course stood unchanged and supreme. And so the positions of the headquarters from which these high officers were to exercise command mattered greatly and, by reason of actual circumstances, were very difficult to fix. During the earliest phase of the invasion the Navy would be in complete control of the land and sea forces, and everything depended upon naval communications. General Eisenhower therefore wished these to be perfect. Malta alone could provide something of this standard in time, but the island was not a practicable site for a General Headquarters because it was crowded, and not well enough served by submarine cable.¹ The main air forces, and land formations which were not sharing in the assault were in Africa, and Africa therefore seemed to be the best place for the headquarters which controlled them. So General Eisenhower's Main Headquarters remained in Algiers, and a command post was placed at La Marsa, near Tunis, where were H.Q.s of Tedder's Mediterranean Air Command, and of Alexander's 15th Army Group. Cunningham's Naval Headquarters was set up in Malta, and he himself joined it on 4th July. Eisenhower went to Malta on 7th July for the period of the landings, and was joined by Vice-Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined

¹ Three cables were working between Malta and Alexandria, and one between Malta and Tripoli. All cables westward from Malta had been broken although, surprisingly, two to Sicily were intact. There were four other Mediterranean cables which could be diverted, but repairs and diversions would take more time than was available.

Operations. Alexander opened a Tactical Headquarters for 15th Army Group in Malta on the 8th. Tedder felt bound to stay at his headquarters in Tunisia, but sent Air Vice-Marshal Wigglesworth as his representative to Eisenhower. Air Marshal Coningham too was in Malta to supervise tactical air operations. The British Chiefs of Staff did not like this rather patchwork arrangement for joint command, but admitted that nothing better was practicable. Montgomery's headquarters moved to Malta at the end of June; Patton's were at Bizerta, but he himself embarked in Admiral Hewitt's flagship, U.S.S. *Monrovia*.

See Maps 4 and 5

The actual landings on the shores of Sicily were, as far as fighting goes, rather an anti-climax. The enemy's coast defence troops made little effort to hold the beaches or the immediate hinterland, since the Italian tactical plan did not contemplate a pitched battle on this field. But the future could not be known to the men in the various Allied Headquarters ashore or in their ships at sea, or in aircraft. All expected a hard fight.¹ The British medical services were prepared to receive about 10,000 battle-casualties in the first week (in fact 1,517 were received); and the orders of most of the army formations outlined action to mitigate catastrophes such as the sinking of key vessels and the loss of the units embarked in them. These examples show that no walkover was imagined. The weather was an anxiety in itself. On the 9th July the seasonably good weather broke, to the point of threatening the ability of the force to land early next morning. Eisenhower and Cunningham were full of anxiety but '... with rather fearful hearts ... decided to let matters take their course', as Cunningham has written. Meteorologists and the weather-wise expected an improvement.

On the 8th and 9th July convoys from east and west were, in Cunningham's words '... converging as if along the supporting strands of some huge spider's web upon Malta', in fact mostly due south of it. On 6th July the Fast Assault convoy from the east, carrying 5th and 50th Divisions and 231st Infantry Brigade, sailed from Port Said. There had sailed also a slow convoy carrying heavy equipment and stores. From the west were approaching Fast Assault convoys carrying 1st Canadian Division from the Clyde, and 1st and 45th U.S. Divisions from Algiers and Oran. There were slow convoys also. All these convoys were of the ship-to-shore type, and were composed generally speaking of large landing ships (L.S.I.) and

¹ '... there was really still nothing for me to do, but I felt very tensed up wondering what the morrow would bring forth. I suppose for this reason, I never felt sea sick ...' Major-General D. N. Wimberley, H.M.S. *Largs*, 9th July.

store- and vehicle-ships. The routes were those, close to the African coast, which had been used for through traffic since the reopening of the Mediterranean. This was one of the great rewards of the campaign which had ended in Africa seven weeks earlier.

On the 8th and 9th the 3rd U.S. Division sailed from Bizerta and Tunis, and the 51st Highland Division from Sfax and Malta. These convoys were of the shore-to-shore type, consisting mainly of landing-craft, but with some medium and small L.S.I. as well. They followed more direct routes than the big-ship convoys.

At this stage everything afloat was under Admiral Cunningham's direct command. The main naval covering force, Sir Algernon Willis's Force H, was split. Its 1st Division, reinforced by American cruisers and destroyers, and for the passage of the Sicilian Narrows by the cruisers *Aurora* and *Penelope*, covered the convoys coming from the west. The 2nd Division covered the convoys from the Middle East. The 3rd Division (Force Z), stood by at short notice at Algiers. Early on the 9th July the 1st and 2nd Divisions made an arranged rendezvous 240 miles south-east of Malta, and then together stood northward to maintain a covering position, and to make a deceptive lunge towards the coast of Greece. This lunge, and the routes of the assault convoys to some extent, were part of an ingenious plan, to suggest to the enemy a descent by 7th U.S. Army upon southern France from North Africa, and by an imaginary British 12th Army upon the Balkans from the Middle East. The part of 'Major Martin's' corpse in this plan has been noticed earlier.

The voyages of all convoys had passed, and continued, with remarkably little incident. The fast convoys were unscathed, but U-boats sank three ships of the slow United Kingdom convoy off the French North African coast. Few men died, but much of the Canadian Divisional Headquarters' signal equipment went to the bottom as well as some 500 vehicles the loss of which was to be keenly felt later. Northwest African Coastal Air Force, No. 201 (Naval Co-operation) Group R.A.F., Air Defences Eastern Mediterranean, and Malta Air Command, all had a hand in the air cover which gave virtual immunity from air attack and reconnaissance.

At noon, the appointed time, on 9th July the British convoys from the United Kingdom and the Middle East made their rendezvous about 50 miles south of Malta. Here too, in his headquarters ship *Antwerp*, came Admiral Ramsay, naval commander of the Eastern Task Force, who now took direct command of that force. At 2 p.m. the American convoys from Algiers and Oran made their rendezvous, also south of Malta. Admiral Hewitt, in U.S.S. *Monrovia*, then took direct command of the Western Task Force. After the rendezvous all these ship-to-shore convoys began the final approach to their several assault areas. The ships for Avola and the east shores of the Pachino

peninsula passed fifty miles to the east of Malta, and those for the west of the Pachino peninsula (Canadian Division) and for the American assault areas, passed close west of the island of Gozo. Besides the ship-to-shore convoys, there were the shore-to-shore convoys of the landing craft. The British convoys from Sfax passed through a position forty miles east of Malta itself, and the whole turned north for the Pachino peninsula. The Americans from Bizerta and Tunis, bound for Licata, followed their big ships west of Gozo. In the Eastern Task Force, in convoy, there were some 182 ships and 126 craft; in the Western Task Force some 30 ships and 218 craft. Many additional ships and craft, upon their several occasions, merged in a tremendous concourse of shipping, either at the rendezvous or during the final approach, and the figures just given are a small part of the ships and craft employed in the whole invasion.

During the 9th the wind freshened from the north-west until by evening it had reached Force 6 (a strong breeze of 25–31 miles an hour). This wind raised a short steep sea which greatly affected the landing-craft, slowing them down and driving them to leeward. Admiral Cunningham had all along been worried by the fact that the speed of convoys of landing craft was at best low, which placed surprise and even the force of the landings at risk. He wrote ‘. . . it appeared to be beyond the wildest expectation that he [the enemy] should be unaware of the L.C.T. convoys which must be within 20 miles of his coast at sunset’ because of ‘. . . the necessity for their arrival at the assault beaches well before first light to provide the supporting arms the army needed . . .’ Now the weather was making the calculated low speed (not more than $5\frac{1}{2}$ knots could be counted on) lower, although the craft were being hard-driven. Some difficult decisions for commanders were in prospect: for example Admiral Troubridge, in command of the force for Avola, was making up his mind to launch his assault even if the craft with supporting arms were absent. The troops in the landing-craft (for twelve hours at least) were nearly all sea-sick, cramped, cold, and—in the more exposed positions—wet. However, shortly before midnight the wind began to ease, by 2.45 a.m. on the 10th it was slight, and by morning it had fallen. But a tiresome swell and surf persisted, especially west of the Pachino peninsula. The convoys stood on towards the Release Positions, marked by beacon submarines, some five to seven miles off the beaches. Shortly after midnight there passed over some of the ships the aircraft and towed gliders of the British 1st Airlanding Brigade and the American 505th Parachute Regiment. They were flying below 500 feet to baffle the hostile radar stations, and the strong wind and other factors were disturbing their navigation.

What reports had the enemy of all this movement? Aircraft saw five convoys north of Malta steering N.N.W. at about 5.30 p.m. on

the 9th, and between 7.10 p.m. and 8.30 two further groups of ships including warships were seen. There were reports of two east-bound convoys as far away as Bône and Tabarka at 9 p.m., and at 11.10 p.m., nearer home, of 20 ships approaching Cape Passero. Guzzoni 'stood to' his garrison between 5.40 p.m. and 7.30, and at 10.20 p.m. German Naval Command confirmed that 'the enemy has begun an extensive invasion of Sicily . . .' It is improbable that the bad weather of the night 9th/10th caused the enemy to 'turn thankfully in their beds saying "tonight at any rate they can't come"'—an impression later and wrongly recorded by both Cunningham and Montgomery.

All this movement was leading up to the operation of landing the equivalent of sixty-seven battalions of infantry, a due proportion of supporting arms such as artillery, engineers, signals, and medical units, and their equipment, for immediate and possibly severe fighting. The landings were to be on twenty-six main beaches lying at irregular intervals along about one hundred and five miles of coast. Two tables at pages 69–71 list these beaches and the main infantry units. The events on each beach were bound to be various, corresponding to the variety of physical and tactical circumstances, but there was in the whole operation a pattern, to be distinguished however from the plan. In other words methods, in an opposed landing, are more uniform, and more important than probably they are in any other operation of war except landings from the air. The following paragraphs are a short digression to illustrate something of this technique, as it was in 1943, in relation to the plan. The examples are pruned of much detail but are reasonably typical of British practice. It may be that ' . . . we weary the unlearned who need not know so much; and trouble the learned, who know it already . . .' their remedy is to skip.

In a raid a force intends to achieve limited objectives and then re-embark and retire, but a great landing is only the first stage of extended operations in territory held by an enemy. The far reaching design dictates the organization of the land force into assault formations, follow-up formations, and build-up formations, but this classification is not rigid. In the Sicilian operation, broadly speaking, the assault divisions were the British 5th, 50th, 51st, and 1st Canadian Divisions, and the U.S. 1st, 3rd, and 45th. The British 46th, 78th, and U.S. 9th and 2nd Armoured Divisions may be termed, indifferently, follow-up or build-up formations. In the Sicilian plan the assault formations were to perform, besides the tasks proper to their

name, most of the tasks theoretically given to follow-up formations: in general to seize the beaches, and positions which would secure them, and the maintenance areas; and to seize airfields, ports and centres of communication. The remaining formations would arrive (build-up) to join in completing the object of the whole operation: the conquest of the island.

This notion of assault—follow-up—build-up appears at all levels from the division to the battalion and if one uses it when following the confusing details of the landings, these are seen to follow the pattern.

In the assault all eyes were on the beaches, vital fixed points when so much else was moving. If anything at all was to land, except by good luck, there had to be accurate foreknowledge of many things of the following sort. Whether craft could run up onto the beach, or whether they would ground off shore, leaving a gap—the ‘water-gap’—between their lowered ramps and dry land. The length and depth of this gap were crucial: if it was short enough for ramps to bridge, or shallow enough for men and waterproofed vehicles to wade, well and good.¹ If not, more elaborate devices had to be used, e.g. naval pontoon causeways. Further points were natural and artificial obstacles off beaches and on them; surf; gradients on and off shore; whether beach-surfaces were hard or soft or fairly firm; of sand, shingle, rock or mixtures. And so on, through a long list. Air photographs told a great deal, but most of the facts had to be discovered at first hand by special Beach Reconnaissance Parties who landed from submarines by night in collapsible canoes (‘folbots’).² In this very skilled and dangerous service, by the end of March 1943, eleven out of thirty-one scarce specialists had been lost. Loss at this rate threatened to outstrip replacements. In the outcome, the hard-won knowledge of the twenty-six beaches proved to be sufficient and accurate.

The Fast Assault convoys were timed to arrive at the Release Positions at 12.15 a.m. on 10th July to allow two and a half hours for lowering troops and assembling flotillas of landing-craft, a run-in of more than an hour, and first landings at 2.45 a.m. Troops embarked in assault landing-craft by methods varying with the ships and craft. Such might be loading at the rail before lowering, or by scramble net, or by jumping from sally-ports which ‘was one of the most unpleasant ordeals that the troops had to face’.

¹ In a few words, to waterproof a vehicle meant to fit extension-pieces to the exhaust-pipe and to essential air inlets; to seal holes, crevices, certain exposed joints and working parts, and electrical equipment. Plastic waterproof materials were used. Water-proofed vehicles, according to type, could wade depths up to six feet. They could run only a short distance without damage. Vehicles were usually partly water-proofed in units and completed by R.E.M.E.

² A usual party consisted of two naval officers and four ratings, and one officer and two men of the Royal Engineers.

At each Release Position the assault landing-craft (usually L.C.A.) carrying the troops to be first on shore had to be marshalled in flotillas under guides in motor-launches. These guides would then shepherd the flotillas as far as sonic buoys which, on the 9th, had been moored about two miles off each beach by beacon submarines. The buoys were set to surface early on the 10th, and to begin to send out their signals. Where an extra help for an accurate touch-down was needed, a folding canoe would show a light to seaward from close inshore. Somewhere near the sonic buoys the final run-in began, the landing-craft taking up the formations best adapted to land their loads of troops in the way required by the tactical plan. Usually each landing-craft carried the equivalent of a platoon of infantry. In 5th Division, landing on three beaches at Cassibile, this very first phase was planned in the following general form. Beach 44 was given to 17th Brigade; Beaches 45 and 46 to 15th Brigade. On 44 the first troops ashore were to be No. 3 Commando, and a company of 6th Seaforth; on 45 two companies of 1st York and Lancaster, and on 46 two companies of 1st King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. This would be at 2.45 a.m. By 3.30 a.m. three more landings would have been made: two more companies of the Seaforth, and three of 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers on 44; two more companies each of the York and Lancaster and K.O.Y.L.I. on 45 and 46. By 4.15 a.m. there would have been three further landings, bringing the remainder of the Seaforth and Royal Scots Fusiliers, and a third battalion, 2nd Northamptons to 44. To 45 and 46 would have come a third battalion, 1st Green Howards. The whole of this very first phase would occupy about one and a half hours, and during it some 57 assault landing-craft (L.C.A.), 1 mechanized landing-craft (L.C.M.), 10 large infantry landing-craft (L.C.I.), and 12 tank landing-craft (L.C.T.) would be used.¹ Among the infantry would land engineer, medical, and signal detachments, and naval Beach Masters and army Landing Officers with men of the Beach Parties, which had multiple duties—part rehearsed, part furious improvisation—in ordering the hurly-burly on each beach, and getting empty craft away. Imagination can easily picture the scene of controlled confusion in the darkness turning to half-light, when each had to look out for himself as well as think for others and the Devil, in various shapes, had a hard hand for the hindmost.

Not much artillery could be landed for three or four hours. Therefore supporting landing-craft accompanied the other craft, ready to lay smoke, or if they were gun landing-craft (L.C.G.) to give covering fire from the two 4.7 inch naval guns which each mounted, or to fire salvos of rockets. Gunboats, destroyers, cruisers, and monitors were

¹ For the correct short titles of landing ships and craft, and some technical details see Appendix 3.

ready to engage targets, mostly pre-determined, when surprise had been lost and when called upon. 5th Division, for example, had the help of seven supporting landing-craft, one cruiser, up to five destroyers, a monitor, and a gunboat. Some 14 targets had been chosen.¹

At a time fixed in accordance with each formation's plan, for example by 5th Division at 3.45 a.m., a further stage of the landing would open. The landing-craft used in the very first stage would have left or be leaving the beaches, running out to begin a ferry-service for men and material. But meanwhile, in 'ship-to-shore' landings (as were all except those of 51st Highland and 3rd U.S. Divisions) the big 250-ton landing-craft (L.C.I.(L)) had berthed alongside the transports (L.S.I. large, medium, or small), and to them were transhipped the units or parts of units, to be put ashore directly, to reinforce or to sustain the battle. This, it was to be hoped, would be developing like any attack on dry land. Except that in this attack which had, one might say, one foot in sea and one on shore, supporting artillery would be very thin. In five hours from the outset one regiment of field guns (usually self-propelled), in a division, might be ashore and would have to suffice for the day. Probably a few tanks would be ashore as well. For every reason it was pressing to start up on the beaches the machinery prepared to handle quickly and methodically everything that was landed. Therefore in the L.C.I.(L) there were detachments of the combined soldier-sailor units called Beach Groups or Beach Bricks, specially trained and equipped for this work.² Also in the offing were tank landing-craft (L.C.T.), waiting until the beaches that best suited them had been chosen, and in them usually would be found guns or tanks. Vehicles, as a rule in these landings, were in L.C.T. timed to arrive on the scene two and a half hours later than the Fast Assault Convoys. Tank landing-ships carried or towed pontoons to bridge the 'water-gap' where necessary. All the craft mentioned would be heading for the shore in ordered sequence, and the assault landing-craft would now be occupied in ferrying. Thus in 5th Division 49 craft were to land 700 men an hour allowing for turn-rounds. From the beginning every group of craft strove to work to a tight time-table but no human skill or foresight could eliminate all hitches or delays.

¹ As a rough guide one 6-inch or 8-inch cruiser was considered to be the equivalent of one medium regiment of artillery, a destroyer of up to two field batteries. Ranges: cruiser, 19-29,000 yards; destroyer 16-20,000 yards. R.A. Forward Observation Officers, and Bombardment Liaison Officers had been trained to work with H.M. Ships.

A L.C.R. carried 792 rockets, and usually fired salvos of about 30.

² Broadly speaking the British Beach Group was an infantry battalion, plus detachments of signals, engineers, A.A. artillery, and the Army's Services. The Naval component included signals, beach party, and boat-repair section. This component, though integrated with the Group, remained under naval command. An R.A.F. component might be added. The American Group was built round three engineer battalions. The naval components were under Army command. For further detail see Chapter IV, pp. 139-40.

When the enemy's gun-fire had been silenced by the bombarding warships or by successes ashore, the whole concourse of ships and craft would move from Release Positions closer in to shore, and anchor. From this stage the whole business of build-up would begin to hum. Protection of the anchorages was vital. Patrols against submarines and E-boats would be set up to seaward and on the flanks, and smoke-screens could be laid to screen the ships from enemy guns which might come to life or be brought up ashore, or from aircraft. Overhead swarmed fighters from Malta, Gozo, and Pantelleria. Far to seaward, Admiral Willis's Force H in the Ionian Sea and Force Z (Captain C. H. L. Woodhouse) west of Sicily, were protecting the whole operation from interference by major surface warships.

These paragraphs have tried only to give an impression of the early stages of the landing, and to illustrate some of the thousands of details, exactly planned weeks in advance, which make up an approach to battle from the sea. This rigidly planned approach is essential because in no other operation of war have brigade and divisional commanders less means of controlling their battle in a vital stage. Since so many things can go wrong in landings, and the course of events is so unpredictable, there is small profit in describing the planned programmes further. It was hoped that, in general terms, after about twelve hours from the first landings divisions would be firmly on their feet ashore, though with few guns and tanks, and with only some of their most important vehicles.

We now turn to pass the main events of the landings in a quick review.

In 5th Division's area of Cassibile the Special Air Service Squadron landed at the right place but twenty minutes late, while half of 3rd Commando reached its right beach almost on time. Each unit silenced a battery. The first flight of 17th Brigade landed well south of their beach, though nearly on time. The following flights found the beach, but were up to an hour late. Beach 44 was taken by 5 a.m., and the Seaforth attacked Cassibile, followed later by the Northamp-ton, while the Royal Scots Fusiliers turned towards Syracuse, which the brigade took in the evening.

15th Brigade's first flights, on the contrary, landed far from the correct position on Beaches 45 and 46, nearly an hour late, and the following flights did little better. Italian guns proved troublesome until neutralized by the destroyer *Eskimo*, but by 10 a.m. the brigade was established in the Cassibile area, and the beaches were being organized for build-up.

Twenty miles south of 5th Division, at Avola, 50th Division's

single assaulting brigade, the 151st, did not have smooth landings. The strong wind and short steep sea made it difficult to lower and assemble landing-craft, and motor-launches which should have embarked naval guides were late, and less suitable craft had to be used. During the passage to the beaches, craft were shipping green seas and had to bale continuously; binoculars became useless, some compass-lights fused, and wireless sets went dead. Navigation suffered and the troops were landed in scattered groups, their units confusedly intermingled, and over an hour late. The enemy however were not alert or pugnacious and as a rule simply fired sharp bursts at craft or men before making off. By a little after 6 a.m. all troops were ashore; the warships at intervals beat down some wavering enemy guns; and 151st Brigade quickly and steadily mopped up, and moved on to its prescribed positions west of Avola. The encouraging developments from a sticky start were not however known to General Kirkman or Brigadier Senior for a longish time. Kirkman in the *Winchester Castle* received garbled reports, and Senior, in a landing-craft, none. Senior landed just before six o'clock, Kirkman at 8.20 a.m. and soon each picked up the threads of the situation. Though the operation was going well ashore the build-up from the sea was unpunctual and confused: equipment and stores went astray or arrived in the wrong order; by nightfall only nine field-guns were in action.

However, in spite of 50th Division's difficulties, General Dempsey's 13th Corps had had a successful and promising day, and in taking Syracuse had fulfilled Montgomery's forecast: Syracuse on D-Day. We next move thirty miles south of Avola to Marzamemi, and into the sector of Sir Oliver Leese's 30th Corps. During the landings Dempsey's headquarters were in H.M.S. *Bulolo*, Leese's in H.M.S. *Largs*.

At Marzamemi the landing of 231st Brigade went very well. H.M.S. *Keren*, and the *Strathnaver* and *Otranto* split off from the main body of their convoy at 11.35 p.m. The moon was setting behind the land, and soon observers discerned the escarpment south of Pachino, and later a lighthouse. Course was adjusted to close the beacon submarine and ships stopped exactly on time in accurate position. Although there was more shelter here than at the northern landings, lowering and forming up the assault craft was not easy. The guiding motor-launches were punctual, and one went ahead to discover the beaches exactly and burn a light to seaward. Signals from the sonic buoys off the beaches were received, but the marker-folbot off one had disappeared in some unknown, fatal, mishap. Nearly all craft in the first flight touched down at the right time and place in a virtually complete surprise. Supporting craft quenched some haphazard firing by the enemy, and the Dutch gunboats *Soemba* and *Flores* neutralized a coast defence battery. By 7.30 a.m. some 3.7-inch howitzers of

165th Field Regiment were in action, and by noon the Hampshires, Dorsets, and Devons were on their final objective which was the road running north from Pachino.

The exception to the generally punctual arrival of ships and craft were the tank landing-craft which, delayed by the weather, were nearly six hours late. However, owing to the fortunate turn of events ashore, the delay did not matter much.

In 51st Highland Division, General Wimberley had decided to avoid the seemingly excellent beach in Portopalo Bay because the enemy was likely to have guarded its obvious attractions with barbed wire under water and plenty of mines in the sand. 154th Brigade therefore landed on more difficult beaches on both flanks of the bay. The Infantry landing-ships were fifteen minutes late at the Release Position but lowered their assault craft fully manned, in six minutes. The Argylls on the left landed exactly on time, but 7th Black Watch in the centre had trouble in finding their exact beach, and 1st Gordons on the right were up to an hour late. The rocket-craft fired some salvos, and Wimberley thus describes the affair '... assaulting battalions were steadily landing... no real attacking was necessary, and opposition was either very slight or negligible...' Soon 154th Brigade was firm on its objective, a ridge about a mile inland, and by noon Pachino was reported clear.

Tank landing-craft arrived two hours late but went straight in-shore, and began to beach at 4 a.m. By 6 a.m. 'B' Battery 11th (H.A.C.) Regiment R.H.A. with its 'Priests' (105-mm. howitzers on Grant chassis), and the first tanks of 50th R.T.R. were in action, and some four hours later the whole R.H.A. regiment was ashore. The large infantry landing-craft, carrying units of 153rd and 152nd Brigades allotted to later landings, did not arrive until the early afternoon, but then landed about 4,000 troops almost simultaneously.

Wimberley has described the scene: '... a hive of activity. Craft of all kinds were lying close to the shore. Working-parties with pick and shovel were improving M.T. tracks, already swept for mines, from sea to higher ground inland. Chains of men, up to their waists in the warm sea and clinging to ropes where necessary... were passing small arms, weapons, and stores landward...' In fact, here and there, craft had stranded on false beaches, and the problem of the 'water-gap', earlier mentioned, had appeared. This was solved by using DUKWs and pontoon causeways. By dark, 51st Highland Division was moving well forward after a good landing, with a fair share of its vehicles.

1st Canadian Division's beaches in the wide shallow bay on the west of the Pachino peninsula, were more exposed to the weather than those on the east side. Sand-bars were known to exist off the right-hand beach, and the plan was to defeat these obstacles by

transhipping assault units of 1st Canadian Brigade from the transports to tank landing-craft carrying DUKWs. But the weather delayed the L.C.T. and Brigadier Graham decided to use assault landing-craft which were on hand. Although preparations had been made for either method the change-over caused his brigade two hours' delay. 2nd Canadian Brigade, however, and the Royal Marine Commandos were nearly on time, although the Seaforth of Canada landed on the right, instead of the left, of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. The enemy scarcely resisted, and some 15-inch shells from the monitor H.M.S. *Roberts* subdued the only active battery. The slow convoy arrived at about 5.30 a.m. and a squadron of Shermans of the Three Rivers Regiment was ready for action by 10.15 a.m. At 11 a.m. 3rd Canadian Brigade began to land, as did 142nd Field Regiment R.A. (Royal Devon Yeomanry) with its 'Bishops', 25-pdrs on Valentine chassis. By night-fall the Canadian Division had formed a deep and secure bridgehead. The Canadian landings completed 30th Corps initial assault.

Some forty miles westward of the Canadians lay the landing area of 45th U.S. Division, the right-hand formation of 2nd U.S. Corps. We can no more than summarize the American landings, and we refer the reader to the very full and interesting American accounts.¹

The American plans for the assault-landing were broadly like those of the British, though there were differences in method which are too technical to include in this account. It is, however, interesting that the Americans on the whole were prepared to use naval gun-fire more freely than the British in support of troops. The Americans were more exposed to the force of the weather, off shore and inshore, than were the British, except perhaps the Canadians and naval Force V which landed them. They also met more opposition from land and air.

At Scoglitti Admiral Kirk decided to postpone landings for an hour, on account of delays which had occurred owing to the weather. The sea was rough, and sand-banks and rocks presented hazards. The landings by 157th Combat Team of 45th U.S. Division on the right were erratic in time and rather scattered in space. Several craft broached to, and at least twenty-seven men drowned. 180th Combat Team on the left part of Beach 66 had greater trials. It proved difficult to lower and assemble assault craft, and there was a good deal of scattering and straying, which resulted in ragged landings. Matters did not improve, but the American historians sum up thus:

'The 180th was the only combat team in the entire American assault-force which had been completely disorganized by faulty landings . . .'

¹ *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, Lieutenant-Colonel Albert N. Garland and Howard McGaw Smith. Washington 1965. *Sicily, Salerno, Anzio and Naval Aspects of the Sicilian Campaign* by S. E. Morison.

When build-up was due to begin:

‘ . . . the beaches were a mass of stranded boats and a milling mass of men and vehicles . . . Because the members of the shore party had been scattered in the landings, the shore party still was not functioning as late as 0800 . . . Additional landing craft were arriving from the transports carrying the supplies and vehicles for the combat team. With no shore parties on hand, problem was heaped upon problem . . . ’

179th Combat Team, on the right-hand part of Beach 66, had an easier time. On the whole the division's landings were successful, and it pushed rapidly inland, securing its beachhead. One of 179th's battalions reached Vittoria, to find that an American force of one subaltern, and two paratroopers (these two much reinforced by Sicilian wine) of the 505th Parachute Regiment were already containing the garrison. In another fashion, 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 180th had been in action with detachments of the Hermann Göring Division, and had had a foretaste of sterner action.

The 1st U.S. Division at Gela were more fortunate in their initial landings. Fires in the town of Gela silhouetted the shore line for the two principal assault forces and they landed dead on time on the correct beaches, encountering little resistance. The Rangers, however, whose task was to land on either side of Gela pier were almost an hour late and suffered heavy casualties from mines and enemy fire in spite of good naval support. By 8 a.m. Gela had been captured and the Division was working its way inland, but counter-attacks by 33rd Regiment of Livorno Division penetrated as far as the town before being beaten off with the help of naval gun-fire. Enemy batteries opened up about this time, briskly, and some of the unloading beaches had to be closed down temporarily. Air attacks began as early as 4.30 a.m., chiefly on transports and small craft. At 5 a.m. one of these attacks sank the U.S. destroyer *Maddox* with heavy loss of life. Surf and sand-banks off the beaches delayed the discharge of L.S.T. and as a consequence no tanks were landed on D-Day in this area. This was unfortunate since during the day two battle-groups of Hermann Göring Division counter-attacked strongly, though unavailingly, as the next chapter will describe.

The 3rd U.S. Division, and the ships and craft which carried it, experienced a particularly severe ordeal by sea and wind during the passage from Gozo to the Release Position off Licata. Tank landing-ships and infantry landing-craft had been pressed almost to their maximum speed in the attempt to stick to time-table, and, in the unpleasant sea, the speed gave men and vessels a buffeting. Off Licata, owing to the swell in the anchorage, there were difficulties and delays in manning and sending away the assault craft, and there

was a great deal of surf on the beaches. First flights were between half and one and a half hours late, except for the 3rd Ranger Battalion, which was on time, west of Licata. 7th Combat Team's landings, five miles west of Licata, came under fairly heavy fire and for about two hours were themselves short of covering fire because the supporting destroyers *Swanson* and *Roe*, had been in collision. Admiral Connolly, however, brought other ships into action, and the later stages of this landing went smoothly. By noon 7th Combat Team secured its objectives. East of Licata 15th Combat Team made good its landings without undue difficulty. 30th Combat Team, on the 15th's right, also had a fairly smooth operation.

By the end of the day then the three American divisions were well established ashore, though in separate beachheads and as virtually separate forces.

That the forebodings of a hostile air onslaught, entertained by Tedder and Cunningham in the planning period, were not fulfilled does not prove them to have been foolish. No sane air or naval commander could have taken a less grave view. And the Allied air forces largely could thank themselves for the fortunate issue. Their preparatory operations, as we have seen in an earlier section, greatly weakened the enemy's air forces, and, as dark fell on the 9th, the largest concentration of air power ever assembled in the Mediterranean began the immediate support of the landings.

Mosquitos set out from Malta on intruder patrols over the hostile airfields in southern Italy and Sicily. Other Mosquitos and Beaufighters patrolled the landing areas, and those based in Malta were controlled by shipborne G.C.I. stations serving as forward links.¹ These aircraft were equipped with Airborne Interception, and the experiment of shipborne G.C.I. (Ground Controlled Interception) stations for the forward control of night fighters proved very successful.

The night-bombers partitioned Sicily. In the east, Wellingtons, in great force, attacked Caltagirone landing-ground, and communications at Catania and on the Syracuse isthmus while Mitchells bombed Biscari landing-ground, and communications in a wide area. R.A.F. Liberators from M.E.A.C. added attacks in the Avola-Noto area. In the west, Bostons and Baltimores attacked Milo airfield, Sciacca landing-ground, and communications round about Niscemi. On the 10th the day-bombers were out in strength. From

¹ American night-fighter squadrons became operational during the invasion of Sicily and defended the north-western African ports. They were armed with British Beaufighters equipped with Mark IV A.I. (Airborne Interception), and enabled R.A.F.-manned Beaufighters of N.A.C.A.F. with the latest A.I. sets (Mark VIII) to be released for the defence of the convoys.

North West Africa 51 Fortresses bombed the Gerbini group of airfields and landing-grounds while 36 Mitchells attacked the airfield at Milo, 35 the landing-ground at Sciacca, and 60 the marshalling yards at Catania and communications in the Palazzolo area; and from the Middle East 21 American Liberators attacked the landing-ground at Vibo Valentia in southern Italy—at a total cost of four bombers. The attacks on Sicily were strongly supported by fighter-bombers. American Mustangs of the U.S. XII A.S.C., from the Cape Bon peninsula, dive-bombed communications and defensive positions in Sicily over a wide area including Agrigento, Caltanissetta, and Valledlunga, and particularly in the Barrafranca area where 111 of their 152 sorties were flown. In support of the Mustangs, twelve Lightning fighter-bombers lent by N.A.S.A.F. also attacked communications in the Grammichele area.¹ The aim of all the fighter-bomber attacks was to interfere with enemy movements towards the areas of landings.

The fighters covered the beaches from twenty minutes after first light on the 10th. From Malta five squadrons of Spitfires were allotted to each of the following areas: Avola, Pachino peninsula, and Scoglitti. A group of American Spitfires from Gozo looked after the Gela area, and a group of American Kittyhawks from Pantelleria was allotted to Licata. Five Spitfire squadrons stood by for a time in Malta as a reserve, and were then used to escort bombers. Fighter squadrons, in general, each employed twelve aircraft. At this strength the fighters were able to protect all beaches continuously during the first hour and a half of daylight and, during the remaining fourteen and a half daylight hours of the 10th, up to two beaches in any given period. Throughout the day the Allied fighters flew 1,092 sorties defending the beaches and anchorages. Other fighters provided escorts to bombers, offensive sweeps over western and south-western Sicily, and protection for shipping in the open sea.

It was obviously desirable to relieve the Headquarters Ships of responsibility for fighter control as soon as possible. Therefore during the 10th an R.A.F. Forward Fighter Control with a G.C.I. station, two Light Warning Sets (L.W.S.s) and a Wireless Unit (W.U.) of five posts in jeeps went ashore on each of three beaches. A similar U.S.A.A.F. organization consisting of an advanced section of the main U.S. Fighter Control went ashore on a fourth beach.²

We do not possess accurate information of the enemy's air action from dusk on 9th July to dusk on the 10th, but a *Comando Supremo* document states that 370 German and 141 Italian aircraft were

¹ From D-Day onwards two U.S. groups of Lightnings were loaned to N.A.T.A.F. by N.A.S.A.F.

² The W.U.s included in their functions those of the Wireless Observer Units (W.O.U.s) which formed the 'Wireless Observer Screen'.

committed. The British assault areas received one attack in the morning, and a few more during the rest of the day. The hospital ship *Talamba* was sunk. The attacks on the American areas were more serious and sank the mine-sweeper *Sentinel*, in addition to the destroyer *Maddox*, while the cruiser *Philadelphia* and the transport *Thomas Jefferson* were dive-bombed but escaped damage. Ashore, 1st U.S. Division received most attention. It was only at Licata and Gela that the enemy broke through the Allied fighters' screen to a serious degree. One reason was that the very large anchorages stretched and thinned the screen. In these areas, as indeed in general, the anti-aircraft artillery was too excitable. The guns persistently engaged Allied fighters, thus distracting them from their protective duties.

Throughout the day there was only one interception by the American fighters from Gozo and Pantelleria. The British fighters from Malta were more fortunate and several enemy aircraft were believed destroyed. Spitfires of No. 229 Squadron made the last interception of the day—of eight Italian Mc. 200s encountered three were claimed shot down. The Malta fighters reported encountering only 57 enemy fighters on D-Day, and it is estimated that all told about 100 were in action, a remarkably small number.

The sorties flown by the Mediterranean Air Command, from dusk on 9th July to dusk on the 10th, are given in the footnote below.¹ During this period the Allies lost some 25 aircraft. Total German aircraft losses by Allied air action amounted to at least 16, and it is known that 11 Italian aircraft were destroyed in the air.

By dusk on the 10th July all commanders were able to feel that the assaulting troops were securely ashore. The exceedingly risky stage of 'one foot in sea and one on shore' was over. Build-up was beginning

¹ *Sorties flown by the Mediterranean Air Command—
Dusk 9th to Dusk 10th July*
(excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports)

	Anti-Radar		Bombers			Fighters			Totals
	H.B.	M.B.	H.B.	M.B.	L.B.	Intruder	Patrols	Ground attack	
N.A.A.F.	12	6	—	127	47	—	—	—	192
Malta	—	—	—	—	—	9	18	6	33
M.E.A.C.	—	—	11	—	—	—	—	—	11
									236

Estimated tons of bombs dropped: airfields 25; roads, railways etc. 234.

[continued on facing page.]

vigorously though how successful it might be could still only be guessed. The Allied air forces were plainly on top of their opponents. In short after weeks of planning, which at times had seemed unfruitful except in changes of mind, and weeks of persevering detailed preparation, the Allies had won the initiative in a matter of hours, and could now press forward in Sicily.

Sicily was perhaps the coming-of-age of British combined operations (for to these only we refer) after a minority of some hundreds of years, if one begins (say) with Wimbledon at Cadiz in 1625. During these centuries the British had sent out perhaps forty considerable expeditions, some with preparation, some without, with fortunes of every sort between success and disaster. Governments had an easy faith in small-scale maps, in the fighting qualities of the Navy and Army which they habitually neglected, and in all being somehow right on the night. Higher naval and military officers usually contrived to forget at the dinner-table their conviction, evident at the Council of War, that the wearers of the coat of opposite colour, red or blue, were troublesome encumbrances who veiled their odd notions and sluggish manœuvres in a cloud of professional jargon. Junior officers and the men of the two Services developed between themselves a tradition, which seems everlasting, of mutual admiration, derision, respect, amusement, confidence, and regret that the other man was not quite right in the head. But there was no combined professional method. The years after World War I saw the beginnings of this method, and Sicily was its first great application. By this time invasions from the sea were professionally recognized to be all-or-nothing affairs, inter-Service and technical to the last degree.

We may perhaps therefore venture a comment, and indulge one speculation. Where so many men of all Services were engaged in a common enterprise, each charged, according to his degree, with

	DAY						Totals
	Bombers			Fighters	Land Reconnaissance		
	H.B.	M.B.	F.B.	Includes shipping protection shown in brackets			
N.A.A.F.	51	131	164	434 (268)	28	808	
Malta	—	—	—	1,346 (61)	18*	1,364	
M.E.A.C.	21	—	—	111 (87)	3*	135	
						2,307	

Estimated tons of bombs dropped: Airfields 264 (including 56 against southern Italy); roads, railways etc. 151.

*Estimated sorties.

Grand Total for 24 hours 2,543

responsibilities and duties which therefore ranged from vast to trivial, it may seem absurd to distinguish one set of men. Yet the naval officers and men of the landing-craft carried an absolutely peculiar responsibility because if they failed, what else could succeed? The first test in action, which no training exercise can exactly simulate and which the young men commanding these craft met, could scarcely have been more severe. Taking into account that most of them were inexperienced as officers and seamen, they did well.

Nevertheless there were mistakes, some of them serious in their results, and the landings proved to soldiers the practical wisdom of a precept derived by 154th Infantry Brigade from its training '... that they might be landed anywhere and then not even as a complete battalion; but in spite of that, they must carry out the original intention ...'

Next it is questionable whether the fire-support designed to carry the assaulting troops into the coast-defences was sufficient, although it was as good as the knowledge of 1943, and the available means, allowed. Whereas on land the techniques of artillery had advanced very far, the employment of weapons afloat in close support of troops still had many problems, technical, tactical, and psychological, to be solved and transformed into matters of common knowledge.

In the event the margin between success and failure was narrow. One can only speculate whether the assault would have succeeded if the enemy had resisted more determinedly, and had used the forces which he actually had with greater skill, speed, and concentration. For the Allies had simply not had the means of providing sufficient reserves to overcome anything greater than a slight set-back.

British landing areas and assaulting troops (north to south)

Area	Main Formation Used	Main Subordinate Formations and Infantry Units	Beach	Type of Landing-Craft	Tasks in Outline	Notes
Acid North, Avola	5th Division Major-General H. P. M. Berney-Ficklin	1st Special Landing Squadron, and S.A.S. Regiment Major R. B. Mayne No. 3 Commando Lieut.-Colonel Durnford-Slater	Cape Murro di Porco	LCA	Destroy coast defence battery	The terms <i>Assault</i> and <i>Local Bridgehead</i> have been used to avoid tactical and topographical detail. <i>Assault</i> means that a unit's main task was to subdue defences. <i>Local Bridgehead</i> means that a unit would land later than an assault unit, though not invariably. Its main task would be to seize tactical features which might be some distance from the beach. Naturally, an <i>assault</i> unit might help in securing the local bridgehead or a <i>local bridgehead</i> unit might reinforce an <i>assault</i> unit. Infantry units only have been shown. Detachments of artillery, signals, engineers, perhaps tanks, would also be landed as soon as possible, either by craft reserved for the purpose, or by craft returning from earlier landings.
			East of Beach 44, Cassibile	LCA	Destroy beach defences and battery	
			George Sector, Beach 44, Cassibile	LCA	Assault	
			George Sector, Beach 44, Cassibile	LCA	Assault	
			George Sector, Beach 44, Cassibile	LCA	Assault	
			How Sector, Beach 45, Green, South of Cassibile	LCA	Assault	
			How Sector, Beach 46, Amber-Red, South of Cassibile	LCA	Assault	
			How Sector, Beaches 45 and 46	LCA	Local Bridgehead	
			Beaches 44, 45, or 46	LCA	Reserve	
			Beaches 44, 45, or 46	LCA	Reserve	
Acid South, Avola	50th Division Major-General S. C. Kirkman	151st Infantry Brigade Brigadier R. H. Senior 9th D.L.I. 6th D.L.I. 8th D.L.I. 60th Infantry Brigade Brigadier E. C. Cooke-Collis 5 E. Yorks. 6 Green Howards 7 Green Howards 168th Infantry Brigade Brigadier K. C. Davidson 1 London Scottish 1 London Irish Rifles 10 R. Berks	Jig Sector, Beach 47, Jig Green, Avola	LCA	Assault	A <i>floating reserve</i> was a unit or formation embarked, available for quick action. A <i>follow-up</i> or <i>reserve</i> formation was one scheduled to land at a later stage, hours or even days later. The terms used to describe beaches are by no means uniform and are confusing. In principle, an <i>area</i> was a wide stretch of coast code-named, and divided into <i>sectors</i> . <i>Sectors</i> were shorter stretches of coast, usually named by a letter of the phonetic alphabet. A <i>sector</i> might include several beaches, or be one beach. A beach might
			Jig Sector, Beach 48, Jig Amber, Avola	LCA	Assault	
			Jig Sector, Beach 47, Jig Green, Avola	LCA	Local Bridgehead	
			Beaches 47 and 48	LCA	Follow-up	
			Beaches 47 and 48	LCA	Follow-up	
			Beaches 47 and 48	LCA	Follow-up	
			Beaches 47 and 48	LCA	Follow-up D + 3	
			Beaches 47 and 48	LCA	Follow-up D + 3	
			Beaches 47 and 48	LCA	Follow-up D + 3	
			Beaches 47 and 48	LCA	Follow-up D + 3	

American landing areas and assaulting troops (west to east)

Area	Main Formations Used	Main Subordinate Formations and Infantry Units	Beach	Type of Landing-Craft	Tasks in Outline	Notes
Josa, Licata	3rd U.S. Division Major-General Lucian K. Truscott	7th Combat Team Colonel Harry H. Sherman 1st Bn 7th Infantry Regiment 2nd Bn 7th Infantry Regiment 3rd Bn 7th Infantry Regiment Detachment Lieut-Col. Brooker W. Brady 3rd Ranger Bn 2nd Bn 15th Infantry Regiment	Beach 73 Red Beach, West of Licata Red Beach, West of Licata Red Beach, West of Licata Beaches 71 and 72 Green West Beach, West of Licata Green East Beach, West of Licata	LCVP LCV(L) LCI(L) LCA LCVP	Assault Local Bridgehead Local Bridgehead Assault Assault	The terms <i>Assault</i> and <i>Local Bridgehead</i> have been used to avoid tactical and topographical detail. <i>Assault</i> means that a unit's main task was to subdue beach defences. <i>Local Bridgehead</i> means that a unit would land later than an <i>assault</i> unit. Its main task would be to seize tactical features which might be some distance from the beach. Naturally an <i>assault</i> unit might help in securing the <i>local bridgehead</i> , or a <i>local bridgehead</i> unit might reinforce an <i>assault</i> unit. Infantry units only have been shown. Detachments of artillery, signals, engineers, perhaps tanks, would also be landed as soon as possible, either by craft reserved for the purpose, or by craft returning from earlier landings.
Dime, Gela	1st U.S. Division Major-General Terry de la M. Allen	Force X Lieut-Colonel William O. Darby 1st Ranger Bn 4th Ranger Bn 26th Combat Team Colonel John W. Bowen 1st Bn 26th Infantry Regiment 2nd Bn 26th Infantry Regiment 16th Combat Team Colonel George A. Taylor 2nd Bn 16th Infantry Regiment 1st Bn 16th Infantry Regiment 3rd Bn 16th Infantry Regiment	Beach 68 Red Beach, Gela Green Beach, Gela Beach 67 West Yellow Beach, East of Gela River Blue Beach, East of Gela River Beach 67 East Red Beach, East of Gela River Green 2 Beach, East of Gela River Green 2 Beach, East of Gela River	LCVP LCA LCVP LCVP LCVP LCVP LCVP	Assault Assault Assault Assault Assault Local Bridgehead Local Bridgehead	
Cent. Scoglitti	45th U.S. Division Major-General Troy C. Middleton	18th Combat Team Colonel Forrest E. Coakson 1st Bn 180th Infantry Regiment 2nd Bn 180th Infantry Regiment 3rd Bn 180th Infantry Regiment 72nd Combat Team Colonel Robert B. Hutchins 3rd Bn 79th Infantry Regiment 1st Bn 179th Infantry Regiment 2nd Bn 179th Infantry Regiment 157th Combat Team Colonel Charles M. Anckorn 1st Bn 157th Infantry Regiment 2nd Bn 157th Infantry Regiment 3rd Bn 157th Infantry Regiment	Beach 66 North Red Calvert Beach, Scoglitti Red Neville Beach, Scoglitti Red Calvert Beach, Scoglitti Beach 66 South Green Beach, East of Scoglitti Yellow Beach, East of Scoglitti Green Beach, East of Scoglitti S. of Punta Branco Grande Green 2 Beach, East of Scoglitti Red 2 Beach, East of Scoglitti Green 2 or Red 2 Beach, East of Scoglitti	LCVP LCVP LCVP LCVP LCVP LCVP LCVP LCVP LCVP LCVP LCVP LCVP	Assault Assault Assault Local Bridgehead Assault Assault Local Bridgehead Assault Assault Local Bridgehead Assault Local Bridgehead	

Air forces available and their deployment on the eve of D-Day in support of 'Husky'

(A) COASTAL AND STRATEGIC

Mediterranean Air Command¹
(Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder)

N.A.A.F.¹
(Major-Gen. Carl Spaatz,
U.S.A.A.F.)

Malta Air Command²
(Air Vice-Marshal Sir Keith Park)

M.E.A.C.

(Air Chief Marshal Sir William Sholto Douglas)

(Photographic Reconnaissance
in Cairo area)

N.A.T.C.C.

(Brig.-Gen. Paul L.
Williams, U.S.A.A.F.)
(Kairouan area for
airborne operations)

N.A.C.A.F.^{1,2}

(Air Vice-Marshal Sir Hugh
Lloyd)
(Northwest African
Littoral)

(Wellingtons of No. 205 Group R.A.F.
in Kairouan area under operational
control of N.A.S.A.F.)

No. 201 (Naval Co-operation)

Group R.A.F.³
(Air Vice-Marshal T. A.
Langford-Sainsbury)
(North African Littoral)

N.A.P.R.W.

(Lt.-Col. Elliott
Roosevelt, U.S.A.A.F.)
(Photographic recon-
La Marsa area)

N.A.S.A.F.¹

(Major-Gen. James H. Doolittle,
U.S.A.A.F.)
(Heavy and medium day-bombers
in eastern Algeria and western
Tunisia; N.A.S.A.F. Wellingtons
in Kairouan area)

No. 205 Group R.A.F.
(Group Captain J. H. T. Simpson)
(Heavy bombers in Cyrenaica)

Air Defences⁴

Eastern Mediterranean
(Air Vice-Marshal R. E. Saul)
(North African Littoral)

U.S. IX Bomber Command

(Brig.-Gen. Uzal G. Ent, U.S.A.A.F.)
(Cyrenaica)

(B) TACTICAL

N.A.T.A.F.^{1, 6}
(Air Marshal Sir Arthur
Cunningham)

*W.D.A.F.*⁶
(Air Vice-Marshal Harry Broadhurst)
(Strat. R. and part of British fighter-bomber force
in Tripoli area, part together with American
fighter-bombers in Medenine area and remainder
together with the British fighter force, Tac. R.
and Advanced A.H.Q., W.D., in Malta)

*Malta*⁵
(Own coastal and photographic reconnaissance)

¹ The Air Commander-in-Chief's Command Post together with the Commanding General N.A.A.F.'s H.Q. and the combined operational staffs of M.A.C. and N.A.A.F. located alongside, and the Advanced H.Q.s of N.A.C.A.F. and N.A.S.A.F. and the H.Q. of N.A.T.A.F. were all in the La Marsa area.

² N.A.C.A.F. provided convoy (including fighter) protection for the assault forces and fighter protection for ports and airfields in the western and central Mediterranean areas.

³ No. 201 Group R.A.F. provided convoy protection for the assault forces in the eastern Mediterranean area.

⁴ Air Defences Eastern Mediterranean provided fighter protection for the assault forces, ports and airfields in the eastern Mediterranean area.

(Two U.S. groups of Lightnings on loan from
N.A.C.A.F. to N.A.T.A.F. in Mateur area)

N.A.T.B.F.
(Air Commodore L. F. Sinclair)
(Cape Bon area)

*U.S. XII Air Support Command*⁶
(Colonel Lawrence P. Hickey, U.S.A.A.F.)
(Fighter-bombers together with one U.S.
group from W.D.A.F. in Cape Bon area and
fighters on eastern side of Cape Bon
Peninsula less one group in Gozo and
one in Pantelleria)

Gozo

Pantelleria

⁵ Malta provided fighter protection for the assault forces from east and west when within 50 miles of the island.

⁶ A.O.C. N.A.T.A.F. was responsible for the overall control of all operations in direct support of the British and American assault forces. During the opening stages and though under A.O.C. N.A.T.A.F.'s general control A.O.C. Malta Air Command was to retain responsibility for all air operations from Malta until A.O.C. W.D.A.F. had established his H.Q. in Sicily and assumed operational control of air support operations. When a sufficient area in Sicily had been captured to allow the Commanding General U.S. XII A.S.C. to assume operational control of air operations in support of U.S. Seventh Army, A.O.C. W.D.A.F. was to revert to the operational control of those in support of British 8th Army.

*Sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command 16th May-9th July 1943
(excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports other than Pantelleria and Lampedusa)*

Command	Land Rece	Fighters	Bombers and Fighter-Bombers												Bomber Totals							
			Greece, Aegean and Crete			Italy		Sardinia		Lampedusa		Pantelleria		Sicily								
			L. of C. and other targets	Air- fields targets	L. of C. and other targets	L.G.s	L. of C. and other targets	L.G.s	L. of C. and other targets	L.G.	Port	Gun posns and other targets	Air- field	Port		L. of C. and other targets	Air- fields and L.G.s					
N.A.A.F	101	3753	—	—	36	128	89	461	—	—	—	—	—	920	221	353	8	416	2632			
Malta	141	1337	—	—	9	—	—	—	—	12	—	—	—	—	—	4	12	19	56			
M.E.A.C.	45	2351	—	—	4	135	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	—	—	2	—	149			
Totals	287	7441	Total sorties flown during First Phase—10565 or a daily average of 503												2837							
SECOND PHASE—6TH TO 12TH/13TH JUNE																						
N.A.A.F.	71	4030	—	—	—	—	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	419	39	92	—	99	4131			
Malta	43	530	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	7	22			
M.E.A.C.	22	852	—	—	—	13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	34	35	200			
Totals	136	5412	Total sorties flown during Second Phase—9901 or a daily average of 1414												4353							

THIRD PHASE—13TH JUNE TO 2ND/3RD JULY

N.A.A.F.†	314	6079*	—	319	37	151	180	—	—	—	—	115	581	1383
Malta	113	1598*	—	12	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	29	77	119
M.E.A.C.†	76	2993	6	49	75	1	—	—	—	—	—	7	143	287
Totals	593	10670												1,789

Total sorties flown during Third Phase—12962 or a daily average of 648

FOURTH PHASE—3RD TO 9TH (DUSK) JULY

N.A.A.F.†	178	3482*	—	3	—	—	131	—	—	—	—	477	1911	2522
Malta	125	1001*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	6
M.E.A.C.†	23	1305	—	25	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	129	157
Totals	326	5788												2685

Total sorties flown during Fourth Phase—8799 or a daily average of 1288

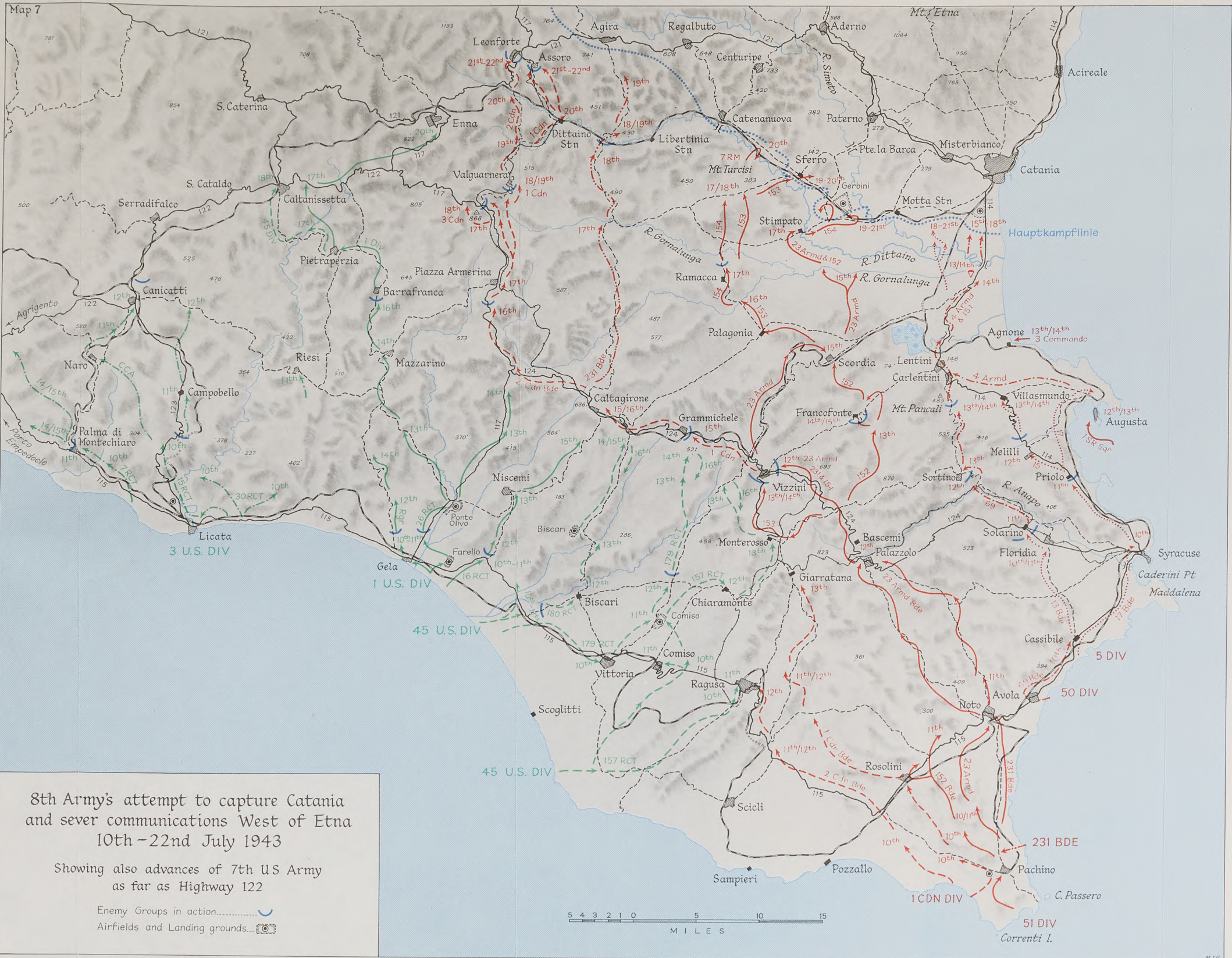
* Sorties flown by N.A.A.F. fighters operating from Malta from mid-June onwards included in the N.A.A.F. figure up to and including 8th July. Thereafter they are included in the 'Malta' figure.

† From the beginning of July the sorties flown by W.D.A.F. and by the Wellingtons of No. 205 Group R.A.F. (which came under the operational control of N.A.S.A.F. on 1st June) are included in the N.A.A.F. figures.

Note For convenience, in all tables of sorties throughout this volume the sorties expended on extraneous targets, such as factories, radar sites, etc., in Italy and elsewhere and the sorties expended on direct support of the armies have been included under 'L. of C. and other targets'.

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CHAPTER III

EXPLOITATION FROM THE BEACHHEADS

(10th to 20th July 1943)

(i)

See Maps 4 and 7

GENERAL Alexander's intention was to establish his two armies on a line from Catania to Licata with a view to final operations to reduce the island. In this phase 8th Army's main tasks were: to capture the port of Syracuse and the Pachino airfield, and thereafter the ports of Augusta and Catania and the group of airfields at Gerbini. Montgomery, on 20th May, had forecast his army's progress as: Syracuse on D-Day (10th July), Augusta on D + 3 (13th July), and Catania on D + 8 (18th July). 7th U.S. Army's main tasks were to capture the port of Licata and the airfields at Ponte Olivo, Biscari, and Comiso, and then to prevent enemy reserves moving eastwards against 8th Army's left flank. Broadly speaking, General Patton intended to place his army on the line (from west to east) Campobello-Piazza Armerina-Grammichele, which would give him control of the west to east roads in southern Sicily. Piazza Armerina was the focal point. It was approached from the south by Highway 117 leading from Gela, and from the east by Highway 124 which came from Syracuse through Palazzolo, Vizzini, and Caltagirone to join Highway 117 about ten miles south of Piazza Armerina. From Piazza Armerina the way led north to a complex of roads, of which Enna is the centre, which was bound to be of the greatest value in future operations, whatever shape these might take. Bradley's Corps was to capture the three airfields and Licata by the evening of D + 2 (12th July), and then move onward. The boundary between the armies (inclusive to the 8th) ran, roughly speaking, from Pozzalo, on the coast, to Vizzini but had not been fixed ahead of that place.

The objects of the phase of exploitation from the beachheads were, in short, ports from which to develop orthodox maintenance to supplement and later to replace maintenance across the beaches; airfields from which to develop the offensive of shore-based tactical air forces; and roads as thrust-lines for the armies. Naval operations had the main object of furthering the armies' build-up. In addition

there were coastal bombardments as feints to induce the enemy to tie up reserves, and offensive action by light coastal forces in the Straits of Messina and off the toe of Italy. Force H for a time held the outer ring but as the Italian fleet proved inactive, the big ships became freer in their movements and on 12th July Force H returned to Malta to refuel. This was the first time that battleships had appeared in the Grand Harbour since December 1940.¹

Admiral Cunningham, in the fast minelayer *Abdiel*, visited the beaches on the 10th; Patton was off the beaches in U.S.S. *Monrovia*; Montgomery opened his Tactical H.Q. in Sicily on the 11th; and Eisenhower, in the destroyer *Petard*, paid a visit on the 12th. The direct higher command of the operations on shore, however, was in the hands of the three Corps Commanders, Dempsey (13th), Leese (30th) and Bradley (2nd U.S.).² Since the assault-landings had been so successful, these commanders' long-prepared plans held good in the main, and speed became the immediate aim in order to keep the initiative which had been gained. The outline of plans is as follows. In 13th Corps 5th Division was to press north by the coast road, relieve 1st Airlanding Brigade—which should have captured the Ponte Grande Bridge over the Anapo two miles south of Syracuse—and take that city. Thence 5th Division was to press on to Augusta. 50th Division, having secured the bridgehead was to protect 13th Corps' left flank, moving on the axis of the not very good inland road from Cassibile, upon Solarino and Sortino. In 30th Corps, 51st Highland Division was to capture Palazzolo, and 1st Canadian Division Pachino airfield and Ragusa. The American Corps was to push northwards towards the Campobello–Grammichele line through two intermediate positions. In following the operations of the next week it is important to remember that all formations had a reduced number of vehicles. The British had Assault Scale, that is enough, in theory, to enable them to act up to a distance of ten miles from beachheads. Additional transport would arrive in the first follow-up convoy (on D + 3) to raise them to the Light Scale, enough, again in theory, to enable them to act up to a distance of thirty miles from beachheads for a period of three weeks.

Intelligence had prepared a very good enemy Order of Battle but information gained by contact was impressionistic for the first few days.

In fact the outline of the enemy's actions was as follows. Early on the 10th Guzzoni decided to support his 18th Coastal Brigade in the

¹ H.M.S. *Nelson* and *Rodney*. Admiral Cunningham had paid a two-day visit in H.M.S. *Warspite* on 20th December 1940.

² For the present, as during the landings, 3rd U.S. Division was under the tactical control of 7th U.S. Army although it was included in Bradley's 2nd U.S. Corps. The reason was that to control three divisions on so wide a front might be too much for the communications of a Corps H.Q.

Gela sector by a strong counter-attack. 16th Corps was to co-ordinate this, using Mobile Groups 'E' and 'H', the Livorno Division, and that part of the Hermann Göring Division which was near Caltagirone, twenty-five miles from Gela.¹ In view of the landings at Licata he took the 'grave decision' (von Senger confirmed it) to bring back 15th Panzer Grenadier Division from west Sicily to the area of Caltanissetta and S. Cataldo, about 40 miles north of Licata by road. He also warned Rossi to reinforce the Syracuse area to prevent the enemy from striking north from Avola into the Catanian plain. Rossi decided to assemble a force composed of Mobile Group 'D', the 75th Infantry Regiment of the Napoli Division, and the Schmalz Battle Group for the purpose.²

With the stage thus set, we can return to the British 1st Airlanding Brigade which we noticed in Chapter II as it flew over part of the assault convoys shortly after midnight on the 9th/10th July. The brigade, at a strength of 2,075 had taken off from the Kairouan base on the evening of the 9th in 137 Hadrian and 10 Horsa gliders piloted by 1st Battalion The Glider Pilot Regiment.³ Some gliders were towed by No. 295 Squadron (Halifaxes) and No. 296 Squadron (Albemarles), R.A.F., but at least 100 by C.47s of 51st Troop Carrier Wing, U.S.A.A.F. They were protected during daylight by Airacobras from N.A.C.A.F. and during darkness by night-fighters from Malta. It was unfortunate that the period since April, when systematic training became possible, had yet been insufficient to complete everything. Glider pilots had learned little of the very difficult art of judging distances across water off a coast line, and the tow-pilots had insufficient practice in night-navigation. These shortcomings were to have grievous consequences.

The brigade's task was to seize intact the Ponte Grande, a bridge which carried the main road over the Anapo River just south of Syracuse, and hold it until 5th Division came up. Two companies of

¹ Mobile Group 'E' consisted of a company of Renault tanks, a company of 47-mm anti-tank guns, a troop of light field guns, and two companies of infantry and motor cyclists. Mobile Group 'H' had a company of light tanks, a company of 47-mm tank guns, a troop of 7.5-cm guns and a mortar platoon.

² The Schmalz Battle Group consisted of a battalion and two batteries of Hermann Göring Division and 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division.

³ The main units of 1st Airlanding Brigade (Brigadier P. H. W. Hicks) were 1st Battalion The Border Regiment, 2nd Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment, 9th Field Company R.E. Battalions took between them six jeep-towed, six pounder anti-tank guns. Transport was limited to hand-carts and light motor-cycles.

Since naval bombardment entered into the plan, two Naval Bombardment detachments accompanied the brigade. These detachments were composed of Royal Artillery observation officers and Naval telegraphists, all parachute-trained. These detachments had been in the establishment of 1st Airborne Division since May 1943. The cruiser *Newfoundland* and the monitor *Erebus* were the supporting warships.

On 30th May A.F.H.Q. had ordered a base for airborne troops to be prepared in the Kairouan neighbourhood. It contained six airfields situated at distances of from 7 to 43 miles from the centre of 1st Airborne Division's area.

the 2nd South Staffords, landing from eight Horsas, were to capture the bridge at 11.5 p.m. on the 9th. The rest of the force was to arrive at the bridge by 1.15 a.m. on 10th July, detaching a company to destroy a coast-battery at Punta Caderini. From the bridge the Border Regiment was to advance to capture Syracuse. Air and naval bombardments were arranged, for diversions as far afield as Catania and for close support, and in particular 80 Wellingtons were to bomb Syracuse between 2.15 and 2.45 a.m. Night-flying Hurricanes of No. 73 Squadron were to snuff out exposed searchlights with their 20-mm cannons, and specially-equipped aircraft were to attempt to confuse the radar stations covering the main lines of approach of the airborne forces.

The force took off from six airfields by individual flights and there resulted what one might call a procession of aircraft on one route, aiming to land all gliders on the landing-zones between 10.10 and 10.30 p.m. on 9th July. From a landfall at Cape Passero aircraft were to fly along the east coast of Sicily until they turned west for the final approach to Ponte Grande. Then, climbing from sea level, at which they had flown for concealment, to release-heights of 1,500 feet and above, they were to release their gliders over the sea. The gliders were to glide into the landing-zones, and the towing aircraft to return to Kairouan.

There was a strong off-shore wind (30–35 m.p.h.); there was no plain landmark by which the aircraft could fix their position before the release-run, which had to be made down-moon, and so it was very hard accurately to read the map or to judge distance. Release-heights gave glider-pilots no room in which to correct mistakes. There was enough flak to distract pilots of little or no experience in battle. There was obscuring haze over the landing-zones, and there were no special navigational aids. These factors, in combination, caused a disaster. Sixty-nine gliders landed in the sea and many men drowned. Fifty-nine gliders landed, strewn across twenty-five miles of country between Cape Passero and Cape Murro di Porco. Twelve gliders landed on the correct zone, one Horsa within three hundred yards of the bridge. Two gliders were shot down. Ten had turned back to base before release for various reasons.

1st Airlanding Brigade's plan was wrecked, but small parties, undaunted and dashing, saved a great deal from the wreck. Lieutenant L. Withers and No. 15 Platoon of the South Staffords, who had landed just south of the Ponte Grande in a Horsa, attacked and took it, some men swimming the river. The defenders were from 121st Coastal Infantry Regiment. For some hours there was a 'free for all' as enemy parties counter-attacked, and men from scattered gliders rallied to the firing. By 6.30 a.m. on the 10th July eighty-seven British troops were holding the bridge. Meanwhile enemy reinforce-

ments were arriving, first two companies of sailors, and by 11.30 a.m. a battalion of 75th Infantry Regiment and some guns. Counter-attacks followed which regained the bridge by 3.30 p.m., just three-quarters of an hour before the 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers, leading 5th Division, arrived from the south. Elsewhere than at the bridge, glider-parties attacked whatever came to hand, including the coastal battery at Caderini Point. This fell to an assault by a party of seventeen from 1st Borders and Brigade H.Q. which included its chaplain militant, the Reverend D. F. Hourigan. All these actions, including those of the American parachute brigade which will be described presently, occasioned confusing reports to Axis commanders of airborne and parachute troops in places scattered from Priolo, near Augusta, to Castelvetro, 140 miles away in west Sicily.¹ 1st Airlanding Brigade embarked for Africa on the 13th July. In its operation it had lost 252 drowned, 61 killed and 174 wounded and missing on land. The Glider Pilot Regiment's losses were 14 killed, 87 wounded and missing. As a result of the gallant efforts of the small party of paratroops who fought at the bridge the enemy were prevented from destroying it despite the fact that it had been prepared for demolition. To this extent therefore the parachute brigade achieved its purpose.

Meanwhile on the 10th, 17th Brigade of 5th Division had been moving north against scattered opposition, followed during the afternoon by 13th Brigade, while 15th Brigade held the bridgehead. 1st Special Raiding Squadron and parties of the Airlanding Brigade were in action against gun positions and posts on the Maddalena peninsula and the environs of Syracuse.² 17th Brigade quickly disposed of the enemy at the Ponte Grande and pressed on into Syracuse. During the night 10th/11th, 13th Brigade took Florida. The defence of the Syracuse Fortress Area had in fact collapsed, and the collapse was spreading northwards to Augusta, although Schmalz's Battle Group reached Melilli at 8 p.m. Rossi's reinforcements had not

¹ Some places named: Priolo as 'infested', the Maddalena peninsula, Cape Passero, Ragusa, at Gela 'thousands' of parachutists, Comiso, Caltagirone, Castelvetro.

² 5th Division (Major-General H. P. M. Berney-Ficklin). Main units:

13th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier L. M. Campbell):

2 Cameronians, 2 Inniskillings, 2 Wilts.

15th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier G. S. Rawstorne):

1 Green Howards, 1 K.O.Y.L.I., 1 York and Lancaster.

17th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier G. W. B. Tarleton):

2 Royal Scots Fusiliers, 2 Northampton, 6 Seaforth.

5th Reconnaissance Regiment.

7th Cheshire (M.G.).

R.A.: 91st, 92nd, 156th Field Regiments, 52nd A.Tk. Regiment, 18th L.A.A.

Regiment:

R.E.: 245th, 252nd, 38th Field Companies, 254th Field Park Company.

1st Special Raiding Squadron, of the 2nd Special Air Service Regiment, was trained for guerilla-type operations by air, land or sea. Its establishment was 16 officers, and 238 non-commissioned officers and men.

appeared in strength. In these first days there appeared a feature which made fighting in Sicily very different from fighting in Africa: marching. By 13th July, as an example, some of 17th Brigade's battalions would have covered up to '... 100 miles on their feet with boots which had been sodden with salt water'.¹

On the 11th 5th Division continued its advance northwards and part of the Schmalz Group held up 17th Brigade at Priolo, though two battalions of 75th Infantry Regiment were driven from Solarino with loss by the Wiltshires and Inniskillings of 13th Brigade. The Wiltshires' diarist noted '... the myth that the Italians would fight with great fortitude in defence of their own country was exploded'. Schmalz, who was using delaying tactics, moved away during the night 11th/12th, pressed by 17th Brigade which entered Augusta in the small hours of the 13th. There it joined up with the 1st Special Raiding Squadron, landed some hours earlier from the L.S.I. *Ulster Monarch* under supporting fire from the destroyers *Tetcott*, *Nubian* and *Kanaris* (Greek). 15th Brigade meanwhile had passed through 17th and was moving towards Villasmundo, west of Augusta. 50th Division's leading Brigade, the 69th turned the enemy out of Sortino on the morning of the 13th, and began to move up a narrow, winding road flanked by precipitous little hills, towards Lentini. 151st Brigade was mopping up west of Solarino, and was in touch with 30th Corps.

30th Corps meanwhile had exploited quickly. Pachino airfield had been found, deserted and ploughed up, by the Royal Canadian Regiment on the morning of the 10th but by early afternoon an emergency crash-landing air strip had been completed by the airfield construction engineers. 51st Highland Division had cleared Rosolini and Noto, and on the 12th was directed on Palazzolo and Vizzini. In fact on the 12th 23rd Armoured Brigade, under the Highland Division's command, pushed through the bombed ruins of Palazzolo, and reached the slopes looking towards Vizzini by evening.² The town seemed strongly held. 1st Canadian Division, advancing north-west by secondary roads had made firm contact with the Americans in Ragusa on the 12th, and early on the 13th July 1st Canadian Brigade reached the hill village of Giarratana. 2nd Brigade was north of Ragusa, and the 3rd about to move up from the coast. The Canadians, quite unacclimatized to Sicilian heat, and cramped by a long sea voyage, had marched well.

¹ One of Wellington's seasoned Peninsular soldiers, Kincaid, wrote 'Marching is an art to be acquired only by habit, and one in which the strength or agility of the animal, man, has but little to do.' *Random Shots from a Rifleman*, Maclaren & Co., London, p. 209.

² 23rd Armoured Brigade (Brigadier G. W. Richards). Main Units: 40th, 46th, 50th R.T.R., 11th K.R.R.C.

The advance of the 8th Army during the three days 10th-13th July was matched by the advance of the three divisions of 7th U.S. Army, in a direction generally northward, from their beachheads at Scoglitti, Gela, and Licata. A bird's eye view of the enemy during these same three days will connect the sketch of British actions just given with the sketch of American actions which will follow.

The enemy counter-attacked in the Gela area, and moved 15th Panzer Grenadier Division eastwards from western Sicily, but this effort was short and unavailing. The Axis Command in Sicily was so hampered by Allied bombing, bad communications, and the buccaneering of roving British and American airborne troops that it had very little control over operations in the beachheads, and the various Battle Groups acted very much on their own initiative. The High Commands in Italy and Germany followed the course of the operations, but did not try to direct it in these early stages. Their later reactions can be examined after events on the American front have been related up to 13th July.

The American landings, like the British, were preceded by an airborne operation. 505th Parachute Regimental Combat Team (82nd U.S. Airborne Division) was to drop east of Ponte Olivo and to block routes leading towards the Gela bridgehead.¹ The R.C.T., some 3,400 strong, took off from Kairouan in the late evening of 9th July in 226 C.47 aircraft of 52nd Troop Carrier Wing, U.S.A.A.F., protected by the Airacobras and Malta's night-fighters. The aircraft flew in five groups, in formation, low over the sea. The route was a complicated dog-leg course on which Malta was an important check-point. The landfall was Correnti Island at the south-eastern tip of Sicily whence the aircraft were to turn west along the coast to the dropping-zones. Darkness, low flight, and a strong wind from the north-west upset navigation. Many aircraft missed Malta's navigational aids altogether and approached Sicily from all directions. Visibility over the land was bad. The result was confusion and wild dispersion. Twenty-six aircraft dropped their loads, amounting to the equivalent of three companies, on or near the objective. Some parachutists landed inland of 45th U.S. Division's beaches, but generally speaking they descended all over the coastal tract of south-east Sicily from Gela to Syracuse.

¹ An American Regimental Combat Team (R.C.T.) was roughly the equivalent of a British Brigade Group. As a rule there were three R.C.T.s in an American division, besides divisional troops.

The main units of 505th Parachute R.C.T. (Colonel James M. Gavin) were: 1st, 2nd, 3rd Battalions, 505th Parachute Regiment; 3rd Battalion of 504th Parachute Regiment attached; two batteries 456th Parachute Field Artillery; one company Airborne Engineers; Naval gun-fire and Air support detachments for observation and control etc. of naval and aerial bombardments.

Although 505th Parachute R.C.T.'s operation was a fiasco as a whole, the scattered groups of parachutists made themselves a dangerous nuisance to the enemy. Nearly all groups, for some attached themselves to British and Canadian units and to 45th U.S. Division, headed for the planned dropping-zone near Niscemi and on the way attacked chance-met enemy patrols, posts, and even units, laid ambushes, tore up railway track, and cut telephone lines. Larger parties in the Gela area played their part in repulsing the counter-attacks. Colonel Gavin, who had dropped near Vittoria, reached the Gela area on the 11th and took command of his homing bands. By the 14th 2,000, about two-thirds of his R.C.T., had assembled.

It was 1st U.S. Division which met the main counter-attacks launched by Axis troops in the Gela area. The first Axis units to be ordered forward from their assembly points in the neighbourhoods of Caltanissetta and Caltagirone early on 10th July were the 33rd Infantry Regiment of the Livorno Division and the tank regiment of the Hermann Göring Division. There was also the Italian Mobile Group 'E', which moved south from the direction of Ponte Olivo, and ran into 16th R.C.T., which was moving north, as well as sundry American parachutists. The Americans soon disposed of this attack, powerfully helped by fire from the cruiser *Boise*, the destroyers *Jeffers* and *Shubrick*, and the monitor H.M.S. *Abercrombie*. West of Gela a battalion of 33rd Infantry Regiment (Livorno) attacked, and was routed by Rangers. In the afternoon, from about 2 p.m. 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 16th Infantry (16th R.C.T.), and detachments of parachutists, in position or aggressively milling round, became engaged with most of the Hermann Göring's tank regiment, and with a second force of two infantry battalions, and some 'Tigers' of Panzer Abteilung 215. These two forces were converging rather raggedly upon the area north of Gela from north and north-east. The Americans and the warships' guns were too much for them, and towards evening they drew off northwards.

While these skirmishes were in progress Guzzoni instructed Rossi, of 16th Corps, that he was to renew the assault the next day, using the whole of the Livorno Division as well as the Hermann Göring. By dawn on the 11th the Italian formation stood ready to attack from the north-west, formed up in three groups, while Conrath's troops were formed into two battle groups east of Highway 117, leading from Gela. Their attack fell mainly on the 16th Infantry, a battalion of the 26th, and the ubiquitous parachutists, who were mostly in temporary positions since an advance was intended. There began a considerable mêlée which lasted until early afternoon. But the American infantry were resolute, and most of the divisional artillery was in action, as from time to time were the cruisers *Boise*

and *Savannah*, and the destroyers *Glennon*, *Beatty*, *Laub*, and *Cowie*. The artillery fired about 2,000 rounds, and the warships 1,600. At length the Germans retreated northwards. The Livorno Division too began its attack early against positions held by 26th Infantry and 1st Rangers. The Italians were roughly handled, and again the warships bombarded heavily, the *Savannah* firing nearly 1,000 rounds. Shortly after mid-day the attack ceased. The Hermann Göring reported 12 tanks destroyed, and twelve too damaged to continue in action.¹ At 1.15 p.m. von Senger reported to Kesselring that Guzzoni had ordered the Hermann Göring Division to break off the counter-attack. von Senger later was misled by a too optimistic situation report and went forward to urge this division to mount a fresh attack towards Comiso. But the visit convinced him that a fresh attack was not practicable, and instead Conrath prepared to retreat, in the first place to a point south-east of Caltagirone. That night, the 11th, Guzzoni ordered the Livorno Division back to the line Mazzarino-Caltagirone, and next morning, the 12th, he ordered 16th Corps to adopt delaying tactics in view of reinforcements which he expected from Italy. The Hermann Göring Division was to hold the area between Caltagirone and Vizzini, with the much weakened Napoli Division on its right, and the Livorno Division on its left. By this time Guzzoni and von Senger had concluded that opportunities to counter-attack in the beachheads had disappeared, and believed that 15th Panzer Grenadier Division would have to stay in central Sicily to counter the threatening American advance from Licata. And so, within three days of the landings, the Axis field commanders had decided that the next phase must be one of defence, and therefore it was rearguards, sometimes stubborn and at others shaky, which opposed for a time the advancing 1st and 45th Divisions. 1st U.S. Division took Ponte Olivo on the 12th and then moved northwards into the gap which was spreading between the Livorno and Hermann Göring Divisions. 45th U.S. Division which on the 11th had seized Comiso airfield and Ragusa, advanced on the eastern flank of the 1st. On the 12th the 45th Division's leading troops (of 157th and 179th R.C.T.s) were on the line Chiaramonte-westwards. The Hermann Göring Division was showing that it had no intention of being hustled or trapped, but on the 13th the Americans continued to move steadily northwards.

Truscott, far away to the west at Licata, had his 3rd Division well in hand on the evening of the 10th, and had pushed two battalions seven miles north towards Campobello. Combat Command 'A' of

¹ There is, however, evidence to suggest that more tanks were damaged, as according to one German report the total of serviceable tanks held by the Hermann Göring Division on the evening of 11th July was 54, including 4 Tigers; this compares with a total of 99 serviceable (including 13 Tigers) on 9th July.

2nd U.S. Armoured Division had landed. Truscott intended on the 11th to consolidate Campobello, push the armour north-west to Naro, and 7th R.C.T. west to Palma di Montechiaro. These objectives and also Riesi were taken. The opposition came mainly from the Venturi Group, three Bersaglieri battalions with a few guns, which 12th Corps had sent to reinforce the shaken 207th Coastal Division. 15th Panzer Grenadier Division was not yet fully assembled, but by the morning of the 12th Group Fullriede (basically 129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment) had deployed in the area of Canicatti. Group Ens (basically 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment) came into position between Piazza Armerina and Barrafranca. Truscott, having completed his initial task and having no further orders, decided in consultation with Patton's deputy, Keyes, to take Canicatti and reconnoitre towards Agrigento. By the evening of the 12th Combat Command 'A' was engaging Fullriede who withdrew north to Serradifalco during the night 12th/13th. On the 13th a small force of 7th R.C.T. reconnoitred Agrigento which appeared to be firmly held, though in fact Italian morale in the area was low, partly owing to bombardments of the neighbouring Porto Empedocle by U.S.S. *Birmingham* and *Brooklyn*. Truscott now was eager to push north-west to Caltanissetta and perhaps towards Enna, and had enough administrative backing to do so. But he knew that he was responsible for the security of the Allied left flank, where the Axis seemed to be reinforcing. He therefore sought fresh orders from Patton, who had opened a H.Q. at Gela.

The American infantry divisions were doing well, and by 12th July 2nd U.S. Armoured Division was complete on shore. On the night 11th/12th, however, a horrible misfortune befell 82nd U.S. Airborne Division. According to 7th Army's plan of June the remainder of this Division was to follow its 505th Parachute R.C.T. to Sicily as soon as might be, and 504th Parachute R.C.T. stood ready to emplane from 10th July.¹ In June the 82nd's commander, General Ridgway, had foreseen that his follow-up flights might be fired on by Allied anti-aircraft guns, and had taken pains to avert the danger. It was agreed that the aircraft would fly on an announced, carefully planned course. The last leg of this course was overland, due west from Sampieri (30 miles east of Gela) along a corridor two miles wide across the dropping-zone, and onwards to Licata and then out to sea. Aircraft were to fly at 1,000 feet. On 6th July A.F.H.Q. issued orders by wireless to all naval forces, informing them of the proposed airborne moves and course, and forbidding fire to be opened on aircraft following the course. On the 7th and 10th, 7th U.S. Army

¹ 504th Parachute R.C.T. (Colonel Reuben H. Tucket). Main units: 1st and 2nd Battalions 504th Parachute Infantry; 376 Parachute Field Artillery Battalion; company 307th Airborne Engineer Battalion.

H.Q. issued similar orders to its formations, and on the 11th a special warning order. At 7 p.m. on 11th July the first of 144 aircraft of 52nd Troop Carrier Wing took off from Tunisia, and the remainder followed. The flight was made in good order, and the leading aircraft turned on to the final leg of the course at about 10.30 p.m.

Unfortunately since early morning on the 11th the Axis air forces had directed most of their attacks against the American beaches and anchorages. During the day there were four main groups of attacks, two ships at least were hit and many narrowly escaped hits. Anti-aircraft guns were constantly in action, ships had often to change position, and American Spitfires and Kittyhawks swept in and out. Between 10 and 11 p.m. the enemy again attacked the anchorages. Ships got under way and 'The Sky over Gela and over Scoglitti . . . was a confused jumble of friendly and enemy planes and anti-aircraft fire . . .' The unfortunate troop-carrying aircraft flew into this vortex, and were shot to pieces by the anti-aircraft gunners, ashore and afloat, who were firing on anything that flew. General Ridgway stood on Gela-Farello airfield and watched, helpless and horrified. From this operation 23 aircraft never returned, and 37 were badly damaged, 504th R.C.T. lost 81 killed, 132 wounded, and 16 missing. Eight aircraft returned to Tunisia without dropping; other parachutists dropped at random. However, by 14th July Ridgway had 3,700 men (including 505th Parachute R.C.T.) in hand, and by the 16th the 82nd was ready once more.

(ii)

By the end of the 11th, in Alexander's opinion, ' . . . the bridge-head was assuming very solid proportions . . . Both Armies were pushing ahead impetuously and it seemed as though nothing could stop them . . .' He had always been clear that 'The next thing to do was to split the island in half, and the first stage would be to seize and hold the irregular rectangle of roads in the centre round Caltanissetta and Enna.' This operation would deny the enemy the main east-west routes in central Sicily. A further move northwards to Nicosia would deprive him of the next east-west route, and then only the north coast road would remain, which could be cut near S. Stefano. On the 11th evening Montgomery set forth his views

' . . . am developing operations intensively so as to retain initiative. Have no news of American progress. If they can . . . secure Caltagirone and Canicatti and hold firm against enemy action from the west, I could then swing hard with my right with an easier mind. If they draw enemy attacks on them my swing north will cut off enemy completely.'

He was on this day hoping to capture Catania and the Gerbini airfields 'by about 14th July'. By the late evening on the 12th his ideas had developed:

'My battle situation very good. Have captured Augusta and my line now runs through Sortino—Vizzini—Ragusa—Sciacca. Intend now to operate on two axes: 13 Corps on Catania and northwards: 30 Corps on Caltagirone—Enna—Leonforte. Suggest American division at Comiso might now move westwards to Niscemi and Gela. The maintenance and transport and road situation will not allow of two armies both carrying out extensive offensive operations. Suggest my Army operates offensively northwards to cut the Island in two and that American Army hold extensively on line Caltanissetta—Canicatti—Licata facing west. The available maintenance to be allocated accordingly. Once my left Corps reaches area Leonforte—Enna the enemy opposing the Americans will never get away'.

The line described in the message was somewhat ahead of the facts, for Augusta was not completely cleared until 14th July and Vizzini was not taken until the night 14th/15th July. Some 16,000 tons of stores and 4,000 vehicles had been landed for 8th Army, and some 17,000 tons and 7,000 vehicles for 7th U.S. Army. Montgomery was not concerned with details, but he took a most hopeful view of 13th Corps' prospects, and was proposing that he should broaden his front and advance, and that 7th U.S. Army should stand fast.

At about the same time Patton believed that his 7th Army was well balanced, strong in armour, and ready for a deep thrust, perhaps to Palermo. General Alexander visited him on the 13th and in discussion agreed that 7th U.S. Army should take Agrigento and Porto Empedocle if this could be done at small cost. Alexander did not, according to American accounts, discuss any broader plans for either army. On the evening of the 13th Montgomery signalled to Alexander (who had returned to Malta) '... 45 Division is advancing between Vizzini and Caltagirone. My troops are now advancing from Vizzini on Caltagirone and unless something is done there will be a scene of intense military confusion on road Vizzini to Caltagirone. Suggest 45 Division moves Gela area and whole American effort is directed on Caltanissetta to Canicatti to Agrigento,' that is westward to a front of forty miles. At 2.30 a.m. on the 14th Alexander replied '... I spoke to Patton yesterday to this effect and have since issued written instructions to this effect ...' These instructions had in fact been sent to 8th and 7th U.S. Armies at 8 p.m. on the 13th and were:

'Operations for the immediate future will be for Eighth Army to advance on two axes. One to capture the Port of Catania and

the group of airfields there, and the other to secure the network of road communications within the area Leonforte—Enna. Seventh Army will conform by pivoting on Palma di Montechiaro—Canicatti—Caltanissetta, gaining touch with the Eighth Army at road junction H.1979. [This was about ten miles due east of Caltanissetta.] Boundary between Seventh and Eighth Armies road Vizzini—Caltagirone—Piazza Armerina—Enna, all inclusive to Eighth Army. Liaison will be carefully arranged between Seventh and Eighth Armies for this operation.'

Alexander has written ' . . . This meant that Seventh Army would be free to pivot on its left and strengthen its grip on the central portion of the island, preparatory to carrying out the task for which I had designated it . . .' This task had been described in Alexander's operation instruction of 19th May:

- ' . . . (iii) Establish itself so as to gain touch with Force 545 [8th Army] at Ragusa and protect the airfields and port in sub-para. . . . [i.e. airfields of Ponte Olivo, Biscari, Comiso; port of Licata.]
- (iv) Subsequently to prevent enemy reserves moving eastward against the left flank of Force 545 [8th Army].

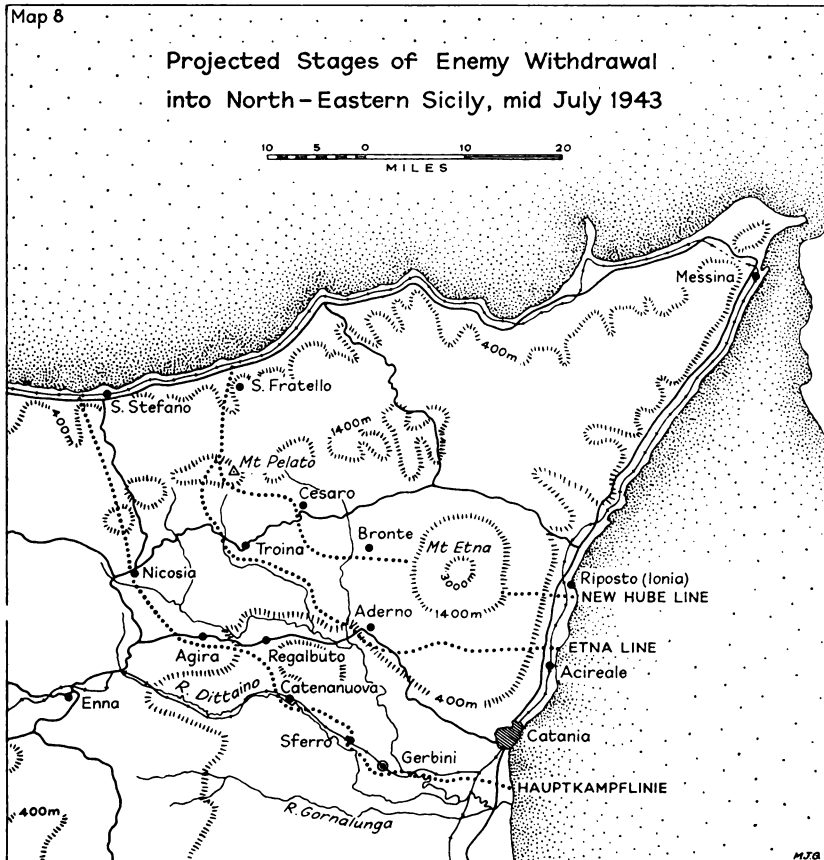
The task for 8th Army in the equivalent phase, described in the same instruction, was to establish itself on the general line Syracuse—Palazzolo—Ragusa; gain touch with 7th U.S. Army in Ragusa; and capture quickly the ports of Augusta and Catania and the Gerbini group of airfields. In fact therefore Alexander adhered to his first plan of using Patton's army, for the time being, to hold, but made 8th Army his striking force, and gave it a second task, and a second axis of advance. His new directive adopted Montgomery's suggestions.

Patton, Bradley, and their senior staff officers were surprised and disappointed by Alexander's directive. It seemed to them that 7th U.S. Army was to be confined to operations in western Sicily while 8th Army reduced the rest of the island. Rightly or wrongly the orders were interpreted to mean that Alexander had less than complete confidence in the capabilities of his American troops. It seemed too that 7th U.S. Army was being deprived of an opportunity, very favourable for bold offensive action, which appeared to exist. The orders would greatly complicate administrative moves. Nevertheless the orders were obeyed. Patton indeed refused Bradley's request to use the Vizzini—Caltagirone road for a short time in order to keep his advance going.

The foregoing paragraphs tell no more than how Alexander elaborated his plan of campaign. They take no account of future developments or of criticisms that would be made.

See Map 8

In the German High Command the orders and decisions which took shape between the 11th and 14th July showed how little confidence there was in the Italian Ally. Hitler, who at first believed that between five and seven Allied divisions had landed in Sicily, robustly directed that the enemy must be thrown back into the sea. For this purpose he ordered, on the 11th, that most of 1st Parachute Division was to be flown to Sicily, and that 29th Panzer Grenadier



Division was to cross from the mainland, followed by Headquarters, 14th Panzer Corps. But on the 12th he received a report that Italian troops had surrendered Augusta without a fight. In furious anger he instructed von Rintelen, military attaché in Rome, instantly to tell Mussolini that, if this report were true, the will to fight of Italian troops in Sicily must be stimulated, for otherwise there would be no point in sending more German troops. Mussolini did not impress von Rintelen as being resolute but did demand more German aircraft. On the 12th Kesselring went to Sicily, confident as was his

habit, and inclined to class the invasion as a 'Dieppe' raid. First-hand knowledge, however, made him think that the German troops were fighting virtually on their own and must be reinforced, that western Sicily must be abandoned, and an 'Etna Line' established. Hitler, on receiving Kesselring's report, issued fresh orders on the 13th. The immediate task, he directed, was to delay the advance of the Allies and then to bring it to a standstill. Therefore a new defence-line must be made ready and manned: to run roughly from S. Stefano (on the north coast) through Aderno to Catania, i.e. forward of Mt. Etna.¹ H.Q. 14th Panzer Corps and two Regiments of 1st Parachute Division were to go to Sicily as planned, but 29th Panzer Grenadier Division no further than Reggio until it was certain that there were sufficient German supplies in Sicily, and until it was known whether continued traffic across the Straits of Messina could be guaranteed. On the 14th Hitler sent Kesselring his secret orders, already noticed in Chapter II, for 14th Panzer Corps, to take over the campaign and elbow out the Italian command, while gaining control of any reliable Italian troops. In fact on the 13th Kesselring had already told Hube, the Corps commander, that 'if a certain situation arose' he would be in command of all Sicily and that his most important task would be to save all the men and equipment that he could—in that order.²

Hitler took no big decisions concerning the campaign in Sicily from 14th July until the 26th, when the event of Mussolini's fall from power caused him to recast all his Mediterranean policies. He did however order, on the 16th, a large reinforcement of the anti-aircraft batteries in the island, and on the 18th gave permission for the move there of the first units of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. Nevertheless by the middle of July his senior commanders had very little hope of holding Sicily for long and believed that there was no profit in sacrificing German formations in the attempt. Therefore a bridge-head in north-east Sicily was conceived of, to which German formations and staunch Italian troops would deliberately withdraw, and through which they would, as deliberately, evacuate Sicily—the entire operation to be under the sole tactical direction of General Hube. These thoughts as yet remained inside German heads, for on the 13th Kesselring told Mussolini that everything possible to hold Sicily would be done although 'naturally he could not guarantee that they would succeed'.

It is therefore convenient at this point to continue the story of the Axis command in Sicily until about 17th July. Hube arrived on the 15th, and also Kesselring once more. On the night 16th/17th Hube took command of all German Army formations, of the Hermann

¹ Aderno had an alternative style: Adrano. We adopt Aderno, but give Adrano in quoting from documents which use that style.

² Kesselring was back in Italy on 13th July.

Göring Division and all Flak units (i.e. *Luftwaffe* troops), and overall command of the defences of the Messina Straits. von Senger reverted to his official duties as Liaison Officer with 6th Army. There were discussions with Guzzoni, beginning on the 16th, concerning the siting and sectors of the line in which 6th Army would 'resist to the last'. It is uncertain who actually fixed the 'line'. In fact there were three which it is best to tabulate.

Hauptkampflinie (main defence line). Following roughly the road-line from just west of S. Stefano south to Nicosia—Agira—east to Regalbuto—then southerly to Catenanuova—eastwards along the Dittaino River—across the northern edge of the Catanian plain to the coast six miles south of Catania. This unavoidable string of names indicates a useful, coast-to-coast defensive line, taking advantage of mountainous country, a river bank, and the broken Catanian plain. Behind the line the country became worse to traverse until after fifteen miles or so there appeared:

The Etna Line or 'Old Hube Line'. From S. Fratello, a few miles inland from the northern coast—south to Troina—south-east to Aderno—and east along the roads girdling Etna to the sea at Acireale.

'New Hube Line'. Mt. Pelato—Cesaro—Bronte—eastward to the sea near Riposto. This 'line' in fact was the outermost delaying position for the north-eastern evacuation bridgehead.

These 'lines' should not be pictured as belts of field-works. They were, rather, excellent natural positions for defence and delay, formidable in themselves, which could readily be made more formidable by demolitions, mines, blasting, pick and shovel—any of the improvements that troops who mean business can make.

By 17th July Axis operations in Sicily were moving towards subordination to the tactical control of Hube. Guzzoni sensibly and tactfully decided to give him command of all sectors in which German troops were to be. But for the present Hube had to exercise command mainly through liaison officers and despatch-riders, and Guzzoni and Kesselring did not immediately withdraw their fingers from the tactical pie. Thus between 14th and about 20th July divisional, even battle-group, commanders took most of the effective decisions, and there was a criss-crossing of orders which we forbear to trace.

(iii)

The narrative now returns to 13th and 30th Corps on the morning of 13th July. The next phase to be described lasts until 18th July, and 13th Corps has the greatest share of events. The action was sustained mainly by groups, brigades on the British side, battle-groups on the German, and the dates and times of events are closely

related. A preliminary outline therefore may avert confusing, explanatory detail later. 13th Corps' object was to make a bridge-head across the Simeto River at the Primosole bridge, seven miles south of Catania, by the evening of 14th July, and then to capture Catania. For this purpose 5th Division was to press northwards up the main coast road and, further inland, 50th Division was to match the 5th's advance, along a secondary road at first parallel, then converging at Carlentini. Ahead of the two advancing divisions, the Malati bridge across the Lentini River was to be seized by 3rd Comando landing from the sea, and the Primosole bridge by 1st Parachute Brigade dropping from the sky. These 'coups de main' would occur during the night 13th/14th and within a few hours 5th and 50th Divisions were to arrive at the scene of each. As it happened, the enemy managed to delay and finally to frustrate 13th Corps. He had no special master-plan; rather, chance and the reactions of competent commanders to the circumstances of an encounter battle decided his moves.

Colonel Schmalz and his battle-group of the Hermann Göring Division had on the 11th begun to establish a position pivoted on Mt. Pancali, just south of Carlentini, and had pushed delaying detachments further south. On the 12th the German 1st Parachute Division began to arrive on Catania airfields. No arrival could have been more timely. Colonel Heilmann and the 3rd Parachute Regiment rushed south, and reinforced Schmalz the same evening. Other units hurried to Primosole. Between them Schmalz and Heilmann gained time. Although the British coups de main succeeded, the general momentum of 13th Corps lessened, and when 50th Division reached Primosole on the evening of 14th, it was unable to force the passage of the river in the face of German parachutists who had firmly, if hastily, established themselves there.

30th Corps' operations were simpler in pattern than the 13th's. 51st Highland Division took Vizzini on the night of 14th/15th July. Leese then sent 1st Canadian Division north-westwards on Highway 124 to Caltagirone and onwards, and turned the Highland Division north to form a firm base in the area of Scordia-Francofonte on 13th Corps' left flank. In fact, the Highland Division with scarcely a pause pushed north, still on 13th Corps' left, towards the Dittaino river.

7th U.S. Army, until 17th July, was held by Alexander to its task of shielding the 8th Army's western flank.

The front (*the Hauptkampflinie*) which Hube and Guzzoni hoped to establish may be likened to a doorway between Catania and S. Stefano. The hinge-post stood at Catania. The door, some of its panels at least dented, was represented by the Axis formations between Catania and Corleone in western Sicily. This door was swinging, on the Catanian hinge, backwards across the country. The

Axis commanders hoped that it would shut before the Allies kicked through any panels or darted round its outer edge.

In 5th Division 15th Brigade set off at 5 a.m. on the 13th and three hours later, at a point some six miles from Villasmundo, found the enemy—in fact two battalions of 3rd Parachute Regiment and part of 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. These had an excellent position on a wooded ravine, hard to outflank. 15th Brigade was unable to mount a concerted attack with artillery support until 5 p.m. and it was 7 p.m. before the enemy were dislodged. Villasmundo was occupied in the early hours of the 14th. Seven crow-flight miles inland, 6th Green Howards (69th Brigade, 50th Division) left Sortino at 1.30 p.m. for a nine-mile march on the switchback road to Lentini. They were checked, some three hours later, by part of Schmalz Group in a delaying position on a bare ridge south of Mt. Pancali, on which was a further position. 7th Green Howards and 5th East Yorkshires were far behind, marching and ‘ferrying’ in a few lorries. General Kirkman, however, launched 6th Green Howards under cover of the failing light, and the battalion cleared the outlying position but was held up before Mt. Pancali. By 4.30 a.m. on the 14th 7th Green Howards came up, and by 10 a.m. Monte Pancali had been taken. 69th Brigade was by this time spread out and very tired, there were enemy rear-guards to deal with, and it was afternoon before it passed Lentini. 13th Corps had lost some hours, for by the plan Lentini should have been clear by dawn on the 14th when 151st Brigade (50th Division), supported by 4th Armoured Brigade (coming from Augusta), should have set out for the Primosole bridge.¹ However, Lentini taken was not Lentini cleared. Rubble and craters obstructed the streets and the roads beyond the town; there were occasional lurking machine-gunners and strafing aircraft; near Carlentini a blown bridge delayed 4th Armoured Brigade. It was 6.45 p.m. before 9th D.L.I. (151st Brigade) and a squadron of 44th R.T.R. were moving northward.

Schmalz Group had made good use of its machine-guns and mortars, and then escaped with enterprise. Schmalz went westward to Scordia and, on the 15th, across the Gornalunga river to Gerbini. Heilmann, keeping near the coast, struck difficult, swampy going. He swung west, and some leading troops actually hid for a little (it was night) under the Malati bridge (west of Agnone) which was echoing to British boots and wheels. Heilmann’s units lay up in olive

¹ *4th Armoured Brigade* (Brigadier J. C. Currie). Main Units: 44th R.T.R.; 3rd County of London Yeomanry. Equipped with Diesel-engine Sherman tanks; landed 10th and 11th July.

groves during the 15th and reached the Catania area on the 17th by travelling stealthily across country.

While these events had been passing 3rd Commando had accomplished its task at the Malati bridge. The Commando landed at Agnone from H.M.S. *Prins Albert* at about 10.30 p.m. on the 13th. H.M.S. *Tetcott* subdued a coastal battery and the Commando drove off an Italian infantry company at the cost of twenty-five casualties. Five miles of rough scrambling through olive orchards, vineyards and across gullies brought it to the bridge which was taken at about 4 a.m., and cleared of demolition charges. Soon, however, Italian troops (probably an anti-tank battalion and a company of motorcyclists) counter-attacked: the Commando numbered about four hundred. There was no sign of the expected British force from Lentini, and casualties were mounting. Colonel Durnford-Slater therefore broke off the action, and his unit withdrew, commando-style, in separate groups southward. The British action, though costly, succeeded in causing the enemy to leave the bridge unguarded and intact.¹

The other coup de main was by 1st Parachute Brigade at Primosole Bridge ten miles north of Lentini.² The Parachutists were carried in Dakotas of the American 51st Troop Carrier Wing and 11 Albemarles of No. 296 Squadron R.A.F. The anti-tank battery was in gliders towed by Halifaxes and Albemarles of Nos. 295 and 296 Squadrons, R.A.F. The first flights took off from Kairouan air base at 7 p.m. on the 13th, and the last leg of the course, which all were to follow, was up the east coast of Sicily, five miles off shore, to the mouth of the Simeto River. Here the aircraft were to turn inland, at 500 feet, to the parachutists' four dropping zones and the gliders' landing zones, near the bridge. Parachute dropping was to begin at 10 p.m. on 13th July, and the first gliders were to land at 1 a.m. on the 14th. 1st Parachute Battalion was to capture the bridge, 2nd Battalion was to hold the approaches to it from the south, and 3rd Battalion the approaches from the north.

The approach-flight experienced hazards and difficulties. 55 aircraft reported that they were being fired on by Allied ships. Damage from this and other causes made 26 aircraft return to Africa without dropping their loads. Anti-aircraft fire accounted for 11 aircraft and in all 14 aircraft were lost. Navigational errors, e.g. owing to evasive action, sent some aircraft astray. In sum 30 aircraft dropped loads

¹ 3rd Commando's casualties, as returned on 18th July, were: 28 killed; 66 wounded; 59 missing.

² 1st Parachute Brigade (Brigadier G. W. Lathbury). Main units: 1st, 2nd and 3rd Parachute Battalions; 1st Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery R.A. (less troop); 1st Parachute Squadron R.E. (less troop); dets 21st Independent Parachute Company; two Naval Bombardment Detachments. Total of Parachute Brigade in operation 1,856 all ranks; 12 6-pdr anti-tank guns, Jeep-towed; the Parachutists in 107 aircraft, the anti-tank battery in 17 gliders flown by the Glider Pilot Regiment.

on the dropping-zones, 9 aircraft dropped near them, and 48 aircraft dropped 'wide' by distances varying from half a mile to over 20 miles. Four gliders only landed correctly; seven others landed successfully at random; three anti-tank guns out of twelve came into action. The strength of the brigade in action was 12 officers and 283 men out of 1,856.

These colourless statistics belie a resolute action. The leading party of 1st Parachute Battalion dropped at 10.30 p.m. on the 13th, and at 2.15 a.m. on the 14th Captain Rann and fifty men snatched the bridge, defended it seems by an artillery troop, and took fifty Italian prisoners. A party of engineers removed demolition charges from the bridge. By 6.30 about 120 men of 1st Battalion, and two platoons of the 3rd, with three anti-tank guns were holding this prize. In the same period a platoon of 2nd Battalion had taken high ground south of the bridge, and were joined by others to a total strength of a little over a hundred. 3rd Battalion had had bad luck: eight aircraft out of thirty-three did not drop, and twenty-one dropped 'wide'. At about 6.30 a.m. the counter-attack, which everyone expected, began from the west against 2nd Battalion. Fortunately the counter-attack was not an onslaught, but rather sporadic thrusts delivered as bodies of enemy troops came on the scene. These were mainly German parachutists from 1st Parachute Division's machine-gun battalion, signals and engineers, but there was also an Italian Blackshirt battalion. The fights at the bridge and on the high ground were separate, and the defenders of each were not in touch. As the time passed the situation tilted against the British parachutists who had few weapons other than small arms, and necessarily a small amount of ammunition. The cruiser H.M.S. *Newfoundland* gave valuable help. There was no news of the relieving force except for a fleeting, broken, wireless contact with 4th Armoured Brigade. By 5 p.m. the bridge-party had lost their foothold on the Simeto's north bank, and were being galled by fire from enemy on the high ground to south, who were also pressing in on the 2nd Battalion. At 7.30 p.m., the bridge-party fell back upon the high ground, and a little later the first tanks of 4th Armoured Brigade appeared. The enemy fell back in their turn but only to positions in the broken ground on the Simeto's north bank. 1st Parachute Brigade's parties had had 115 casualties from a strength of 292.

This was the last major airborne operation by the Allies in Sicily.¹ On the 15th General Alexander suspended further tactical operations by 1st Airborne Division pending a great deal more inter-Service

¹ There were minor airborne operations carried out on the 12th/13th and 14/15th (an attempt on the 13th/14th was abortive). The object of these parachute drops, employing small parties, was to demolish enemy communications in the rear areas, principally around Randazzo. Telegraph poles, wires and cables were destroyed, M.T. and railway tracks blown up, and booby-traps planted—over a considerable area.

training in airborne techniques. On the 23rd Eisenhower appointed a board of officers to review the recent airborne operations and collate the lessons with a view to future planning. Much heat as well as light was generated, and the subject lies beyond our field. It is probably fair to say that in Sicily the airborne forces achieved some good results at far too high a cost, just as had the German 7th Air Division in Crete in 1941. The larger the scale on which airborne forces are used the more vast and complicated is the apparatus required to execute the operation, and the more susceptible it becomes to failure at one point or another. Possible causes are many, but not least is insufficient training because training cannot be hurried through even in war. To hurry through training is to deny the truth of the aphorism ascribed to Suvorov: 'Train hard: fight easy'.

During this phase in which the land forces began to reach out from the beachheads it is not possible to match the activity of the Allied tactical air forces with incidents on the ground. But the fruits of their activity are evident: on the 11th the Axis committed 481 aircraft to action over Sicily, a figure which shrank until it stood at 161 on the 15th.¹ The certain Axis losses in the air by day over Sicily between 11th and 16th July, were 59 German and 32 Italian, and four more German aircraft were destroyed by the A.A. guns. By night, between the 10th/11th and 16th/17th, 44 German and 12 Italian aircraft are known to have been destroyed, and the A.A. guns brought down five more German aircraft for certain and probably a further three.

References scattered in the enemy's records show that their moves on land were harassed by air attacks; for example, on the 11th Schmalz Group was dive-bombed by aircraft identifiable as Kittyhawk fighter-bombers of Nos. 3 R.A.A.F. and 112 and 250 Squadrons R.A.F. and Livorno Division had losses to report. In general, however, communications suffered rather than men.

Examples of successful combats in the air are more definite. Thus, on the 11th, No. 92 Squadron R.A.F. (Spitfires) shot down several Ju. 88s over Gela, as did No. 72 Squadron on the 12th with its Spitfires in three combats over Cassibile. On the 13th Stuka dive-bombers reappeared, brought south from Milan, and of 12 intercepted,

¹ In tabular form:

	<i>Italian</i>	<i>German</i>
11th July	198	283
12th "	171	202
13th "	197	164
14th "	88	156
15th "	76	85

five were destroyed and seven damaged. The night-fighters from Malta had continued success: on the 10th/11th four Ju. 88s and a Cant Z 1007; on the 11th/12th three Ju. 88s and a Ju. 52; on 12th/13th five Ju. 88s, three He. IIIs and two Cant Z 1007s; on the 13th/14th four Ju. 88s, two He. IIIs and an Italian P. 108. On the 14th/15th Beaufighters of Nos. 108 and 600 Squadrons and a Mosquito of No. 256 Squadron destroyed eight Ju. 88s, three He. IIIs and a Cant Z 1007; on the 15th/16th Squadron Leader J. W. Allan of No. 256 Squadron shot down four Ju. 88s and a Cant Z 1007 in a single sortie, and a He. III was destroyed by a Beaufighter of No. 600 Squadron. Then, on the 16th/17th, the night-fighters destroyed five Ju. 88s, one He. III, and six Cant Z 1007s near Augusta and Syracuse. By day American fighters had their successes, too.

In more general terms, by the 13th the German air formations were much reduced, and were beginning to rely mainly on night bombing. On the 14th the Italian strength fell away disastrously, and did not recover. On the 15th Kesselring told Hube that he must no longer count on air support during daylight, and on this day the Axis began to remove its serviceable aircraft and aircrews and essential ground staff to Italy.

In contrast to the run-down of the Axis air force in Sicily, the Allies were building up. On the 13th Advanced Headquarters Western Desert Air Force opened on Pachino airfield, and No. 244 Wing and three of its Spitfire squadrons flew in there from Malta.¹ Various units designed to extend the network for warning of air raids, and the machinery for fighter control came ashore, as did a detachment of No. 40 Air Stores Park, a most valuable boost for maintenance—eleven days ahead of schedule. On the 14th No. 244 Wing's fourth squadron arrived and No. 324 Wing with three squadrons of Spitfires flew from Malta to Comiso airfield. The American 33rd Fighter Group and its three squadrons of Kittyhawk fighters from Pantelleria, together with the American 111th Tac. R. Squadron (Mustangs), settled down at Gela—Farello; Advanced H.Q. of XII Air Support Command had opened at Gela on the 12th. On the 15th No. 324 Wing's remaining two squadrons arrived; two squadrons of U.S. 31st Fighter Group (Kittyhawk fighters) flew to Ponte Olivo from Gozo, and a third to Licata. More R.A.F. squadrons could now scarcely be fitted in until the Gerbini group of airfields had been taken—one more reason for a quick passage of the Simeto by 13th Corps and the capture of Catania.

There were, despite the general success, two main difficulties in tactical air operations. One was the difficulty, which had caused

¹ On 21st July Western Desert Air Force was renamed Desert Air Force.

much frustration in the Desert, of quickly making effective the theoretically well-known methods of fixing and using the bomb-line. The other difficulty was the, probably unavoidable, large number of air headquarters. The network of tactical air command is very hard to describe clearly and shortly.

During the assault phase Sir Arthur Coningham, A.O.C. N.A.T.A.F., had exercised overall control of all British and American air operations in direct support of the assaulting forces. He continued to do so in the post-assault phase, but at the lower level A.O.C. Malta Air Command, Park, retained control of the Malta-based air operations only until A.O.C. W.D.A.F., Broadhurst, had established his H.Q. in Sicily to control all tactical air operations in the island. But there would be another development when enough terrain had been captured to allow the Commanding General U.S. XII Air Support Command, Hickey, elbow room. Then Broadhurst would control tactical air operations in support of 8th Army, and Hickey those in support of 7th U.S. Army. This is the sufficiently complicated outline of arrangements at a fairly high level. It can easily be seen that the progressive transfer of command to the various headquarters, when established ashore in Sicily, at this level and below, was not simple. It was made much more difficult by inadequate communications.

The Allied air plan in preparation for the invasion, for the actual assault, and for the critical days following it was remarkably successful. The forecast, made on 10th January, of the number of German aircraft likely to be committed in opposing the invasion was 540 (the figure for the Italians was 190). But between mid-May and 10th July there was a 75% increase (excluding air transports) in German air strength in the Mediterranean area, with the result that the number of German aircraft within effective range of Sicily rose to 600-775 with a further 63 on the way, and this despite the loss, by Allied action alone, of over 320 aircraft in this period. Yet on 10th July only 370 German aircraft were committed (the Italian figure was 141) in opposing invasion. The disruption of aircraft maintenance and repair facilities both in Sicily and southern Italy brought about by the frequent moves, enforced by the Allied preparatory bombing, of the G.A.F. from airfield to more distant airfield, coupled with the destruction of and damage to hangars, workshops and installations, had undoubtedly taken a heavy toll of serviceability. When the invasion was launched the Axis air forces were nowhere near strong enough to make heavy and sustained attacks on the invasion forces, much less to defeat the Allied air defence of the assault areas. The fairly small loss suffered by Allied ships from hostile air action between 10th-31st July, off the coasts of Sicily, indicates how effective was the air defence. The list reads: in ships lost, two American warships, one British hospital ship, seven merchant vessels; in ships

damaged, six British warships, five American warships, one British hospital ship, seven merchant vessels. For contrast the sea, the wind, the sand-banks, rocks, and other dangers off the Sicilian shores, and unknown causes, damaged some 250 landing-craft.¹

The success already achieved by D-Day was enhanced by subsequent Allied air action. Those of the enemy's airfields in Sicily which had escaped serious damage by then were very few, and this restricted the dispersal and cramped the operations of his fighters and fighter-bombers thus making further bombing attacks on them that much more devastating. Against the assault shipping and land forces ashore there were, to begin with, sporadic attacks which are inescapable if a hostile air force means to fight at all. But they rapidly faded as Allied attacks on the enemy's airfields and the attrition of his fighters and bombers in the air continued and took effect. That during the first week of the invasion the total number of Axis aircraft committed daily to operations fell from over 500 to well under 170 provides some indication at least of the success achieved after D-Day.

(iv)

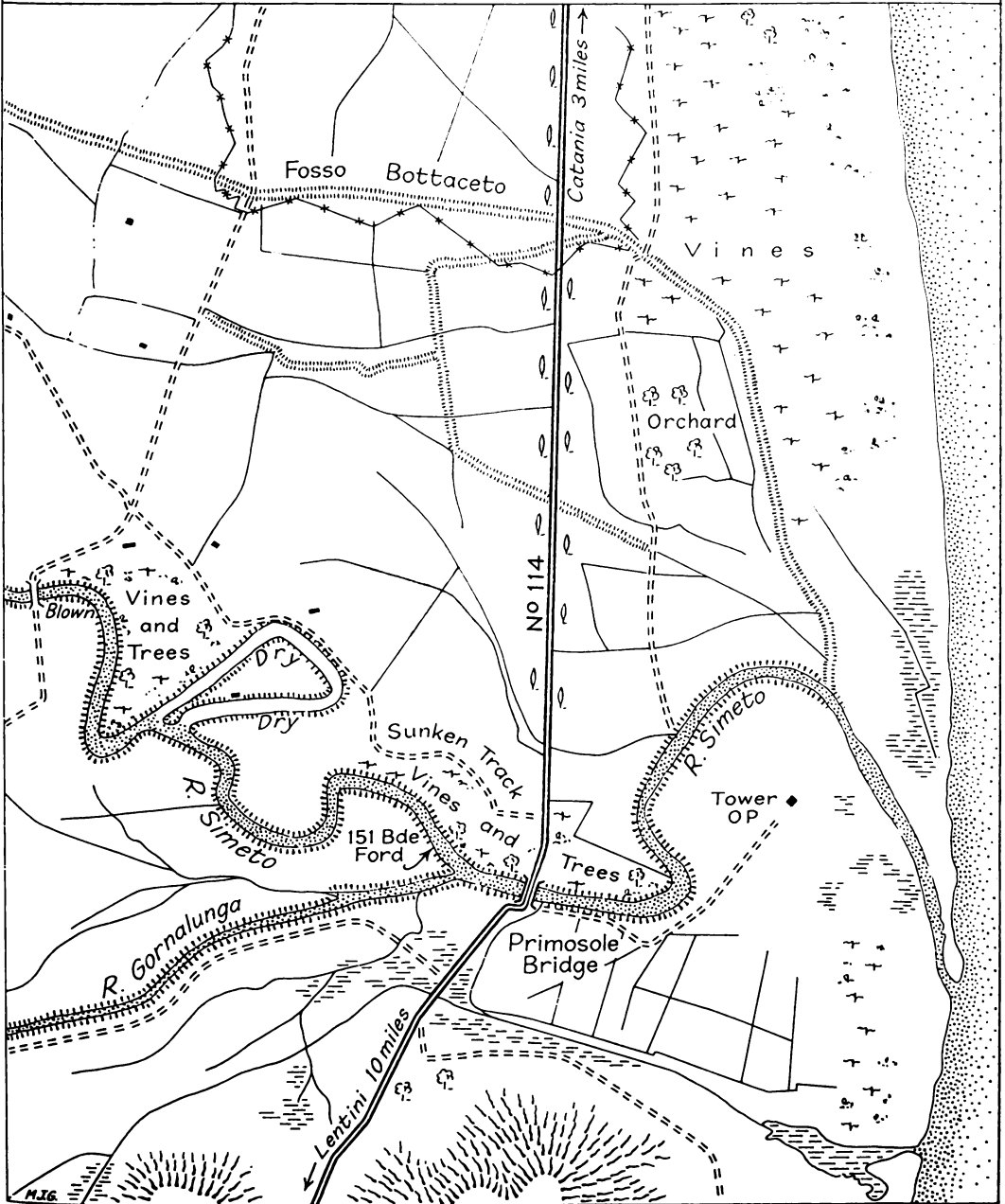
See Map 9

The Primosole bridge crossed the Simeto River at the middle of a loop in its bed, open towards the north. The river was about thirty yards wide, with a muddy bottom and muddy banks on which grew patches of tall reeds. In July the water might be described as waist-deep, though hollows in the bed produced places out of a man's depth. The stream was sluggish. Seven hundred yards west of the bridge the Gornalunga River, embanked and canal-like, joined the Simeto on its south side. East of the bridge the Simeto wound to the sea, about a mile and a half away, through marshy flats without much cover. Near the bridge, however, the north bank, for a thousand yards eastward and rather more westward, carried a belt, some five hundred yards deep, of vines, fruit trees and olives. On the northern fringe of this belt ran a track, sunken in parts, and in it was a farm building or two. It was a hole-and-corner area, very 'blind', full of lurking-places. North of the belt was a slab of Catanian plain, bare but cut up by water-channels and drains, and across it the straight road ran northwards until, after two and a half miles, it crossed the Fosso Bottaceto, a big, dry, irrigation channel. This channel in fact was on the southern skirt of the defences of Catania

¹ The number of craft which were a total loss is uncertain but was small. The uncertainty arises from the fact that a large, but not accurately known, number of craft, thought to be damaged beyond repair, were repaired.

Map 9

Area of the Primosole Bridge



airfield. Here, on the east of the road, there was a strip of trees and scrub.

Such was the area in which 50th Division had to make a bridgehead before capturing Catania and the Gerbini airfields.¹ A glance at where some formations, British and enemy, were early on the 15th July will set the scene. In 50th Division, 151st Brigade was south of the bridge as were 98th Army Field Regiment, 24th Field Regiment (both self-propelled 105-mm), and 4th Armoured Brigade. 69th Brigade was at Lentini, holding a firm base and especially watching the western flank, which at this time was a worry and a hindrance to both 50th and 5th Divisions. For it was reported that German troops were in the area Francofonte–Scordia, and the reports were confused and coloured by the appearances and disappearances of parties, probably of Schmalz's and Heilmann's men of 2nd/3rd Parachute Regiment. 168th Brigade, which had landed on the 13th, was near Melilli. Transport was still scarce, and marching and ferrying were the rule. In 5th Division 15th Brigade was clearing up the Villasmundo area and 13th Brigade had closed up to it. 17th Brigade was near Augusta. The two divisions of 13th Corps therefore were strung out by brigades, mostly busy with local tasks, and as was unavoidable, not disposed for any attempt at shaking out on to a broad front. The nearest neighbours from 30th Corps were the Highland Division's 152nd Brigade which had moved up from Francofonte to Scordia, continually in contact with small parties of the enemy.

The backbone of the enemy's defence on the north bank of the Simeto was formed by the Machine-Gun and Engineer battalions of 1st Parachute Division, part of a battery of parachute artillery (7.5-cm guns), sundry detachments from divisional headquarters, at least two 8.8-cm guns probably from the Hermann Göring Flak Regiment, and a couple of Italian battalions. But in addition Schmalz's Group had now reached the Catania area, as had a battalion of 4th Parachute Regiment. In short there was a stiff German nucleus on the Simeto's north bank, and miscellaneous reinforcements were entering the Catania area, just as 50th Division attacked.

¹ *50th (Northumbrian) Division* (Major-General S. C. Kirkman).

Main formations and units:

69th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier E. C. Cooke-Collis):

5th E. Yorkshire, 6th and 7th Green Howards.

151st Infantry Brigade (Brigadier R. H. Senior):

6th, 8th, 9th Durham L.I.

168th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier K. C. Davidson):

1st London Irish, 1st London Scottish, 10th Royal Berkshire.

74th, 124th, and 90th Field Regiments R.A.; 102nd A/Tk Regiment R.A.; 25th L.A.A. Regiment R.A.; 233rd, 501st, 505th Field Companies R.E.; 2nd Cheshire (M.G.)

The 168th Infantry Brigade, originally part of 56th Division, joined 50th Division in May 1943. The Brigade had no experience in battle.

9th D.L.I. and the squadron of 44th R.T.R. had arrived too late on the 14th to attack with much hope of success, especially because the men were very tired. No one had enjoyed much sleep since the 9th, the eve of invasion. At 7.30 a.m. on the 15th the battalion, supported by the tanks and the two field regiments, attacked the bridge, head-on. One platoon reached the other side temporarily, but heavy fire held everyone else to the south bank all day. There were a hundred casualties in the day—34 killed—including nine officers. General Kirkman planned a stronger attack in the afternoon, but towards noon General Dempsey arrived with a wider plan. 50th Division was still to force the river-crossing, but the timing might alter since troops of 17th Brigade and two Royal Marine Commandos were to assault Catania from the sea on the night 16th/17th, and 50th Division was to time its thrust to Catania to take advantage of this operation. Later 5th Division was to pass through. It therefore would suffice if 50th Division secured its bridgehead on the 16th, and Kirkman decided that 151st Brigade should renew its attack by moonlight in the small hours of the 16th. There would be more artillery by then: 124th Field Regiment, 92nd Field Regiment from 5th Division, and a medium battery.¹

Brigadier Senior decided to renew his attack with one battalion—8th D.L.I. 9th D.L.I. was engaging the enemy at the bridge, and 6th D.L.I. was two miles in rear, watching the approaches from Scordia: again the worry of the open flank. Two companies were to ford the river half a mile west of the bridge, swing right through the vineyards and orchards, and pounce on the bridge's northern end. Then the rest of the battalion would cross at the bridge, and extend the bridgehead a thousand yards northwards.

At 1.30 a.m. on the 16th, after an hour's artillery preparation, 'A' and 'D' companies of 8th D.L.I. crossed, and won a footing. Unfortunately the wireless sets had been 'drowned', reports went astray, and it was not until first-light that the rest of the battalion and a squadron of 44th R.T.R. crossed over. They could make no headway against the enemy tucked into holes and corners, and four tanks were knocked out. It was stalemate. Kirkman considered putting in another battalion but decided against it. There seemed small chance of success, in daylight, in the face of machine-guns and mortars, and because the artillery was stultified because no one could see, or accurately find out, where the troops on the north bank were—a fog which did not begin to clear until Senior at 10.40 a.m. ran the gauntlet to return and report. Later Montgomery and Dempsey arrived, agreed to postpone the landing at Catania until the night 17th/18th,

¹ Only 124th Field Regiment belonged to 50th Division. Its 74th and 90th Field Regiments were landing at Syracuse, and would come into action, it was hoped, on the 16th.

and directed Kirkman to enlarge his bridgehead during the night 16th/17th.

Kirkman and Senior decided to attack with two battalions of 151st Brigade at 1 a.m. on the 17th. 69th Brigade was still mopping up around Lentini, and 168th Brigade was just arriving in the forward area. 6th D.L.I. was to cross the Simeto by the fords west of the bridge and attack north-eastwards; 9th D.L.I. was to attack straight ahead. The objective was a line drawn across the shoulders of the loop made by the river; 6th D.L.I. on the left of the main road, 9th D.L.I. on the right. 3rd C.L.Y. (4th Armoured Brigade) was to exploit. Six field regiments and one medium were to give artillery support, firing concentrations for half an hour before zero, and then barrages and some concentrations.¹ It was a very great handicap that from a single observation post only was it possible to gain a fair idea of where friend and foe already were in the undergrowth on the north bank.

The 6th D.L.I. crossed the river on time and almost unopposed. An hour later 9th D.L.I. advanced in its turn. Some tanks crossed also. By about 1 p.m. both battalions had reached their objectives. This is a bald summary of fighting that was hard and messy. The belt of vines and fruit trees was hard to clear. There were continual deadly shootings and grapplings between small parties in the undergrowth. A group would eliminate its immediate enemies and then find that others popped up like jack-in-the-boxes behind and around it. The tanks and infantry at first, if anything, obstructed each other. Tank-men wanted a clear field in which anything seen could be taken as hostile so that they could move first and shoot first. Infantry engaged in their own fights, found it hard and expensive to move to clear the field, however much they might wish to. After two or three hours effective answers were found. It was a blind and confused action—two six-pounder anti-tank guns, towed by carriers, of 6th D.L.I. dashed almost to the Fosso Bottaceto before realizing where they were. The successful action cost 6th D.L.I. 120 casualties, and 9th D.L.I. 100. The enemy fell back to the Fosso Bottaceto.

Meanwhile Dempsey had arrived with a plan somewhat modified in consequence of Montgomery's expanding ideas, such as '... All indications point to the fact that enemy is very stretched and we should press him strongly with thrusts in all sectors.' The next chapter will trace these developments. The present results for 13th Corps were that the landings at Catania were scrapped; 50th Division was to push up to the Fosso Bottaceto on the night 17th/18th, to clear the way for a thrust by 5th Division to Misterbianco, five miles west of Catania.

¹ 74th, 90th, 124th, 24th, 92nd, 98th Field Regiments R.A., 66th Medium Regiment R.A.: approximately 96 25-pdrs., 48 105-mm howitzers, and 16 medium guns: 4.5-inch and 5.5-inch.

By the night 17th/18th Kirkman would have his whole division in hand. He therefore decided that 168th Brigade, supported by the fire of eight field regiments and two medium batteries of artillery, was to secure a first objective, about two thousand yards north of the river; 69th Brigade, with the same weight of artillery support, was then to exploit to the line of the Fosso Bottaceto. 13th Brigade (loaned from 5th Division) was to protect the left flank of the attack.

The attack did not go according to plan. A report received about 7.15 p.m. from reconnaissance parties of 4th Armoured Brigade indicated that the enemy had withdrawn from south of the Bottaceto ditch and was only holding the ditch itself with weak detachments. As a result of this report, which was mistaken, it was decided to replace the barrage, under which 168th Brigade was going to attack, by an artillery concentration on the Bottaceto ditch.

In fact the enemy were still holding positions south of the ditch. These were untouched by the artillery concentration and the attack stalled some two hundred yards short of the objective. The leading troops were withdrawn to a covered area about a thousand yards south of the Bottaceto and 50th Division took up defensive positions. Four days' hard fighting had failed to expand the Simeto river bridgehead sufficiently to warrant further attempts to force a way through to Catania on this axis.

Nothing is easier, after the event, than to fight the battle for Catania more successfully with tactics such as quicker moves on broader fronts, with perhaps a bolder outflanking move to the west, across the Simeto in places where we have learned that it was almost dry. But actualities did not, at the time, offer the choices which hindsight generously provides. It was common sense for exploitation from the bridgehead to follow the two roads, one of them bad, which became one road at Lentini and narrowed the front. The country off the roads was bad going for tracks and wheels, and troublesome, slow, going for infantry. Thus the advance very naturally became at first two crocodiles, then one crocodile—slow creatures on land. The enemy used delaying tactics well, in spite of some uneasy hours. Shortage of troop-carrying transport (for there were more vital things to bring ashore during the first few days) prevented quick deployment of large numbers against him when he stood, or attempts to overrun him when he withdrew. Moreover there was always the threat to the British left flank which seemed very real at the time and which tied up troops. Nature gave the enemy a good position on the Simeto, and he used the gift well. When all is said, it is possible that seasoned troops might have hustled him more on the way to the Simeto, and broken him at it. For seasoned troops, at concert pitch,

have a deliberate, rather awesome impetus—hard to define in words, but unmistakable and deadly in action. Neither 5th nor 50th Division had recently had the experience which gives this quality.

The narrative now returns briefly to 51st Highland Division (30th Corps). By the evening of the 12th a small mixed force from 23rd Armoured Brigade had reached the outskirts of Vizzini.¹ This town stands on a knife-edge ridge, and Highway 124 from the east and a secondary road from the south led into it by serpentine bends. The going was rough for infantry and tanks could approach only in single file along roads. The position was held by the Reconnaissance Battalion of the Hermann Göring Division and a few miscellaneous detachments.

Brigadier Richards' tanks and handful of infantry demonstrated against Vizzini on the 13th. The rest of the Highland Division was strung out, marching (some battalions 35 miles in 24 hours) and ferrying: 231st Brigade's leading troops nearing Vizzini from the east at noon; 153rd Brigade eight miles further back; 154th Brigade down at Palazzolo; 152nd Brigade away in the Scordia-Francofonte area. By 7.30 p.m. the Hampshires (231st Brigade) were attacking Vizzini, but by the small hours of the 14th the enemy was unshaken and counter-attacking. Meanwhile 153rd Brigade had been diverted to the secondary road through Monterosso, and by 6 a.m. on the 14th 5th Black Watch were three miles south of Vizzini, and attacked at noon. By 5.30 p.m. the Black Watch and 1st Gordons were in the south and western skirts of the town. 231st Brigade had been making diversions during the day, and in the evening the Devons began an attack from the east. The operations of the day by two brigades, from different directions, and three miles apart, had been unavoidably disjointed, and productive of delays. Towards evening General Wimberley, who had been busy on his right flank, arrived to direct an attack by 154th Brigade and part of 153rd, for which he had given outline orders during the morning. This went in at 1 a.m. on the 15th, to find that the Hermann Göring birds had flown. 51st Division now pressed on, temporarily, towards Caltagirone; 1st Canadian Division had been ordered to pass through and take up the running in this direction, for the Highland Division was required for a thrust to the north-east.

¹ Two squadrons 50th R.T.R., two squadrons 46th R.T.R.; 11th (H.A.C.) Regiment R.H.A., one company 1st Dorset (from 231st Brigade).

CHAPTER IV

THE ALLIES' FIRST ATTEMPT TO
BREAK THE ETNA POSITIONS;
THE CLEARING OF
WESTERN SICILY
(14th to 23rd July 1943)

(i)

See Maps 2 and 7

THE third chapter followed the Allied exploitation from the beachheads, and in particular the thrust by 13th Corps to the Simeto River as being the operation which was probably uppermost in the minds of Alexander and Montgomery. The account ended at a self-suggesting pause, the night 17th/18th July.

On the 14th Alexander, in a signal to Sir Alan Brooke, had sketched the development of the campaign beyond the immediate future contemplated in his directive of 13th July which we have already quoted. '... Future operations,' he wrote, 'will then envisage thrust towards Messina from Catania by 13th Corps. 30 Corps drive to north coast at S. Stefano then turning east to join up with 13 Corps at Messina. When the island is split in two from north to south American Seventh Army will be directed towards Palermo and Trapani.' On the 14th Montgomery had reported optimistically and on the 15th Alexander visited him, found him satisfied with the general situation, and himself was very satisfied with the progress of operations.

On the 16th Alexander issued a directive to Montgomery and Patton. When 8th Army had captured Catania and its airfields, and the network of roads within the area Leonforte-Enna (directive of 13th July) it was to drive the enemy into the Messina peninsula, advancing by three main lines:

- (i) Northward from Catania.
- (ii) Eastward from Leonforte through Regalbuto and Aderno.
- (iii) Eastward from Nicosia through Troina and Randazzo.

This meant one thrust on the east side of Mount Etna, up the coastal strip along Highway 114, one thrust passing north of Mount Etna

along Highway 120, and one thrust straight at Etna along Highway 121 to cut the lateral road which connected Randazzo with Catania. For Patton the word was: 'Seventh Army will protect the rear of Eighth Army in two phases . . .' The first phase was with one division to establish a secure base within the oval of roads marked by Enna, Caltanissetta, and Villarosa. The second phase was to thrust north to capture Petralia, a point on Highway 120, the important east-west route through northern Sicily. If the operation to take Agrigento and Porto Empedocle, approved by Alexander on the 13th (see Chapter III), was likely to bring on heavy fighting, it was to be postponed until the two phases, described above, had been accomplished.

Alexander's directive reached Patton at midnight on the 16th, and moved him to immediate, vehement protest. To understand Patton's feelings it is necessary to have an outline of the 7th U.S. Army's operations since Alexander's directive of the 13th. The Americans were obeying Alexander's instructions, almost to the letter, to form what may be called a shield on the line Caltanissetta to Palma di Montechiaro, 15 miles west of Licata. Bradley—to leave Highway 124 clear for 30th Corps—halted his right-hand Division, the 45th U.S., dead in its tracks two miles south of this road on the 14th. The irrepressible Allen of 1st U.S. Division—on the 45th's left—under similar restraint, nevertheless pushed patrols on to this road on the 15th. On the 15th Patton gave orders. He hoped to be allowed to strike at Palermo, and in anticipation he regrouped his forces as 2nd U.S. Corps (1st U.S. and 45th U.S. Divisions) under Bradley, and the Provisional Corps (3rd U.S. and 82nd U.S. Airborne Divisions) under his own deputy, Lieutenant-General Keyes. He directed 2nd U.S. Corps to secure the area of Caltanissetta by 19th July, and the Provisional Corps to move westward along the coast, led by 3rd U.S. Division which then changed its reconnaissance in force towards Agrigento into an attack. As a result, as the 16th July passed into the 17th, and the 17th wore on, the American positions became the following. 1st U.S. Division near Caltanissetta; 45th U.S. Division, after a side-step of well over 60 miles through Mazzarino and Riesi, about to pass through the 1st, north-westwards to S. Caterina; 3rd U.S. Division in possession of Agrigento and Porto Empedocle. All these gains had cost some fighting.

The American historians use strong words to describe Patton's reaction to Alexander's directive ' . . . To adhere to this order, he felt, would have been disloyal to the American Army . . . He was not overly concerned with Messina; he accepted the taking of that city as Montgomery's mission. What did bother Patton was Alexander's assignment of Seventh Army to the passive mission of guarding the Eighth Army's rear . . .'¹ Patton, after consulting four of his general

¹ *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, Garland and Smyth, Chapter 26.

officers, flew to Tunisia on the 17th, where Alexander had returned on the 16th. His objects were to protest to Alexander and to propose an attack on Palermo. General Lucas, whom Eisenhower had appointed to observe the Sicilian Campaign in order to record its lessons, flew to Algiers to protest to the Supreme Commander. Eisenhower at the time was near La Marsa, close to Alexander's headquarters. Patton made his case, and Alexander agreed to an extent expressed in his fresh directive to Patton, on the 18th.

' . . . On capture of Petralia you will take advantage of the situation by pushing north a detachment to cut the coast road thereby splitting the island in two. As soon as you are firmly established on the general line Campofelice-Petralia-Caterina-Caltanissetta-Agrigento you will advance westwards to mop up the western half of Sicily, but this operation must not be started before you are ready to operate from a secure base as given to you in the above.'

Patton set about carrying out this directive with the greatest energy. Eisenhower, too, saw Patton and later Lucas, and used his great influence and singular tact to ensure that the real co-operation between his subordinates should not be eroded. But he noted in his diary a slight regret for his own lack of direct influence on the operations. Alexander himself seems not to have been aware of the troubled feelings which he had gradually aroused in Patton and other American officers. This was characteristic for something of the sort had occurred in his handling of 2nd U.S. Corps in Tunisia in March and April.¹ An explanation may be sought in a guess at part of Alexander's temperament. He certainly did not underestimate Patton's fine qualities, but among his own were imperturbability and an easiness and sprightliness, very characteristic of the Irish patrician, in facing deeply felt responsibilities. These qualities, for all his tact, may have made him somewhat insensible to the susceptibilities of others.

Alexander, by his decisions on the 13th and 16th, gave his campaign a virtually unalterable shape. He plumped for the 8th Army as his main offensive weapon, and adopted Montgomery's suggestion that the army should follow two diverging axes to its first objectives, Catania and Enna, which were 45 miles apart. He counted, reasonably, on a quick success by 13th Corps' two divisions at Catania, but at Catania stalemate came into view. Then, Montgomery's attempt to broaden his front there, and to put in a heavier punch by bringing up a division from 30th Corps on 13th Corps' left, was too late, and so was Alexander's decision of the 16th to turn both the Corps in a generally eastward direction on three axes. For on the 15th and 16th

¹ See Volume IV, Chapter XIV, p. 376.

Kesselring, Hube, and Guzzoni made the decisions that were the exact counter: to establish the *Hauptkampflinie* and the Etna lines. By the 17th a connected German front had come into frail being, and Axis operations, in practice if not in theory, passed under the control of a single, able, German commander, Hube, who had the authority and the means to exercise it.¹ He also had a policy, in part secret from the Italians, for defence and ultimate withdrawal which called for the tactics most suited to the terrain.

It is not altogether hindsight to see that 7th U.S. Army had created by 13th July a highly promising situation on its front, recognizable at that time. Alexander was short of information from the Americans up to the 11th, but he spent the 13th with Patton at Gela, and reported (to the C.I.G.S.) 'They have done well and are in good heart and show lots of enterprise.' On the 14th he suggested to Montgomery a thrust northwards by 45th U.S. Division but this was not adopted. He kept 7th U.S. Army to a holding role and its enterprise was not exploited. To take some of the practical possibilities: Enna was 92 miles away from Pachino by the route followed by 30th Corps, but 42 miles from Gela by the route which 2nd U.S. Corps might have taken; the enemy was more or less the same for the time being. If the Americans had taken Enna by the 16th, 15th Panzer Grenadier Division and the Italian 12th Corps might well have been cut off in west Sicily, and in consequence the road to Randazzo might have been less strongly held.² And if Randazzo had therefore been quickly captured, the enemy between Catenanuova and Catania would have had left a single line of withdrawal, Highway 114 cramped between Mount Etna and the sea.

Against speculation now must be set facts of the general situation at that time, which pointed to 8th Army as the more profitable offensive weapon. From the first it had been an axiom that it was vital to gain the ports of Syracuse, Augusta, and Catania if the maintenance of the Allied force was to be assured. Maintenance across the beaches was in fact succeeding far beyond expectation, yet who could guarantee that it would continue against such likely dangers as unseasonable foul weather, or air attack? Alexander had full confidence in Montgomery and attended to his opinions. Montgomery, on the 12th, hoped to have Catania on the 14th, and on the 16th was still hoping 'to get Catania tonight'. Moreover Montgomery, between 11th and 17th, six times offered his advice to Alexander on how to use 7th U.S. Army, and on four of these occasions advised

¹ One of the most useful means was a 'very modern' radio-telephone system.

² The Canadians by-passed Enna on the 18th, and on the 20th four troopers of 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, riding in turn a commandeered donkey, beat by a short head patrols of the U.S. 16th Infantry, and entered the place as Fullriede's rearmy left. Princess Louise Dragoon Guards, a reconnaissance regiment, were converted into infantry in July 1944 in Italy, and reconverted in February 1945 in Belgium.

using it in a holding role. It seems clear that Alexander had cogent reasons for his decisions. It does, however, seem clear that on the 13th July Alexander, prompted by Montgomery's excessive and unjustified confidence, made a mistake. If Alexander had not issued his orders of the 13th (see p. 88) two things would probably have happened. First, 45th U.S. Division would have reached the Enna-Leonforte network of roads days earlier than 1st Canadian Division did. Second, 30th Corps would have remained concentrated, advancing on the axis Ramacca-Sferro-Paterno, and the battle for Paterno, fought by 51st Division in isolation on the 20th-21st July, would have been fought by the whole Corps with the probable result that Paterno would have fallen and the defences of the Catania plain would have been turned before the end of July.

(ii)

The phase of operations now to be considered falls between 16th and 22nd July as nearly as may be. For the Allies it included an attempt to breach the *Hauptkampflinie*, and the clearing of western Sicily. For the Axis there were three main groups of operations. These were confused in detail, and for the most part independent of each other. The reasons were that the decisions made by Kesselring, Guzzoni, and Hube on the 15th and 16th could not take effect overnight because the central command was still far from being fully effective although it was developing. The subordinate Axis commanders used their military common sense to guide them in the fairly obvious course of withdrawal, and their actions therefore had a general coherence. It chanced too that Alexander's policy played into their hands during this period. The following paragraph describes the broad shape of the Axis operations, and thereafter a glance at some physical features of the three main Axis sectors will discover some that influenced the actions of the Allies, of the 8th Army in particular. These stage directions may make rather scattered happenings easier to follow.

In the eastern sector an Axis group whose most important part was drawn from the Hermann Göring Division was holding the line of the Dittaino river between the Fosso Bottaceto near the sea and Dittaino Station, 42 miles to the west. The Allied troops involved here were 13th Corps and 51st Division of 30th Corps. In the centre, 15th Panzer Grenadier Division was withdrawing from the general line, some 20 miles long, Caltanissetta-Pietraperzia-Barrafranca-Piazza Armerina, north-eastwards to the area Leonforte-Nicosia. In the withdrawal the Panzer Grenadier Division was engaged on its left (or eastern) flank with 1st Canadian Division of 30th Corps, and

on its right (or western) flank with 1st and 45th U.S. Divisions of 2nd U.S. Corps. In the west, 12th Italian Corps was extricating its Assietta and Aosta Divisions from the area Lercara–Corleone and moving them more than 70 miles north-east to the line S. Stefano–Nicosia. The Allied troops here concerned were part of 2nd U.S. Corps and the U.S. Provisional Corps, which were heading for Palermo on two routes and clearing away the rubble, sometimes resistant, formed by 12th Corps' troops other than the Assietta and Aosta Divisions, and by coastal defence formations. The Axis central command had little grasp of the Italian troops, but its links with 14th Panzer Corps were growing more effective. 6th Army's Headquarters at Enna had in fact been destroyed by air attack during the night 12th/13th July but reopened at Randazzo on the 14th.

The eastern sector began on the Fosso Bottaceto, four miles south of Catania, and the 'line' (it was not a formal system of field defences) then ran westward, roughly parallel to the left bank of the Dittaino River and about four miles distant from it, through Gerbini to Sferro. At Stimpato, five miles south of Sferro, the bed of the Dittaino bends sharply north until near Sferro it begins to describe an arc north-westwards. From Sferro the 'line' kept close to the river and railway as far as Dittaino Station. From the Fosso Bottaceto to Dittaino Station was the Hermann Göring Division's territory. Associated with this division (the description 'under command' requires too many qualifications) were part of 1st Parachute Division, some mixed groups of the Livorno Division, and 76 Infantry Regiment of the Napoli Division.¹ The Livorno and Napoli divisions belonged to the 16th Italian Corps, but by 20th July this Corps had ceased to count, and Guzzoni assigned its fragments to the north-east coast for possible reorganization.

In the centre sector the lie of the land and the trace of the roads give the key to the fighting. The hill top towns of Valguarnera and Enna command all roads leading from the south and south-west towards the Etna region. In depth to these positions lies the key ridge of Leonforte–Assoro athwart Highway 121, which runs on east through Agira and Regalbuto to Aderno. This ridge is approached from Piazza Armerina by roads leading through Valguarnera northwards, and from Enna by Highway 121. Enna itself is a focal point of all roads coming in from the south and west.

As has been mentioned a little earlier, 15th Panzer Grenadier Division at the beginning of this phase was on the general line

¹ 1st Parachute Division's 3rd and 4th Parachute Regiments, M.G. and Engineer battalions, and part of 1st Parachute Artillery Regiment served in Sicily. 1st Parachute Regiment remained in Italy. The Division's commander, Major-General Richard Heidrich, was not in the field in Sicily. Towards the end of July he was appointed 14th Panzer Corps' 'Mainland Commandant' responsible for receiving the German formations as they withdrew from Sicily.

Caltanissetta–Pietraperzia–Barrafranca–Piazza Armerina. General Rodt intended to withdraw to the area Leonforte–Nicosia and he did so in two groups: on his left (or east) 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment through Valguarnera; on his right (or west) 129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment by Caltanissetta, S. Caterina, and Alimena. Each group covered itself with strong rearguards and demolitions, and fought delaying actions at favourable places. And as a result it came about that 1st Canadian Division had a sharp action at Valguarnera, and a hard battle at the Leonforte–Assoro ridge where Rodt decided to make a determined stand with 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. His right-hand group disengaged from the Americans (whose first objective was Palermo), but did not fall back straight to Nicosia. For though Rodt could only guess at 12th Corps' whereabouts, and did not rely on it to fall into place on his right flank at Nicosia, his policy was delay, and he decided that his right hand would hold on to the area of Alimena, 15 miles west of Nicosia, as long as possible.

The western sector must be passed over quickly. On the 18th Guzzoni ordered 12th Corps to send back the Aosta and Assietta Divisions, most of the Corps artillery and three Mobile Groups to defend the line, some 45 miles long, of Highway 120 between Cerda–Petràlia–Nicosia. The Aosta Division was to move first by road and rail, covered and followed by the Assietta Division, covered in its turn by the Mobile Groups and a rout of Bersaglieri, coastal defence units, and artillery detachments. These movements depended on circumstance rather than design, and the American troops and Allied aircraft harassed all and destroyed some of the columns. On 21st July Guzzoni altered 12th Corps' area to S. Stefano–Nicosia. It was 'to resist to the uttermost'. On 22nd July Palermo was in American hands.

(iii)

We must now return to Allied troops, beginning in the eastern sector with 13th Corps. A very broad, tactical generalization may be useful as a preliminary. The Axis fronts were very long, and by no means locked into each other, the Axis troops few in comparison with the space. Why then could the British and American forces not make deep and rapid penetrations, and crack open whole sectors? A general explanation is that in this usually rugged country mechanized troops were bound, in large moves, to roads which were often narrow, hilly, winding, and sometimes walled. The most practical routes for the Allies were therefore as a rule the obvious approaches. This fact favoured the enemy, and he knew well how to make use of the natural advantages of the terrain. He also was hampered by the

country and harassed by air attacks. On the other hand the Allies found that big tactical manœuvres across country, of longish duration, were not possible for want of animal transport. Seven companies of pack-mules were included in 8th Army's Order of Battle, but it was thought more important to ship other types of unit. Then, on 17th July, 8th Army signalled to Middle East 'No Pack Transport Units are required by 8th Army in Sicily', and any hope of organized animal transport receded to the future. There was some pack-saddlery and some local mule-trains were organized, but these were too small and too untrained for anything except small tasks. For several reasons, therefore, Allied formations were, in general, tactically slow. Action took a long time to get going, and until experience was gained, advances sometimes appeared rather like efforts to cram a number of corks into a bottle.

General Montgomery, on 18th July, decided that in 13th Corps 50th Division should hold fast in the Primosole area, and 5th Division, on 50th's left should strike for Misterbianco. The line of attack lay about three and a half miles west of the Primosole Bridge and crossed the Gornalunga and the Simeto rivers: a line further west would have meant crossing a third river, the Dittaino which flowed between the Gornalunga and the Simeto until it joined the latter. North of the Simeto, in the enemy's territory, the plain was open and seamed with water-channels and ditches. On the night 18th/19th July 13th Brigade made a shallow bridgehead on the Simeto, but this did not seem to dishearten the enemy, a group of Hermann Göring Division which retaliated very aggressively. Through this bridgehead 15th Infantry Brigade, supported by one medium and eight field regiments of artillery, attacked at 1.30 a.m. on the 20th. Success was to be exploited by 17th Infantry Brigade. But the attack faded out, and indeed for some five hours little was known of what positions 1st Green Howards, 1st York and Lancaster, and 1st K.O.Y.L.I. had reached, and the uncertainty handicapped the artillery's attempts to support them. The infantry proved to have advanced about three thousand yards, and to have stalled under heavy mortar and machine-gun fire from enemy ensconced in gullies and ditches. Early on the 21st when a further attack was being prepared, troops and transport were caught by the enemy's defensive fire, and disorganization and delay led to postponement. Later General Dempsey, aware of impending changes in plans, and the Division's commander, Berney-Ficklin, agreed that to continue held no prospect other than heavy casualties. 5th Division was ordered to consolidate its bridgehead for the time being. Montgomery's hope, expressed to Alexander on the 19th, of reaching Misterbianco on the evening of the 20th thus disappeared. But he had hoped also that 51st Highland Division, eleven crow-flight miles west of the 5th,

would reach Paterno on the night of the 20th. The narrative therefore moves to the Highland Division.

Early on 17th July the 51st Highland Division's three brigades were disposed thus: 152nd in the area of Scordia, 153rd just north of Palagonia, and 154th in the area of Palagonia.¹ 23rd Armoured Brigade was still under the Division's command. The Division had been directed on Paterno, and General Wimberley intended to get there with all speed, using 'Arrow Force' to lead the way on his right, and 154th Infantry Brigade on his left.² Paterno, twenty crow-flight miles north-east of Palagonia, was not easy to approach tactically. Two miles west of the town was a reach of the Simeto River, running from north to south until after eight miles it turned east. Roughly five miles west of the Simeto there ran the Dittaino River, from north-west to south-east, until at Stimpato, it turned east. South of the Dittaino ran the Gornalunga River, west to east. These three rivers, which at this season might be shallow or even dry in certain reaches, had to be crossed. Two of several possible routes to Paterno seemed the most promising. One, on the right, was northwards to the Dittaino at Stimpato, across the river there, and then northwards via Gerbini to the Simeto at Ponte la Barca. From Stimpato there was an eastward alternative, across the Simeto near Motta Station, and then north. On the left there was a more roundabout way: northwards through Ramacca to the south side of Mt. Turcisi. Here a road ran north-east across the Dittaino at Sferro (which was five miles north of Stimpato), and then north-east, also to Ponte la Barca on the Simeto. 'Arrow Force' was ordered to go north to the Stimpato area and make good a line from Gerbini to a point a little west of Stimpato. 154th Infantry Brigade was to follow the Ramacca route, and gain some high ground south of Mt. Turcisi. Further moves would depend upon the situation, and 152nd and 153rd Infantry Brigades stood ready to move as needed. Enough transport was available for troop-carrying if used ingeniously.

The enemy's outposts were known to be on the Gornalunga and

¹ *51st Highland Division* (Major-General D. N. Wimberley) Main units:

152nd Infantry Brigade (Brigadier G. H. A. MacMillan):

5th Camerons, 2nd Seaforth, 5th Seaforth

153rd Infantry Brigade (Brigadier H. Murray):

5th Black Watch, 1st Gordons, 5/7th Gordons

154th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier T. G. Rennie):

1st Black Watch, 7th Black Watch, 7th A. and S.H.

126th, 127th, 128th Field Regiments R.A., 61st A/Tank Regiment R.A.,

40th L.A.A. Regiment R.A., 274th, 275th, 276th Field Companies and

239th Field Park Company R.E., 1/7th Middlesex (M.G.)

231st Infantry Brigade reverted to control by 30th Corps on 15th July

7th Battalion, Royal Marines was placed under the division's command from 19th to 29th July as an extra battalion of infantry.

² 'Arrow Force': Headquarters 23rd Armoured Brigade; 50th R.T.R. less two troops; 11th (H.A.C.) Regiment R.H.A.; 243rd A/Tank Battery R.A.; one company 1/7th Middlesex (M.G.); 2nd Seaforth (from 152nd Infantry Brigade).

watching the road Sferro to Ramacca, and it was clear that he would probably fight on the Dittaino–Gornalunga line. In fact, in the area of Paterno–Sferro–Gerbini was most of Hermann Göring Division's 2nd Panzer Grenadier Regiment and the Napoli Division's 76th Infantry Regiment, while the two tank battalions of the German division, with 48 serviceable tanks, were not far away.

During the 17th and the night 17th/18th 'Arrow Force' made a shallow bridgehead over the Dittaino at Stimpato, while 154th Brigade advanced through Ramacca, clearing enemy rearguards from that place, with 153rd Brigade moving northwards towards Sferro on its right flank. 152nd Brigade was still in hand behind Ramacca. On the 18th Wimberley changed the direction of advance of his brigades sending 154th Brigade to pass through the Stimpato bridgehead directed on Motta Station on the Simeto river. 153rd Brigade was directed on to Sferro, there to establish a bridgehead across the Dittaino and then to drive on to the Simeto at Ponte La Barca.

152nd Brigade was to consolidate the bridgehead at Stimpato and to be prepared to exploit to Paterno either through Motta Station or Ponte La Barca as the situation developed.

So far the advance of the 51st Division had been an affair of outposts only and this double-headed thrust by 153rd and 154th Brigades, to be made during the night 18th/19th, seemed full of promise.

Both brigades' attacks met considerably stronger resistance than had been expected. By daylight on the 19th 154th Infantry Brigade had reached its objectives but was unable to cross the Simeto. Further progress would require further preparation. In 153rd Brigade, 5th Black Watch made a bridgehead at Sferro, but it became clear that there were further positions ahead, and that there were tanks about. The Brigade had one field regiment in support, too little in the circumstances. Here too plans needed recasting. Wimberley now decided to try a further thrust from Sferro, and that therefore 153rd Brigade should enlarge this bridgehead during the night 19th/20th. 30th Corps too required a subsidiary operation eight miles to the north-west—the capture of a bridge at Catenanuova—and provided 7th Battalion Royal Marines for the task. 1st and 5th/7th Gordons of 153rd Brigade made a small bridgehead during the night but the enemy proved stubborn and it could not be enlarged. The Marines established themselves, not too securely, across the river about three miles north-west of Sferro.

The Highland Division was now in check. Wimberley began to feel over-extended, and thought that a further thrust on his right would hit the enemy where he seemed strongest. He did not, however, wish to give up the ground gained on his right for he thought that this might serve 13th Corps for a possible attack from this flank,

across the Simeto, to Misterbianco. He was thinking of a renewed attack at Sferro. Yet it was becoming clear that the heavily defended area of Gerbini airfield, two thousand yards or so north of 154th Brigade's positions, was the 'firm base' of the enemy's defence in the sector. Wimberley decided that 154th Brigade and a squadron of 46th R.T.R., supported by two field regiments and a composite medium regiment, should take Gerbini during the night 20th/21st July.¹

The attack was to be made by 7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders who were to be joined by their carriers and mortars (when a way for these had been cleared by a company of 1st Black Watch) to help consolidation, and to be covered then by a squadron of 46th R.T.R. In three hours of fierce and sustained fighting the Argylls won their objective, and their heavy weapons and the tanks joined them. But the enemy (probably the Hermann Göring's Reconnaissance Unit, two battalions of 2nd Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and most of 2nd Battalion of the Hermann Göring's tank regiment) were unsubdued, and countered by heavy fire and infiltration. Before dawn on the 21st most of 1st Black Watch had been committed, and Mathieson, commanding the Argylls, and Routledge, commanding the tank squadron, killed. At 10.30 a.m. the enemy counter-attacked in earnest with infantry and tanks, and in a very tough fight regained their positions. This action cost 7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders 18 officers and 160 men, and 46th R.T.R. eight tanks.

On the 21st a change in Montgomery's plans placed 51st Highland Division on the defensive. Its advance on a wide front, by any reckoning very good tactics, had failed to achieve its object owing to the innate 'cussedness' of war.

Meanwhile, since 15th July, 1st Canadian Division had been moving on Leonforte and Assoro.² It was passing through 'big'

¹ 127th and 128th Field Regiments R.A.; 64th Medium Regiment R.A. less one battery, and one battery 70th Medium Regiment R.A.

² 1st Canadian Division (Major-General G. G. Simonds) Main Units:

1st Infantry Brigade (Brigadier H. D. Graham): The Royal Canadian Regiment, The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, 48th Highlanders of Canada.

2nd Infantry Brigade (Brigadier C. Vokes): Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, The Loyal Edmonton Regiment.

3rd Infantry Brigade (Brigadier M. H. S. Penhale): Royal 22c Regiment, The Carleton and York Regiment, The West Nova Scotia Regiment.

1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade (Brigadier R. A. Wyman): The Ontario Regiment, Three Rivers Regiment, The Calgary Regiment. [Redesignated 1st Armoured Brigade, 26th August 1943.]

4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards (4th Reconnaissance Regiment).

1st Field Regiment R.C.H.A., 2nd and 3rd Field Regiments R.C.A.

1st A/Tk Regiment R.C.A., 2nd L.A.A. Regiment R.C.A.

1st, 3rd and 4th Field Companies, and 2nd Field Park Company, R.C.E.

The Saskatoon Light Infantry (M.G.).

The following British units were under command from time to time:

231st Infantry Brigade (20th July); 142nd Field Regiment (Royal Devon Yeomanry) R.A.; 7th Medium Regiment R.A.

country which almost daily grew more rugged and mountainous.¹ As a rule the compact, stone-built, little towns or villages, through which the roads ran, perched commandingly upon steep escarpments, and were so many minor fortresses which had to be reduced. The enemy used a great many demolitions and road blocks, and sited his guns, mortars, and machine-guns cleverly. Not until about 29th July were the Canadians able to improvise a small mule train, and so the advance was road bound, and turning movements were very narrow. The loss of some 500 vehicles in the torpedoed *St. Essylt* and *City of Venice* was now keenly felt yet ingenious use of what transport there was achieved much troop-carrying. The troops were becoming quickly, if roughly, broken in to heat, dust, and thirst.

1st Infantry Brigade had its first check from a rearguard at Grammichele on the 15th, and it was perhaps ironical that the artillery of 45th U.S. Division could not intervene. It had been rightly forbidden to fire for fear of mishaps since the British were now using Highway 124 and their movements had to be guessed. The 48th Highlanders of Canada and some tanks of Three Rivers Regiment entered a battered and burning Caltagirone in the small hours of the 16th, and 2nd Infantry Brigade then took the lead to Piazza Armerina. Here 2nd Battalion, 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (15th Panzer Grenadier Division's left-hand group), skilfully posted, imposed twenty-four hours' delay. At noon on the 17th 3rd Infantry Brigade led off northwards along Highway 117, directed on Enna.

However, eight miles north-west of Piazza Armerina the road climbs a narrow pass, the Portella Grottacalda (Pt. 868), between high hills, and here again the enemy stood.² Simonds deployed two brigades, directing the 3rd still towards Enna, and sending the 1st north-east across country towards Valguarnera. But for some fourteen hours on the 18th the enemy delayed 3rd Brigade until frontal attacks by the Royal 22e and flank attacks by the Carleton and Yorks and West Novas prised him out. At Valguarnera the Royal Canadian Regiment and the Hastings of 1st Brigade attacked, but it was not until after dark that the 48th Highlanders entered the town. These fights cost the Canadian Division 145 casualties.

Simonds now determined to by-pass Enna, and on the 19th decided to take advantage of the road forking, north of Valguarnera, in order to broaden his front, directing 2nd Infantry Brigade to Leonforte, and 1st Brigade to Assoro—both some eleven miles to the north. It will be remembered that it was for this ridge that Rodt was determined to fight hard, and in fact here began a period of seventeen days' hard fighting.

¹ Some approximate elevations in feet: Piazza Armerina 2,366; Valguarnera 2,000; Leonforte 2,100; Assoro 2,950; Agira 2,700.

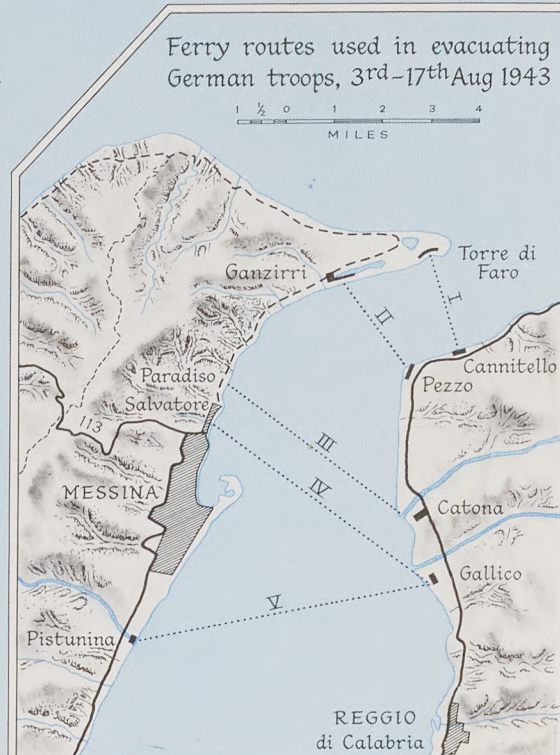
² The figures following Ft., here and throughout the volume, denote a spot elevation in metres.

NORTH-EASTERN SICILY

Showing main lines of advance of Allied Divisions



Ferry routes used in evacuating German troops, 3rd-17th Aug 1943



1st Brigade opened with a bold stroke. Assoro village lies on the western and less precipitous slope of a mountain whose eastern side is horribly steep, and terraced. Major Lord Tweedsmuir, commanding the leading battalion, The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment (a random shell had killed Colonel Sutcliffe), decided to assault by night by the eastern side for he believed that by using that most unlikely route he might win surprise. He succeeded. The Hastings, carrying nothing except rifles, some light automatics, and ammunition, traversed goat paths in single file under a helpful moon, and scaled the terraces in a tearing forty minute climb. They reached the top without loss, and settled down to hold a position where the enemy expected no one except Germans to be. The Hastings held on, against two counter-attacks, until on the morning of the 22nd the 48th Highlanders fought their way into Assoro by the western slopes of the hill on which the enemy's grip had been loosened by the Hastings' exploit.¹

At Leonforte on 21st July the Seaforth of Canada were checked in the steep and difficult approaches to the town, but towards 9 p.m. the Edmonton Regiment, supported by a bombardment, made a lodgment. Hard house-to-house fighting followed during the night. Early on the 22nd a vital bridge over a ravine below the town was repaired, and four tanks of The Three Rivers Regiment, a troop of anti-tank guns, and a company of the P.P.C.L.I. charged across to help the Edmontons. Hard fighting continued until by afternoon the enemy was driven out of the town on to two hills. From these he was dislodged by the P.P.C.L.I. towards 5.30 p.m. Leonforte cost the Canadians 175 casualties; Assoro, nearly 100. Here too Montgomery's forecast of the 19th, 'Canadians will reach Leonforte area tonight,' had underestimated the difficulties.

From 30th Corps we turn to 7th U.S. Army. On 21st July the Provisional Corps occupied Castelvetro as part of its drive from Agrigento to Palermo, and on the 22nd 2nd U.S. Armoured Division (now included in the Provisional Corps) was unleashed from the area of Castelvetro upon Palermo. But on the 18th Guzzoni had decided to withdraw from western Sicily. A regiment of Aosta Division remained in Palermo temporarily, to supervise the removal of supplies, and the Germans successfully withdrew their Flak and administrative units, though part only of their 15,000 tons of stores. The morale of the Italians remaining in Palermo collapsed, and Keyes and Gaffey accepted their surrender on the evening of the 22nd. On the 21st 3rd U.S. Division had entered Corleone. For the

¹ During the night 21st/22nd July 100 'porters' of the Royal Canadian Regiment carried ammunition and food up to the Hastings. 'Porters' are essential in mountain warfare. To organize them properly is far from simple, e.g. porters cannot fight and carry; the one task excludes the other.

Provisional Corps H.Q., 2nd U.S. Armoured Division, and 82nd U.S. Airborne Division, Palermo ended operations and until 20th August these formations performed duties of occupation in western Sicily. The American official historians state that the Provisional Corps had inflicted 2,900 casualties upon the Italians, and captured 53,000.¹ In 2nd U.S. Corps 45th U.S. Division left S. Caterina on the 19th and advanced north-west on Highway 121. 180th R.C.T. reached the outskirts of Palermo on the 22nd, while on the 21st 179th and 157th R.C.T.s turned north. On the 23rd the 157th reached the northern coast road at Cerda Station and turned east towards Campofelice. 1st U.S. Division was equally quick in spite of some sharp clashes with rearguards drawn from 29th Panzer Grenadier Division which was now appearing in this northern sector. The R.C.T.s leap-frogged: Enna was entered on the 20th, the remains of Schreiber Group was overrun at Alimena on the 21st, Fullriede's rearguard was dislodged from Bompietro on 22nd and from Petralia on the 23rd.

In five days the 7th U.S. Army, without great trouble and at trifling cost, had fulfilled Alexander's directive of the 18th, bisected Sicily and virtually mopped up the western portion. It is difficult to see why it should not have won these advantages much earlier, though no doubt with more difficulty, had Alexander allowed it to try.

(iv)

See Map 10

While the events just described were in progress, General Alexander was thinking of further developments. On the 19th he signalled to Montgomery:

' . . . The enemy's front from the north coast to the east coast may be too strong for your army to pierce . . . would you like to have one American division put under your command now for operating in your northern sector. Seventh Army should take advantage of Italian demoralization to clean up the west of island and at least seize Palermo from which port they can be based; and, if the Germans are then too strong for you, Seventh Army can take over a sector in the north from S. Stefano to Troina.'

Montgomery replied the same evening that he had called off his thrust at Catania; and he wrote of his others—at Misterbianco, Paterno, and Leonforte-Aderno:

' . . . These four thrusts are very strong. The enemy will not be able to hold them all. If I can reach Misterbianco and Paterno

¹ Garland and Smyth, *op. cit.* Chapter 26, p. 24.

tomorrow night [20th July] and Adrano by 21st July, I will be well placed for extension of battle round either side of Etna. Suggest that when Americans have cut coast road north of Petralia, one American division should develop a strong thrust eastwards towards Messina so as to stretch the enemy facing me . . . and possibly repeat the Bizerta manoeuvre.¹

Alexander visited Montgomery on the 20th and later summed up matters (in a report to the C.I.G.S.):

' . . . Fighting has been particularly fierce opposite Catania . . . further advance in this sector is too costly at moment. General line runs [brief description] . . . to Agira, which 231 Brigade have taken. Canadians have taken Enna and Leonforte and are pushing east towards Adrano. I hope Seventh Army will get Petralia today. I have ordered them to advance one division to cut northern coast road and then to operate east on roads Palermo-Messina and Petralia-Troina coming in north of Eighth Army. Remainder of Seventh Army to advance and secure Palermo. Intention is to base Seventh Army on Palermo so as they can operate against the Germans north of Eighth Army in the final thrust for Messina . . . '

Since Leonforte did not fall until the 22nd and Agira until the 28th, Alexander's information was better than the facts.² Since 8th Army's formal situation reports for 19th and 20th July correctly state the position on those days, it seems that Montgomery must have been over-optimistic, a usual frame of mind in him, when he discussed the situation with Alexander.

Alexander's orders to Patton did not affect Patton's actions, and on the 21st evening Montgomery submitted a fresh concept of operations. He signalled to Alexander 'Enemy resistance about Catania and in the foothills through Misterbianco and Paterno was found last night to be very great. I have won the battle for the plain of Catania and am in possession of practically the whole of it. [But by contrast it was not until the 26th that Hube felt that it would be necessary to withdraw from the *Hauptkampflinie*.] . . . Heat in the plain is very great and my troops are getting very tired. During the past ten days we have driven the enemy into north-east corner of island. He is determined to hold fast on his left flank about Catania, and further attacks here made by me will mean heavy losses. I am

¹ In the final stages of the campaign in North Africa, 1st Army had assaulted Tunis, while on its left 2nd U.S. Corps had assaulted Bizerta, and on its right 8th Army had made a strong diversion at Enfidaville. See Volume IV, Chapters XV, XVII.

² On the 24th he signalled to the C.I.G.S. that ' . . . I am prepared to send unconfirmed news but this must be valued at what it is worth . . . I must confess here that I gave you news that Agira was taken twenty-four hours [in fact one week] before we actually occupied it . . . '

therefore going to hold on my right and will continue operations on my left against Adrano. Will give 78 Div to 30 Corps so that 30 Corps can have greater strength in its operations north towards Bronte.

Two things are very important:

- (i) American thrust eastwards along north coast road towards Messina.
- (ii) The full weight of all air power that can be made available from North Africa must be turned on to the enemy army hemmed in to the north east corner of Sicily.'

Montgomery therefore rather suddenly had dropped his idea of 8th Army's four-pronged assault, developing into 'extension of battle round either side of Etna' helped by one American division which was to stretch the enemy by a thrust towards Messina. Instead he was calling on his reserve division the 78th, from Africa, and, on the 22nd he decided to commit 30th Corps 'to a blitz attack . . . on the thrust line Adrano-Bronte-Randazzo'. He reasoned that if he could capture Aderno the great mass of Etna would be interposed between the two wings of the German forces, because the loss of Aderno would take away from them their lateral communications on the southern and south-western side of the mountain. He now desired much stronger action by the Americans along the northern coast road. The central Highway 120, running east-west through Nicosia-Troina-Cesaro-Randazzo dropped out of his picture.

Montgomery could not be expected to read the enemy's mind, but the picture which he gave to Alexander of an enemy hemmed in to Sicily's north-east corner was fanciful. In reality Kesselring reported on the 21st ' . . . The enemy has not yet embarked on an offensive of decisive importance', and by the 25th 29th Panzer Grenadier Division had reinforced the northern sector, where the enemy's advance was reported to be very hesitant. That night came the news of Mussolini's fall, and at his evening conference with his Service chiefs Hitler announced that the 70,000 German troops on Sicily must be got away. Kesselring was instructed to transfer no more troops to the island, and to prepare to evacuate the garrison. He held a conference to discuss this contingency on 27th July, by which time Hube had decided that the *Hauptkampflinie* was no longer suitable for protracted defence, because the Allies were much stronger on the ground and dominant in the air. It was not until 1st August that 14th Panzer Corps gave in writing the procedures that were to be followed if the code-word for evacuation was received, but there had already been a substantial build-up of the A.A. defences of the Messina Straits and on the mainland, and assembly points and reception areas were being allotted to the Sicilian divisions by 29th July.

However, Alexander accepted Montgomery's fresh concept. He

had already ordered Patton to exert pressure along the coast road (Highway 113) and Highway 120, and on the 23rd he gave him this more forceful directive.

'8th Army is meeting continued heavy and stubborn resistance by German forces on a general line from the bridgehead over the River Simeto thence along the railway to Catenanuova and Agira. To delay the enemy rate of build up the Air Forces are being directed to hamper enemy rail and road movement by bombing key points on the communication system in the North East corner of the island on a carefully controlled plan. Your task will be to transfer your axis of supply to Palermo as rapidly as possible.

You will leave sufficient forces in the west of the island to mop up the remaining enemy elements and to maintain order in the area.

In your thrust eastwards along the coast road and road Nicosia-Troina-Cesaro you will employ the maximum strength you can maintain. In order to bring about the rapid collapse of the German forces left in Sicily it is imperative that you exert strong pressure on their northern flank and maintain this pressure continuously. To co-ordinate the actions of Seventh U.S. and 8th Armies this effort should start as early as possible and in any event by 1st August.'

Like Montgomery, Patton called in his reserve and ordered over from Africa the remainder (for 39th R.C.T. had already landed) of 9th U.S. Division. On 24th July Alexander visited Montgomery, and on the 25th he conferred with Montgomery and Patton together, for the first time during the campaign. The 8th Army's operation to capture Aderno was code-named 'Hardgate', and the date was provisionally fixed as 30th-31st July.

At this point a glimpse of the wider horizons of the war is interesting. On the 22nd the Prime Minister told Alexander that he intended to visit the President on 15th August.¹

'... Naturally we shall use all our influence to direct forces so as to obtain a decision in the Med by finishing off in Italy. How this is to be done rests with you and Eisenhower, who can best measure the alternatives ...'

On the same day Alexander replied, reviewing the situation in Sicily and continuing:

'... I appreciate that Germans will hang on to the Messina peninsula at all costs, consequently I must have Palermo as a port through which to supply Seventh Army which I shall bring into line north of Eighth Army at earliest possible. Air is

¹ The first Quebec Conference. 17th August 1943.

being employed almost exclusively against Germans in north-east of island, when this can be developed it should make his supply problem intolerable. We are prepared to jump a bridge-head on to the mainland at the first opportunity. Failing this we have all plans and preparations for Buttress and Goblet.¹ You may rest assured that we consider Husky [Sicily] only a base for the extension of an advance into Italy. It may be possible to launch an amphibious operation against the shin but this must depend on the air situation and to the strength and disposition of German troops nearer the time . . .'

However, for the moment the more distant future must be left to itself, while attention turns to the air forces, which both Alexander and Montgomery had much in mind, as the references by the one on the 22nd and the other on the 21st indicate.

(v)

Mediterranean Air Command, between 10th and 22nd July, put almost the whole of its bombing power into attacks upon targets in Sicily and Italy. Two-thirds of the bombers' sorties were flown against communications and related targets and in direct support of the armies, and one-third against hostile airfields. Almost all the sorties were flown by Northwest African Air Forces.² It became possible gradually to relax the efforts of the fighters by day, as the Allies progressively established and exploited their bridgeheads, and as the air offensive against the Axis air forces continued to succeed. The night-fighters, however, found plenty of action and those based on Malta won an outstanding success in destroying 53 German aircraft, and at least 13 Italian, between the nights 10th/11th and 21st/22nd July. The enemy's reports of the effects of Allied air attacks on Sicilian targets and against his land forces, during this period, include few details, and are sometimes contradictory. It is therefore very seldom possible to describe the effects of Allied air action upon particular operations. The Axis documents before us ascribe virtual control of the air to the Allies, and warrant the assertions that Allied air action damaged and interrupted communications over a wide area, and that most movements of troops were spotted and attacked.

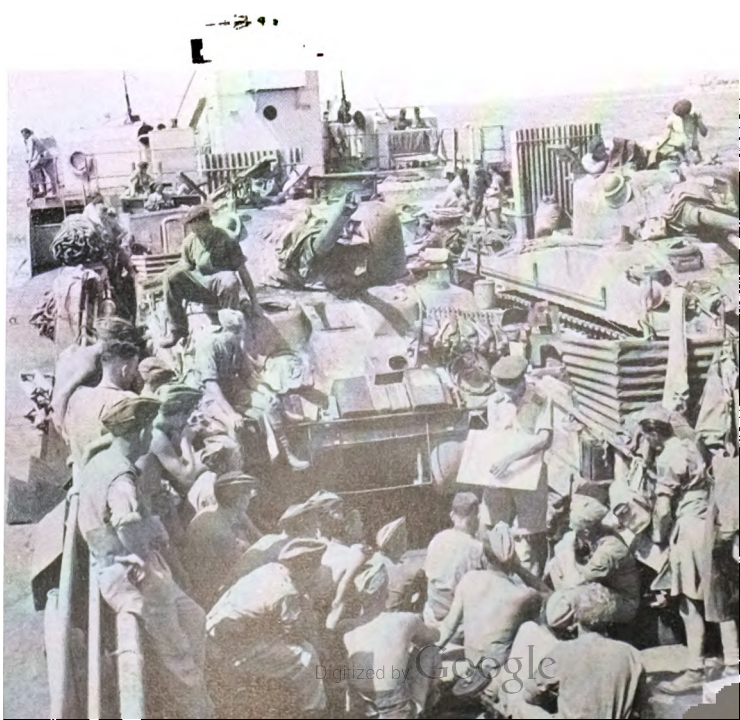
Before describing some of the air operations, something must be said of the steady build-up in Sicily of the Allied tactical air forces.

¹ 'Buttress' was the code-name for a landing at Reggio, projected for 1st September; 'Goblet' a landing at Crotona in eastern Calabria projected for 1st October.

² A tabular statement of sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command from dusk on 10th July to dawn on 22nd July, but excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports, is at page 148.



1. H.M.S. *Warspite* and Martlet fighter of Fleet Air Arm.



2. Tank landing craft on passage to Sicily.



3. Sicily. The 'flat'. Part of the plain of Catania.

4. Sicily. A hill town. Vizzini.





5. Sicily. Close cover on the plain of Catania just north of the River Simeto.

6. Sicily. Plateau and hill. View towards Agira.





7. Sicily. The hill. Near Bronte.

8. Part of 91st Field Regiment R.A. in action on a hill road south-east of Mt. Etna.



By 22nd July No. 239 Wing R.A.F. with its five Kittyhawk fighter-bomber squadrons, and the U.S. 57th Fighter Group and its three fighter squadrons, had settled down at Pachino. No. 244 Wing R.A.F., joined by its fifth squadron and by No. 40 (S.A.A.F.) Tac. R Squadron (Spitfires) and No. 1437 Strat. R Flight (Mustangs), was now at Cassibile. No. 322 Wing R.A.F. with four of its five Spitfire fighter squadrons had just flown into Lentini. Elsewhere, the U.S. 27th Fighter Group and its three Mustang fighter-bomber squadrons, together with the 99th Fighter Squadron (Kittyhawks), had arrived at Licata, and the U.S. 86th Fighter Group, similarly equipped as the 27th, at Gela. In all, there were then 37½ squadrons of Allied fighters, fighter-bombers and reconnaissance aircraft in Sicily.

Some of the moves had left vacant space on Malta's airfields and into this moved day-bombers: three British squadrons of Baltimores, and two British and four American squadrons of Bostons. These nine squadrons were controlled directly by the A.O.C. Desert Air Force, and, in Malta, they were within easy range of any target in Sicily. The Commanding General, U.S. XII Air Support Command controlled two Boston squadrons of No. 326 Wing R.A.F. and two Groups of American Mitchells, which still remained in north-west Africa. All the above day-bomber formations were mutually supporting though they had been removed from the central control of Northwest African Tactical Air Force. This Headquarters, by the third week in July, was too remote to meet in time the armies' requirements for direct support, to co-ordinate the operations of tactical bombers, fighter-bombers, and fighters, and to choose the best targets.

The operations of the bombers may well come first. The distribution of tasks in Sicily followed a now familiar pattern: by day American Fortresses, Mitchells, Marauders, and Bostons; by night British Wellingtons, Bostons, and Baltimores, and some American Mitchells. The effort in sorties expended upon targets in Italy was about one-third of that expended in Sicily but was much more comparable in terms of total bombload. This was because the types of bombers engaged against Italy carried a heavier bombload. Over 500 of the sorties against Italy were flown by Fortresses of N.A.A.F., and British Halifaxes and British and American Liberators of Middle East Air Command, working from Cyrenaica, while the remainder of the sorties were flown by British Wellingtons and American Mitchells. An 'extra' was provided by R.A.F. Bomber Command in the United Kingdom in the shape of three attacks by a total of 337 Lancasters upon industrial targets in northern Italy. The main targets, other than airfields which will be mentioned separately, were the principal centres of rail and road communications, and military and industrial installations. The bombing was 'round the

clock', and virtually no twenty-four-hour period passed without bombing somewhere. Some examples follow.

In Sicily main centres of communications, for example Messina, Catania, Randazzo, and Palermo were singled out. Smaller centres, situated in the paths of the Allied armies, were also pounded, in particular Caltanissetta and Enna. Messina suffered perhaps most of all as when, on 14th July, raids by 96 Fortresses and 83 Mitchells destroyed a great many buildings and large stores of ammunition. In Italy the area of Naples received the most attention, for example on 17th July when 96 Fortresses and 179 American Mitchells and Marauders inflicted great damage on railways, fuel depots, and buildings. On the same day 71 American Liberators bombed the port. The three attacks against Italy from the United Kingdom, mentioned above, were the following. On 12th/13th July 295 Lancasters heavily damaged industrial plants in Turin including the Fiat steel works, the State arsenal, factories for cotton-spinning and electric cable-making, a timber yard, a gas works, a tram depot; and also a dump of military stores. Thirteen Lancasters were lost. On 15th/16th 24 Lancasters (six to each target) attacked transformer stations at Reggio Emilia, Bologna, Arquata Scrivia, and S. Paolo D'Enza, and on the next night 18 Lancasters attacked transformer stations at Cislago and Brugherio. The aircraft employed on the 15th/16th and the next night refuelled at Blida in North Africa before flying back to the United Kingdom.

The first bombing of Rome, on 19th July, stands apart because this city was, and is, illustrious in the eyes of all manner of people throughout the world. Before the decision to bomb the city was taken, the political, religious, cultural, and military considerations were searchingly examined. An account may be read in the fourth volume of the Grand Strategy series of this history. In simple military terms Rome was the focal point of the whole system of Italian railways. Except for one important line which ran from Milan, through Bologna, to Ancona on the east coast, and then southwards, all rail traffic between northern and southern Italy passed through Rome's two marshalling yards, the Littorio and the S. Lorenzo. These marshalling yards were exceedingly important in the offensive against the Axis lines of communication. Further, the bombing of Rome could be expected very adversely to effect the morale of the Italian people which was showing signs of wilting; and most nations had accepted the idea that national morale is a legitimate objective of military attack.

On the night 18th/19th July four R.A.F. Wellingtons dropped 864,000 leaflets warning the Italian people of the coming raids. Every precaution had been taken to ensure, so far as humanly possible, that military targets alone would be attacked. The bomber

crews had been carefully chosen, carefully trained, minutely and scrupulously briefed. On the 19th 149 Fortresses from North West Africa and 122 American Liberators from Cyrenaica attacked the Littorio and S. Lorenzo marshalling yards. Later photographic reconnaissance showed wide damage to tracks, rolling stock, and railway installations. An enemy report stated that the Termini railway station, the district of S. Lorenzo, and the Fiat and Bianchi works were heavily damaged. Monsignor Alberto Giovannetti, writing in 1962, records damage to the University quarter, the basilica of S. Lorenzo, and in human casualties: 700 killed and 1,600 wounded.¹ That so little damage was caused outside a target area which was hemmed in by populous suburbs shows that the bomber crews used skill and care. In the afternoon of the 19th 249 American Mitchells and Marauders, escorted by Lightnings, bombed the Ciampino airfield near Rome and destroyed eight German and two Italian aircraft, and damaged nine German and thirteen Italian. The attacks on the marshalling yards in Rome, coupled with those at Naples on the 17th, made a 200-mile 'gap' in the Italian railway system from north of Rome to south of Naples, and stopped traffic between central and southern Italy for several days. 1,000 tons of bombs were dropped on the Roman targets and at Ciampino on the 19th; two Allied aircraft only were lost—at Ciampino. Two reports of the attacks reached Mussolini and Hitler while they were in conference at Feltre on the 19th. Mussolini appeared much affected, Hitler seemed unconcerned.

The attack on the Ciampino airfield was an incident in the offensive against airfields, now to be outlined. The Allied bombers from North West Africa had dealt with virtually all worthwhile airfield targets in Sicily by 14th/15th July, and thereafter these aircraft joined the British and American Liberators of M.E.A.C. in the attacks upon airfields in Italy.

Detailed results of only a few of these attacks can be found in enemy records. For example on the 13th July, when 37 Fortresses raided Milo airfield at Trapani, at least 27 Italian and one German aircraft were destroyed, and the Germans themselves destroyed 12 more, which presumably had been damaged beyond repair. On the 15th, in a raid on Foggia by 68 American Liberators from Cyrenaica, several hangars were demolished, six Ju. 88s were destroyed and three damaged. Italian losses are not recorded. In addition three trains in Foggia railway station—one carrying fuel, one ammunition and the third an A.A. battery—were completely destroyed, as were at least eight aircraft (presumably crated) in sidings. On the 16th, when 117 Fortresses raided Vibo Valentia airfield, they caused heavy

¹ *Roma, Città Aperta*, Alberto Giovannetti, 1962.

damage for the Germans alone lost 21 aircraft. The R.A.F. Wellingtons from North West Africa also hit hard. On the night of the 14th/15th 32 of them attacked Capodichino and Pomigliano airfields in the Naples area, wrecking the runways at each airfield and creating what an enemy report describes as 'havoc' among parked aircraft. Unfortunately only German losses (seven aircraft) are recorded. Two nights later the Wellingtons attacked again and nine German aircraft were certainly destroyed and six damaged. On the night 17th/18th, a further nine German aircraft were added to the number of those destroyed at Pomigliano. Two nights later the Wellingtons had one of the best of their recorded successes when 65 of them raided the airfield at Aquino. Eight German and 13 Italian aircraft were destroyed and six German and 30 Italian damaged.¹

We have remarked that we have seen few really informative Axis reports of action against their land forces in Sicily by the Allied tactical air forces. It is also a fact that from the view-point of Allied airmen the Axis forces were thin on the ground, and did not present the sort of targets against which fighter-bombing, strafing, and the action of day-bombers would have been profitable. In fact the 8th Army did not often call on the fighter-bombers, although No. 239 Wing R.A.F. had moved to Malta before D-Day especially to answer calls. The Allied fighter-bombers in fact found most of their work in targets of opportunity beyond the battlefield. Protection of anchorages and administrative areas for a time continued to demand a large number of fighter sorties, but gradually more and more fighter squadrons switched to offensive sweeps over Sicily, and to escorting N.A.A.F.'s bombers. Air reconnaissance over land was constant, and a detachment of N.A.P.R.W. operating with No. 248 Wing R.A.F., covered Sicily and southern Italy daily from Malta, while No. 40 S.A.A.F. and the U.S. 111th Tac. R. Squadrons provided tactical reconnaissance in Sicily.

From dusk on the 10th to dawn on the 22nd July the Mediterranean Air Command flew an average of some 1,700 sorties every

¹ *Axis aircraft destroyed or damaged on the ground, dusk 10th to 22nd July.*

The Italian figures included below are derived from certain contemporary, and in some instances contradictory, German and Italian reports. Other reports contain no figures but one of them, for example, refers to 'Havoc' wrought among parked aircraft. The Italian figures are therefore incomplete and represent only those losses about which we can be reasonably certain.

	<i>German</i>		<i>Italian</i>	
	<i>Destroyed</i>	<i>Damaged</i>	<i>Destroyed</i>	<i>Damaged</i>
Sicily	7	8	27	—
Italy	110	33	23	43
Location unknown	1	—	—	—
	118	41	50	43

twenty-four hours, excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports, and the loss of some 100 aircraft is recorded. In contrast the Allies destroyed 273 German aircraft, at least 11 of which fell to the A.A. guns, and 115 Italian so far as is known. A further 14 Italian aircraft (seaplanes) were captured at Syracuse. We have not included the number of aircraft destroyed by the Germans themselves, which is a remarkable feature of the recorded *Luftwaffe* losses for this period. Of a total of 30 aircraft thus destroyed, at least 28 are known to have been blown up on Sicilian airfields, presumably to prevent them falling into Allied hands.

As already described, the enemy's effort by day over Sicily steadily grew less until, by the 15th, it began to tail off rapidly, and many instances of his fighters avoiding combat were noticed. After his heavy loss in bombers during the opening stages of the Allied invasion he appeared to rely more and more on less costly night bombing to disrupt the Allied build-up, but he found it impossible to sustain a consistent effort. The greater ranges at which his bombers were forced to operate coupled with the further heavy losses inflicted by Malta's night-fighters had drastically reduced the numbers fit to fly. Yet only half of these could be manned, so serious was the shortage of aircrews. The heavy losses inflicted by Malta's night-fighters aggravated the difficulties. In general the enemy's support to his ground forces was piecemeal and lacking in any apparent co-ordination, and Axis pilots frequently failed to press home their attacks. Colonel von Bonin, who came to Sicily on 17th July as the Chief of Staff of 14th Panzer Corps, later wrote that an occasional group of Me. 109s could be seen reconnoitring the rear areas, but that there was no real air support of operations. Most of the senior German officers in the field echoed von Bonin's comment. It is nevertheless only fair to remember that crippling losses and damage to airfields, inflicted by Allied bombing, had driven most of the Axis air forces in Sicily to withdraw to southern Italy. There they worked under great disadvantage, and there the Allied air force quickly showered bombs upon them.

The root cause of the Axis Air Forces' failure was the lack of an adequate single-engine day fighter force. It was during the daylight hours, against ineffective enemy air opposition, that the Allied air forces had wrought so much destruction and damage on the enemy's Sicilian air bases forcing him to move half of his surviving aircraft including all the bombers to the mainland. Yet it was also during daylight hours that the German and Italian armies desperately needed maximum air support if they were to repulse the Allied landings. Had the Axis Air Forces possessed an adequate single-

engine day fighter force they could have protected their air bases, provided effective fighter escort for their bomber and fighter-bomber forces in air support, and reconnoitred the beaches at will. In the event none of this was possible.

For some time previous to the invasion of Sicily the Italian Air Force had ceased to play an effective part in Axis air operations and the main burden had fallen on the German Air Force. To find out at least some of the reasons why the German single-engine day fighter force found itself so heavily outnumbered, we must look back at certain events which had taken place beyond the Mediterranean theatre.

When the Germans invaded Russia in June 1941 the greater part of the total German fighter force became committed to that front, while in the Mediterranean area the German fighter force was still very small. Thereafter, however, the bombing of targets in Germany by Royal Air Force Bomber Command in the U.K., joined later by the United States Eighth Air Force, forced the Germans progressively to increase their fighter force in defence of the Reich. By D-Day of the invasion of Sicily the size of the fighter force in Germany had outstripped that on the Russian front, and was absorbing an increasing amount of German fighter production. Moreover, in terms of single-engine day fighters the fighter force in Germany was more than double the size of that which, in the intervening period, had been built up in the Western and Central Mediterranean where the Allies had already by then a four-to-one numerical superiority in this type of aircraft. Later, by mid-August, a substantial number of single-engine day fighter replacements arrived for the German Air Force in Italy to offset some of the casualties suffered in the invasion of Sicily, but they only partially and very temporarily arrested the decline in its single-engine day fighter strength.

All this was the direct result, aggravated by the demands of the Russian front, of the Allied air attacks on Germany which by July 1943 had become co-ordinated within the Combined Bomber Offensive. With the negligible contribution from the Italian Air Force, it is scarcely reasonable to think that the German Air Force could have done much more than it did to oppose the invasion of Sicily.

(vi)

See Maps 4 and 7

The administrative side of the campaign in Sicily is a story of well-earned success. 'Administration' was the term used by the Army and the Royal Air Force to describe the whole process of providing forces

with what they require or of performing some service for them. This process was vast, and our account necessarily must be restricted.¹ It can cover only some broad features of British administration and one or two topics.

The Army and the Air Force each had its own system of administration, but the systems had many resemblances since their purpose was the same. Moreover, there was much ground in administration that was common to the Army and the Air Force, and within this the two bodies could perform administrative functions for each other through their independent systems. Because the Army was a 'land animal' it was natural for it to perform the greater share of these common functions. Therefore the following paragraphs deal mainly with the Army's system, and to a lesser extent with that of the Air Force.

There are some interesting general factors which bear upon administration in the Sicilian campaign. By the middle of 1943 the outcome of the maritime war in the Mediterranean for the Allies was that their shipping, given air cover, could sail almost where it pleased. However, the virtual air supremacy which had been won, and victorious naval power, could not guarantee immunity from losses. In 1942 73 Allied and neutral merchant vessels, amounting to 365,127 G.R.T., were lost in the Mediterranean, and in 1943 136 vessels amounting to 630,436 G.R.T. But these figures do not reflect a state of maritime affairs which was worse in 1943 than it had been in 1942. In 1942 the passage through the Mediterranean had been too hazardous for convoys unless they were fought through in a major operation for a vital purpose like sustaining Malta. In fact 42 of the 73 vessels lost were lost in June, August, and November in three Malta convoys and the 'Torch' operations. In 1943 the Mediterranean became 'open' after May, and the larger losses occurred in a greatly increased traffic, much of it off an enemy's shore. The fact remained that the Allies enjoyed freedom of movement at sea. Moreover, since May 1943 the long ocean haul to the Middle East Base, round the Cape of Good Hope, or across the Indian Ocean and through the Red Sea, was becoming a thing of the past.

The great Middle East Base was a source of abundant supply. It owed its sufficiency in great part to Wavell's foresight in planning largely, and to the labours of many very able men in development. To represent these, of all ranks and various responsibilities, we may name a few: Riddell-Webster, Lindsell, Hutchison, and Tickell, of the Army; Dawson, Maund, and Pirie of the Royal Air Force.² In

¹ An important subject, here omitted, is dealt with in *Allied Military Administration of Italy 1943-45* by C. R. S. Harris.

² Riddell-Webster and Lindsell, Lieutenant-Generals, Administration; Hutchison, a Deputy Quarter-Master-General; Tickell, an Engineer-in-Chief; Dawson, Chief Maintenance and Supply Officer; Maund and Pirie, Air Officers-in-Charge of Administration.

North Africa too there had been built up a fine Base under control of A.F.H.Q. Maintenance of the forces in Sicily over the beaches, an operation of vital importance in the campaign and one bristling with 'unknowns', had a success greater than anyone had dared to hope. The weather remained favourable. In Sicily distances were short, the roads at least serviceable: there was nothing comparable with the 8th Army's 675-mile haul from Benghazi to Tripoli; there was no desert demanding 'desert worthy' vehicles, and expert navigation in desert convoys. Perhaps the most important factor of all, however, was that the campaigns in Africa had bred a race of administrative officers and men in staffs and administrative units and services who had thoroughly learned how to conduct their hard business in the uncertain circumstances of war.

At this point a survey of how the administrative responsibilities for the campaign were arranged is desirable. The plan of campaign (see Chapter I) committed the 8th Army and the 7th U.S. Army to the capture of the island and so, in effect, two separate Allied Armies, with associated Air Forces, were fighting one battle.¹ The whole operation, from an administrative point of view, had four broad phases: first, preparation; next, an initial phase covering the voyage and assault until the Headquarters of the Armies were established ashore; then the further development of the operations according to the plan; last, a longer-term future which would probably include an advance across the sea to the Italian mainland. Responsibility for general and local administration was given to the various Headquarters in the manner which seemed to suit these phases.² Unavoidably there was some overlapping.

Circumstances and expediency had dictated that the forces of invasion were to be assembled in the Middle East, North Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. This geographical distribution fixed the allotment of administrative responsibility during the preparatory and initial phases, in each case to the authority which was geographically nearest to each assembling force, and which commanded the necessary resources. Thus: G.H.Q. Middle East for forces assembling in the Middle East; A.F.H.Q. for British

¹ The reader will recall that the invasion forces passed under different names at successive stages. The first names were a convenient shorthand for forces whose exact composition was not settled, and they gave little away—a security precaution.

Force 141—15th Army Group.

Force 545—Eastern Task Force/8th Army.

Force 343—Western Task Force/7th U.S. Army.

The following pages use the names closest to the facts related.

² General administration means that part of the business which is controlled from the headquarters of the forces in the field. Local administration is that part of the business which is executed by a local authority.

forces assembling in North Africa; the War Office for forces assembling in the United Kingdom; the American Service of Supply, in the 'North African Theatre of Operations U.S. Army' and in the United States, for American forces. In these two phases Force 141 had no executive responsibility for, or control over, the administration or maintenance of either Task Force; but it was responsible for co-ordinating, whenever and wherever necessary, administration and supply. It was also the body responsible for general planning, and for setting other headquarters on to plan. Each Task Force commander was responsible for making his own administrative plan, and for assessing and demanding what stores (with some exceptions reserved to Force 141's care) he would require for the assault and for the build-up.

In the third phase, that of development of the operations, Headquarters 15th Army Group was responsible for the administrative policy and for the co-ordination of general administration of all ground and air forces in Sicily, in accordance with the operational plan. During this phase each Army had, in effect, its own bases and axis of supply, because G.H.Q. Middle East was responsible for the maintenance of 8th Army, and A.F.H.Q. for the maintenance of 7th U.S. Army, while—for example—15th Army Group, if need arose, co-ordinated maintenance or any other part of administration.¹ In this phase 8th Army was responsible for its own local administration by the standard British system of Lines of Communication Areas and Sub-Areas.² But the general administration of ports and beaches in eastern Sicily was committed to a special organization (to be described later)—'Fortbase'—directly under 15th Army Group H.Q. 7th U.S. Army was responsible for general and local administration in western Sicily. During the fourth, or long-term, phase, which might begin in mid-August, the Armies' separate bases and axes of supply would merge into common bases in North Africa, and common axes of supply from North African ports and from outside the Mediterranean. A.F.H.Q. would then assume full administrative responsibility, and Middle East would fade out of the picture.

The planning of the arrangements outlined above, and the thousands of actions needed to translate them into administrative facts

¹ The term maintenance involves the process of keeping a force in the field complete with personnel, material and, where necessary, animals. This process includes provision, holding and distribution. Maintenance depends on a constant flow of reinforcements, supplies and stores from rear bases along the lines of communication to the troops fighting in the front line.

² A L. of C. Area was a locality or district, on the L. of C., organized under one authority (in fact a commander and staff) for purposes of local administration. It might be divided into Sub-Areas (each with a commander and small staff). A Sub-Area could function independently if the volume of work to be done was within its capacity.

amounted to an immense volume of work. This began in the third week of February.¹ It was the task of the administrative side of Force 141 (the central planning Headquarters for the invasion), and the principal agents were Brigadier W. H. A. Bishop, succeeded by Brigadier E. P. Nares; and Brigadier-General Archelaus Hamblen, United States Army.

In Cairo General Wilson's administrative staff also began the spade work for the forces to be mounted in Middle East, although not until April could the work be taken beyond foundations. From about March, in the United Kingdom, the Staffs of 1st Canadian Army and 1st Canadian Division were at work on preliminaries along with those concerned in the War Office and in 3rd British Division (which gave place in the expedition to the Canadians in April), and at the beginning of May the Canadian Staffs began personal contacts with Cairo.² In March, too, in the U.S.A., the 45th U.S. Division was being prepared. This short survey suggests how widely separated the administrative planners were, and dates roughly the beginnings of what was necessarily a fluid process. For, as described in Chapter I, operational plans were in the melting pot. Administrative planning was possible, though difficult, because some elements of the problem were bound to be constant. The few major changes in administrative plans is evidence of the remarkable skill, foresight, and firmness of the men responsible for them.

We must now consider some important decisions of policy: those concerning the provision of initial requirements for maintenance; the scale of reserves to be built up in Sicily; the programme of sea convoys for the build-up; and the scales of transport. These matters were fundamental in the Sicilian, as in any, administrative plan. Thereafter we shall look at the question of maintenance in its novel and all-important aspect of maintenance across the Sicilian beaches. Finally we shall outline the development of the L. of C. in Sicily.

The general allotment of administrative responsibilities gave the task of providing initial maintenance requirements *at the points of embarkation* to: G.H.Q. Middle East for the 8th Army; the War

¹ *Force 141 issued:*

Administrative Appreciation and First Outline Maintenance Project 9th March

Second Outline Maintenance Project 23rd March

Third Outline Maintenance Project 15th April

² There occurred a hard stroke of fate. On 29th April an aircraft carrying some of the Canadian party crashed in Devonshire. Among those killed were General Salmon, commander of 1st Canadian Division, Lieutenant-Colonel Finlay, his senior administrative staff officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Wilson, G.S.O.1, 3rd British Division, and Rear-Admiral Mack and Captain Sir Thomas Beevor R.N., commander and staff officer of the naval forces assigned to the Canadians. On 30th April and 1st May further Canadian parties with General Simonds, the Canadian Division's new commander, flew to Cairo.

Office for the Canadian Division; the American authorities for American forces.

The Air Forces also had to be provided for. These required some special arrangements, complicated in detail. In general such arrangements covered two classes of things; those supplied from Air Force sources and those supplied from Army sources.¹ As regards things of Air Force supply, the initial requirements of air force units would be met by the Air Command which provided the units. Further requirements for a period of about six weeks would be met by Stores Holding Units to be established, and stocked under Air Force auspices. Force 141's main part in the process would be as arbiter of demands for cargo-space in ships. As regards things of Army supply, G.H.Q. Middle East was responsible for meeting the demands of Middle East Air Command, A.F.H.Q. for the demands of the Northwest African Air Forces.

Initial maintenance requirements, which were to be carried in the actual assault convoys and which were based approximately on provision for the first seven days, amounted to some 11,700 tons for 13th Corps and 8,300 tons for 30th Corps. These tonnages did not include vehicles, guns and trailers, and tanks. In regard to the latter 13th Corps alone required some 4,260 vehicles and guns and 191 tanks.

The policy for building up reserves of material could be sparing because the period required for replenishment from Middle East and North Africa was short. The principle was that each convoy to arrive in Sicily would land maintenance for the troops on shore to suffice until the next convoy arrived, plus a quantity set apart for reserves. This earmarked quantity would increase in each convoy after the first because it was unnecessary to repeat in every convoy certain articles of equipment and kinds of stores. The total amount of reserves to be accumulated was fixed at 30 days' plus 10 days' working margin.² At the end of July the state of the campaign and of maintenance was satisfactory, and H.Q. 15th Army Group reduced the scale of British reserves in Sicily to 14 days' and 7 days' working margin. In June, Miller, 15th Army Group's Major-General Administration, announced a decision which made smaller the scope

¹ R.A.F. responsibilities included: Providing, holding, and distributing R.A.F. reinforcements, aircraft, vehicles, and technical stores; repair and recovery of aircraft, R.A.F. stores, and technical equipment; R.A.F. wireless communications; decontamination of R.A.F. units; Pay.

The Army was responsible for landing, holding and distributing to the R.A.F. all other forms of supplies and stores.

² A working margin is in effect a provision against contingencies which might interrupt the building up of reserves, or cause them to be nibbled at.

of the general administrative problem, including reserves in general. This was that full Base depots would not be built up in Sicily, and that the island would not be considered as a Base for further operations in the sense that the Middle East and North Africa were Bases. (This decision later affected the preparation of operations against the Italian mainland as Chapter XII will tell.)

The planning of sea convoys was co-ordinated at A.F.H.Q. under the direction of the Chief Administrative Officer, Major-General Gale. It is worth remarking that the commitment in shipping was very great, so great, indeed, that after the Casablanca conference (January 1943) there had for a time been fears that the demands of the invasion for British merchant ships could not be met unless other great projects—for example, administrative preparations for the invasion of France, and plans connected with the recapture of Burma, suffered.¹

The programme of convoys in fact worked out as follows: on 13th–14th July (D + 3) follow-up convoys arrived for 13th Corps and the 1st Canadian Division from Middle Eastern ports, and the United Kingdom. A ferry-service of L.C.I. and L.C.T. was begun from Sousse to deliver 800–1,500 tons of maintenance daily, principally for 51st Highland Division. After D + 3, convoys were arranged to arrive, still from Middle Eastern ports and the United Kingdom, at intervals of approximately a fortnight. The long-term plan was that after about the third week in August all convoys should sail from the United Kingdom, their sailings and lading being directed by the War Office and A.F.H.Q. In practice the programme of convoys worked punctually with small loss. The planned, gross total of stores to be delivered up to the end of August was some 247,000 tons leaving aside deliveries by the Sousse ferry-service.

Transport in all its forms was the life-blood of the administrative system, and motor-transport was its most important constituent. Vehicles which have not been dismantled and crated are very awkward objects to ship in numbers because the measurements and weights of each type differ, as does the stowage-space in ships and the power of ships' lifting-tackle. Fitting vehicles into ships, particularly for tactical stowage, is therefore always a jig-saw puzzle. The capacity of special landing-ships and craft was rather small, as was the number of these vessels available. The total vehicles of an infantry division

¹98 British deep-sea cargo ships and 84 British, or British-managed, coasters were used in the assault and early build-up. Sometimes, if one looks at the lesser difficulties in a great problem, which must nevertheless be overcome, one gets a vivid sense of how intricate it was, and of how laborious it must have been to work out the solution. For example, to employ British merchant-crews in the assault necessitated getting round a body of enactments, which had been created during a long span of years, to promote the safety and welfare of merchant seamen. *Merchant Shipping and the Demands of War*, C. B. A. Behrens (H.M.S.O. 1955), Chapters XV, XVIII.

numbered about 3,000.¹ For these and other reasons assaulting formations were to land with a reduced scale of vehicles known as Assault Scale. The first follow-up convoys would land vehicles to increase this to a still reduced Light Scale.² With the convoys due to arrive on about 24th July it was planned to complete the 1st and 2nd Line Transport of all formations. As regards Third Line Transport one company of 10-ton and two companies of 3-ton vehicles were to land during the first forty-eight hours; during the next ten days three more companies of 3-tonners were to follow, and thereafter one further 10-ton and one further 3-ton company.³

Despite many unavoidable, and often unexpected, upsets and mishaps, including such incidents as the disembarkation of key personnel on the wrong beach, craft grounding on sandbars and drowning their vehicles when attempting to get them ashore, French speaking Canadian officers trying to handle English speaking stevedores, misappropriation of vehicles from their proper jobs and many others of a like nature, the amount of transport proved to be sufficient. Generalization is difficult and rash, but it is likely that formations had available about 30% of their transport between the third and fourteenth days from landing. Captured and local transport helped matters, and the fairly short distances allowed of strenuous 'shuttling' of vehicles which helped much more. Towards the end of July the 8th Army's transport was of the order of:

	<i>Load-carriers</i>		<i>Lift in tons</i>	
	<i>2nd Line</i>	<i>3rd Line</i>	<i>2nd Line</i>	<i>3rd Line</i>
13th Corps	372	248	1,100	750
30th Corps	501	397	1,600	1,100
8th Army	—	870	—	2,600

¹ An 'average' MT/store ship carried 125 vehicles; a Landing Ship Tank 50 vehicles, or 20 vehicles plus 22 tanks; a Landing Craft Tank 10 vehicles or 6 tanks.

² *Assault Scales* were calculated to meet all the needs of units and formations, enabling them to operate up to a depth of ten miles from their maintenance areas on the beach. *Light Scales* increased the Assault Scales so as to enable units and formations to operate up to a distance of 30 miles from their maintenance areas for a period of three weeks.

The following approximate figures show how the scales worked out in numbers of vehicles:

	<i>War Establishment</i>	<i>Light Scale</i>	<i>Assault Scale</i>
Infantry Battalion	75	49	29
Infantry Brigade Company, R.A.S.C.	100	100	100
Infantry Brigade Group	980	455	300
Infantry Division (3 Brigades)	3,000	2,000	890

³ (a) First line transport was an integral part of a unit. It carried all the supplies and stores that a unit needed to have always 'in its pocket'.

(b) Second line transport comprised transport units (normally companies of 3-ton lorries) included in the organization of divisions, independent brigade groups, or of temporary formations, for specific duties, e.g. to carry ammunition or supplies etc.

(c) Third line transport comprised transport units under the control of a higher formation, e.g. an Army or a Corps, for any purpose that circumstances might require, usually by allotment to a lower formation.

This quantity of transport, with careful management, was meeting demands.

Not much had been expected from the Sicilian railways because, apart from the damage expected to have occurred from Allied air attack, it seemed certain that the enemy would at least obstruct the system. In the event only telegraph and other communications had been wrecked. The track was virtually undamaged, and a fair amount of locomotives and rolling-stock was found in running order. Coal was provided (nearly 8,000 tons of it) in early convoys. A light engine ran from Pachino to Syracuse on 13th July, and the first train of stores on the 16th. In the second and third weeks of July rail-heads were opened at Palazzolo and Syracuse, and the broad gauge carried about 500 tons a day, the narrow gauge 150 tons.

Air transport came on the scene early. A service for mail and urgently needed ordnance and air force stores worked from North Africa, carrying casualties on return flights, and from 24th July a freight service was established between Castel Benito, in Tripolitania, and Cassibile.

The plan of invasion and the administrative facts meant that the large forces being put ashore would have to be maintained over the beaches by the use of up-to-date craft and amphibians for more than a fortnight. This required a technique which had not previously been tried out and which involved considerable and unknown risks. The risk was increased when the early capture of Palermo was struck out of the plan for tactical reasons. It was possible to be certain of the early capture only of Syracuse and Augusta: the hoped-for timetable was that Syracuse and Licata would fall on the first day, Augusta (a naval anchorage rather than a port, having only a few quay-side berths for small coasters) on the third, and Catania on the eighth. Damage to the ports from Allied air attack and the enemy's demolitions had to be assumed, and the time required for repairs and development could only be guessed. It was possible that the estimates of the capacity of the ports were not accurate. For these and several other reasons it seemed that full maintenance over beaches would be necessary for more than a week at shortest, and at worst for up to thirty days, in whole or in part. Yet experience gained during the 'Torch' landings had led the Vice-Chief of Combined Operations to express a generally accepted opinion that '. . . Taking it by and large, it appears doubtful whether any assault plan should rely on more than 24 hours' maintenance over unsheltered beaches . . .' In the event those concerned closely calculated the risks (not only in the matter of beaches), the means of overcoming them, and, like Nelson,

left something to chance.¹ They declared themselves confident. This was a reasoned, bold declaration and the Allied commanders, with equal boldness, decided to accept it.

When the Royal Navy brought convoys safely to their anchorages off beaches, the problem of beach maintenance was, in the simplest terms, to transfer cargo from ships' holds and from craft to a Beach Maintenance Area by the quickest possible means. The problem sounds absurdly simple but in real life bristled with practical difficulties. For example in July 1943 there was no clear division of responsibility for the tasks of: discharge from ship to lighter; landing from lighter and delivery to land-transport; carriage to the Beach Maintenance Area. Nine persons could, if they chose, legitimately give orders concerning these tasks.² This was the extreme; but in fact control was difficult and troubles arose owing often to the want of small fast launches and Jeeps to keep officers in touch on sea and land. A Beach Group lost its whole outfit of indispensable traffic-signs, sunk. A tank jammed in a landing-craft and special tackle had to be improvised to clear it. The point to be grasped is how many things could go wrong, with immediate serious results, in the wide range between major policy and mishaps which might have been trivial elsewhere than on a beach.

However, two very powerful helps to maintenance over beaches had been devised: in this new organization the Beach Group or Beach Brick, and in the new amphibian, the DUKW. '... a magnificent bird ... in combined operations the greatest invention of modern times' as some users called it.

The need for an organization to maintain an assault force over beaches until a port has been captured had already been accepted by those concerned with combined operations. The answer to conflicting requirements was in the end to assemble a Beach Group round the nucleus of an infantry battalion which could readily return to its primary function when its services for beach work were no longer needed. The Beach Groups or Beach Bricks (the Middle East's name) evolved on slightly different lines in the U.K., the Middle East, and North Africa. In general, however, the organization of all was similar in pattern and included the following components:

H.Q.s. Group H.Q.s with detachment Movement Control.
Artillery. One Heavy and one Light A.A. Battery.

¹ '... Something must be left to Chance; nothing is sure in a Sea Fight beyond all others ...' *Victory*, off Cadiz 9th October 1805. ('The Trafalgar Memorandum.')

² The Naval Commander; the Corps Commander; the Corps' D.A. and Q.M.G.; the Assault Brigade commander; the Senior Naval Officer Landing; the Principal Beach Master; the Principal Military Landing Officer; the Beach Group Commander; the Sub-Area Commander.

Engineers. A Field Company and a mechanical equipment detachment.

Signals. Beach Signal Section from Army, Navy and R.A.F.

Infantry. A battalion.

Supply and Transport. A Field Maintenance Centre, a detail issue depot, two general transport platoons and a workshop platoon.

and, in addition, specialized detachments of Ordnance, R.E.M.E., Medical, Provost, and Pioneers.

Each Beach Group possessed also its own Naval and Air Force component. The Naval component included signals, boat handling, boat repair and maintenance personnel amounting in all to about 15 officers and 150 ratings.

The Naval component, under the direction of the Principal Beach Master (usually a Commander R.N.), had the tasks of reconnoitring and marking the beaches to receive landing-craft, of receiving them, and of controlling the movements of craft to meet the Army's needs.

The Air Force component handled purely R.A.F. stores, supervised the movement of Air units across the beaches and provided detachments to handle stores furnished to the Air Force by the Army.

The general duties of the whole Beach Group were:

- (i) To arrange and control the movement of all personnel and vehicles from ships and landing-craft to assembly areas inland.
- (ii) To move stores, etc. from ships' holds and from landing-craft to Beach Maintenance Area.
- (iii) To develop and organize beaches and the Beach Maintenance Area for defence, movement, and for administrative purposes, including evacuation of casualties and recovery of vehicles.
- (iv) To provide a three-Service Beach Signals organization.

There were in all eight of these Beach Groups or Bricks. They were assigned to beaches and formations and given specialized craft and amphibians in accordance with the table shown below. Work on all beaches was immensely helped by the following factors: anchorages mostly calm, no tide, dry beaches and roads, and little interference from the enemy.

The DUKW was an American designed amphibious truck and derived its name from its factory serial initials. It was a 2½ ton six wheeler truck with a boat built round it, powered by a petrol unit driving its wheels on land and its propeller in the water. It carried 3½ tons or 25 troops. Speed in the water was about 6 m.p.h., on land up to 50 m.p.h.¹

¹ See p. 147 for further details.

Distribution of Beach Groups and DUKWs

Formation	Beach	Beach Group	Infantry nucleus	Craft*	DUKW*	Co-ordinating Administrative H.Q.s
13th Corps: 5th Division	44	33	1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders	12 L.C.T.	45	86 L. of C. Area, later 151 L. of C. Area
	45 46	32	2nd H.L.I.	24 L.C.T.	45	
50th Division	47	34	1st Welch Regt.		50	
30th Corps: 231st Brigade	51	31	7th Bn R. Marines	6 L.C.T.	9	103 L. of C. Sub-Area
	52					
51st Division	56	20 21	2/4th Hampshires	9 L.C.T.	105	
1st Canadian Division	57	3	11, 188 and 242 Pioneer Coys. 73, 84 and 238 Pioneer Coys.	9 L.C.T.	96	
	(Closed D+3)	4				

* The figures shown are as a general illustration only. Numbers fluctuated, and there is no exact record. Besides L.C.T., other craft, e.g. L.C.M. were used. However something like these numbers would have been at work on an 'average' day.

Major-General Miller (Major-General Administration Force 141) had ordered a large number of these DUKWs from America in March 1943 of which 100 were sent from the U.S.A. to the U.K. for the 1st Canadian Division. In British formations the DUKWs were manned by specially trained R.A.S.C. personnel and organized as platoons of General Transport Companies or as independent Amphibian platoons.

The allocation of DUKWs to beaches and formations is included in the table above.

All Beach Groups landed early on 10th July and made successful reconnaissances although it was typical of the mishaps of war that at Cassibile the commander of No. 32 was unluckily killed by a sniper's bullet, and that at Groticelle (Beach 57) the commander of No. 3 had to work for some hours on foot (when time was very precious) because all Jeeps had gone astray. 5th Division's Beach Groups, by nightfall, had begun well in forming the various dumps and depots; 50th Division's Group, faced with more physical obstacles, had not done so well. 51st Highland Division and 231st Brigade's Beach

Groups also began well and brought their beaches into working order during the day. Early fears about the suitability of 1st Canadian Division's beach proved to be correct. False beaches, poor exits and an unsuitable hinterland impeded by terraces created major difficulties and this beach was closed on the 14th July and its traffic diverted to Portopalo Bay.¹

Complete figures for the vehicles and stores landed on the 8th Army's beaches were either not tallied in the general bustle or have not survived. About 8,532 vehicles were landed on the 10th and 11th and between 13th and 29th about 73,000 tons of stores. On all 30th Corps' beaches, from 10th to 23rd July, there was landed a total of 4,364 vehicles, and 38,000 tons of stores. Curiously, the average daily rate of build-up of about 1,350 tons, or double the Corps' average daily requirement for maintenance, was almost too good because it exceeded the power of the various depots to handle it. At the end of this fortnight about 8,000 tons had not been cleared from the beaches or their neighbourhood. Of the total of 38,000 tons nearly a half was carried from ships to Beach Maintenance areas in DUKWs, and the saving in double-handling alone would have been enough to prove the value of these excellent creatures.

Some of the great practical difficulties have been described on earlier pages, as well as the peculiarly favourable factors. The contemporary opinion was that in these circumstances maintenance over the beaches proved surprisingly easy, and that there appeared to be no reason why beach maintenance should not have continued indefinitely if the occasion had demanded it. Yet no false conclusion was drawn that this operation of war was an easy one. From a very large number of technical lessons, two may be noted as of particular interest. The first was that the planning should be centralized in a Corps Headquarters from the earliest moment, and that the Corps should take control of the beaches very early. The second was that much work remained to be done on the problem of defeating the water-gap. A point of particular human interest was that the morale of all the toilers on the beaches responded sharply to news 'from the front', which was hard to come by—whether the news was good or bad seemed to matter little provided that the toilers could feel that their efforts were helping their particular fighting 'teams' to shoot or to save goals.

The 8th Army's administrative organization in Sicily developed in the following stages, broadly speaking. First, the period of initial maintenance over the beaches. It was believed that the first five days

¹ On the 10th about 55% of the L.C.M., and on the 11th about 40%, stranded on these false beaches. Some 250 vehicles in all were 'drowned' in the water gap.

of this would be critical (events proved otherwise) and the Beach Groups were mainly responsible for ensuring that there was no administrative breakdown during this vital period. Second, the organization of Syracuse as the advanced base port to maintain the Armies (a thousand tons of cargo was to be allotted daily to 7th U.S. Army), and the replacing of beach maintenance areas by properly organized L. of C. Areas and Sub-Areas. Third, the setting-up at Syracuse of Fortbase to take over control of the L. of C. behind 8th Army, and to perform for 15th Army Group the functions mentioned on page 133. General Alexander had long ago decided that there would be no place in Sicily for the administrative staff of an Army Group, complete with Services and departments. Fortbase, under its original title Tripolitania Base and L. of C. Area, commanded by Sir Brian Robertson, had been a powerful part since March 1943 of the 8th Army's splendid administrative team.¹ It knew the 8th Army's needs and methods, and enjoyed the confidence of Montgomery and of G.H.Q. Middle East. It seemed common sense to use it in Sicily to the fullest extent, under the direct command of 15th Army Group, to serve 8th Army and to perform some administrative functions for the Army Group. Alexander took with him to Sicily merely a skeleton administrative staff to co-ordinate and to advise.

86 L. of C. Area (Brigadier H. C. N. Trollope) had, in a sense, become almost the 8th Army's administrative 'assault-force' in the days of the advance to Tripoli in January 1943. In July its reconnaissance parties were in the assault-convoys for Sicily, its main body in the convoy due to arrive on D + 3, and it opened in Syracuse on 11th July. Here it began the many-sided task of organizing the area as an advanced base for the 8th Army: getting the port at work, setting up all types of supply and ordnance depots, vehicle parks, railway workshops, field hospitals, transit camps and camps for prisoners of war. This continued until 21st July when H.Q. 6 Base Area took over at Syracuse, and 86 Area moved to Lentini to be ready to organize Catania on capture. Meanwhile H.Q. 103 Sub-Area, at Pachino, had since 11th July been organizing a sector of L. of C. for 30th Corps, and H.Q. 151 Sub-Area, at Augusta, had been doing the same for 13th Corps. On 15th July an advanced echelon of the 8th Army's administrative staff began work at Syracuse.

Within the first week then, while maintenance over the beaches was still in full swing, a normal L. of C. had begun to appear. Main H.Q. of 13th Corps opened at Syracuse on 13th July. No. 100 Field Maintenance Centre opened for 13th Corps just north of Syracuse on 18th July.

¹ See Volume IV, Chapter XIII. In the Order of Battle for Sicily, H.Q. Tripolitania Base and L. of C. Area became H.Q. 20 Base and L. of C. Area but was always known by its telegraphic address, i.e. Fortbase.

Late in July No. 100 F.M.C. moved to Lentini.¹ Main H.Q. of 30th Corps reached Vizzini on 15th July but No. 200 F.M.C. had already been opened at Bascemi on the 13th. H.Q. 8th Army placed an Army Roadhead just north of Syracuse on 18th July and a Railhead at Scordia on the 22nd. On 24th July 30th Corps opened No. 201 F.M.C. at Scordia which in effect maintained the Corps until early August.

The advance party of Fortbase arrived at Syracuse on 20th July. This H.Q. took over control of the local administration of the 8th Army's ports and L. of C. Area. It performed these functions under 8th Army's orders, and itself took command of No. 6 Base Sub-Area, and Nos. 103 and 151 L. of C. Sub-Areas. On behalf of 15th Army Group Fortbase co-ordinated policy concerning the development of ports in Sicily, and demands for maintenance tonnage. It regulated the flow of tonnage to beaches and ports with the aim of making the best use of both, and controlled generally the use and development of road and rail transport.

The ports came quickly into use. Between 15th and 24th July 25,272 tons of stores and 4,741 vehicles were cleared through the port of Syracuse, and for the period 19th to 31st July the totals were 35,569 tons and 5,454 vehicles.² Augusta could handle no more than about 500 tons daily, and was soon reserved as a naval port and anchorage defended by the Mobile Naval Base Defence Organization, a formation of the Royal Marines specially designed for the rapid defence of captured bases. The 7th U.S. Army too was having notable administrative success. In the first four days 22,000 tons of stores and 8,286 vehicles were landed on its beaches. The small ports of Licata and Porto Empedocle were developed at top speed, and these and the beaches cleared 104,000 tons by 31st July. The capture of Palermo on the 22nd gave the Americans a deep-water port which their first convoy entered on the 28th. But as early as the 20th they had informed 8th Army that they would not need the 1,000 tons daily reserved for them at Syracuse. The American success thus

¹ The Field Maintenance Centre had appeared in the Desert campaign of the winter of 1941. It was a development of the Field Supply Depot, a number of which had been worked by the supply and transport services in the first campaign (1940) in the Desert. The F.S.D. was, in essence, a smallish quantity of reserves held at a point close to the fighting troops to offset the interruptions to which a long and exposed L. of C. was liable. The risk of losing it was accepted. The more elaborate F.M.C. was practically a small advanced base containing rations, petrol, water, ammunition, as well as ordnance, engineer, and medical stores, a transit camp, an army post office, and a prisoners' cage. It had a commander and a small staff. See Volume I, pp. 288-9; Volume III, p. 10.

² Further statistics for Syracuse:

<i>Period</i>	<i>Totals Cleared</i>		<i>Daily Average</i>	
	<i>Stores (tons)</i>	<i>Vehicles</i>	<i>Stores (tons)</i>	<i>Vehicles</i>
15th-24th July	25,272	4,741	2,204	474
25th July-7th August	47,998	6,331	3,428	452
8th-21st August	51,057	3,547	3,830	253

directly benefited British administration by cancelling a commitment.

Something must now be said of the special administrative arrangements of the Royal Air Force. Its plan provided for three servicing commandos to land on 10th July, three more on the 15th, and a seventh to be in reserve at Malta. Each had enough technical equipment to maintain four fighter squadrons for nine days.¹ On the arrival of squadrons 'A' and 'B' parties, the servicing commandos would turn themselves into temporary repair and salvage units.² Two Air Stores Parks were to arrive on the fourteenth day, each having the requirements of about ten squadrons of fighters for 28 days.³ At the same time there were to arrive two Repair and Salvage Units, an Air Ammunition Park and a Mechanical Transport Light Repair Unit. The Air Stores Parks carried requirements for 28 days, and were to be replenished with the same amount at the end of this time. Building and improving airfields was the task of the Royal Engineers with some specialized help from the R.A.F. The plan worked well in spite of some delays, in the very early stages, in pushing forward fuel, ammunition, and other stores to captured airfields. Whereas one A.S.P. was five days late in arriving, a detachment of the second A.S.P. and a A.A.P. landed eleven days, and one of the R.S.U.s one day, ahead of schedule. The move of the second R.S.U. to Sicily was cancelled and it remained in Tripolitania until moving to Italy later. Only in the move of the M.T.L.R.U. to Sicily was there a serious delay, of a fortnight, but the Army had in any case undertaken to provide 'common' spares for a month and to help with repairs. R.A.F. fighter, light and fighter-bomber squadrons in Sicily and Malta were kept up to strength by aircraft ferried out from holding units on the African mainland, under arrangements directly controlled by No. 214 Group R.A.F. at Tripoli; N.A.A.F. was responsible for the U.S.A.A.F. squadrons. By the end of July twenty-one airfields (including those in the American sphere) were operational, of which five had needed repair and improvement.

In one field of administration there was partial failure, in meeting an old enemy, malaria. In the 8th Army battle casualties were roughly 9,000, and 'casualties' from malaria 11,500. The figures in

¹ R.A.F. Servicing Commandos were used for the first time during the landings in French North Africa ('Torch') in November 1942 and the eastward advance into Tunisia. Their task was to occupy advanced landing grounds immediately after capture, and to undertake the daily servicing, refuelling, and re-arming of squadrons until the regular maintenance crews arrived.

² The mobile element of a squadron's maintenance staff was divided into two parties. The 'A' party was a refuelling and re-arming team for operating at an advanced or new landing ground. The 'B' party carried out day to day maintenance at the operational landing ground. If an advanced or new landing ground became the main site for operations the 'B' party would join the 'A' party which in turn became available for another jump forward.

³ 14½ squadrons of Spitfires, 5 of Kittyhawks, 1 of Beaufighters.

7th U.S. Army were similar, and the Germans too noted that their troops suffered grievously, although the extent of the harm is not known to us.¹ The Allied medical authorities had foreseen the danger, and had taken precautions which might have been sufficient had they been properly applied. But the execution of anti-malarial measures was tardy, and discipline in units very often overlooked the need to compel men, careless or ignorant of the danger, to observe them.

On the whole then the Lines of Communication in Sicily came smoothly into being, and the operational maintenance of the two corps and of the air force presented few problems that were very difficult. This is not to say that there were no difficulties, for nothing in war is simple. Roads, in general, were narrow, winding and hilly, raising problems for transport, and to establish and work the various administrative apparatus in very close, rocky country was not easy. Scarce pack-transport was a handicap. On the whole however the flow of maintenance was unbroken and sufficient, although towards the end of July 13th Corps had twice to be restricted in its expenditure of artillery ammunition, first by forbidding excess of the normal scale and later by a cut of one-third of that scale for 25-pdr and 105-mm. Administrative units proved adaptable in their methods: the Canadian Division for example met one problem, a round trip of 225 miles over mountainous roads with meagre transport, by a neat exercise in 'continuous running', in other words relays of drivers, and maintenance 'while you wait' by pit-crews, for the never-resting vehicles. There were not wanting experienced heads and hands to tackle problems, and newcomers learned quickly. In Sicily the business of administration, which is unique in war because never does it have respite, was admirably carried on.

¹ 7th U.S. Army. Battle casualties, roughly 8,300. Malaria 'casualties', roughly 9,800.

THE DUKW

APPENDIX

THE DUKW

This American designed amphibious truck derived its name from its factory serial initials. It was a 2½-ton, six-wheeled truck with a boat built round it. Its power-unit was a petrol engine, driving all wheels on land, and a propeller in the water, though the wheels could move the DUKW through water in emergency. It carried a load of up to 3½ tons if properly stowed, or 25 troops, and in Sicily handled up to 23 tons in an 18-hour working day, on an average turn-round of 2½ hours. It was stout, and sea-worthy if well handled, although it was found to be undesirable to work it alongside a ship in choppy water or in the dark. A light derrick (the 'A' frame) could be fitted, but a DUKW was slower to unload than a lorry, because of the height of the gunwale from the ground. Speed in the water was about 6 m.p.h.; on land up to 50 m.p.h.

In March 1943 Major-General Miller, then Major-General Administration, 18th Army Group, heard of the DUKW, and ordered a large number, of which 100 were sent from the United States to the United Kingdom for 1st Canadian Division. DUKWs in British formations were manned by specially trained R.A.S.C. 'crews' (two drivers and two 'boathook' men to each DUKW). They were organized, with some variations, as platoons of General Transport Companies or as Independent Amphibian Platoons, R.A.S.C. The main centre of training was at Sousse in the hands of No. 385 G.T. Company R.A.S.C.; the DUKWs for the Canadian Division did not reach the United Kingdom until the last minute and instructors were flown from Africa with no time to spare. There were 207 DUKWs in 30th Corps, and 140 in 5th Corps.

TABLE
Sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command dusk 10th-dawn
22nd July 1943 (excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports)

Command	Land Rece	Fighters	Bomber and Fighter-Bomber						Bomber Totals	
			Sardinia		Italy		Sicily		Day	Night
		Includes shipping protection shown in ()	L. of C. and other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	L. of C. and other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	L. of C. and other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s		
N.A.A.F.	577*	4974† (1621)	—	—	392	70	—	76	707	—
			—	—	179	509	—	205	1423	—
			—	—	—	139	—	399	108	1,004†
			—	—	—	—	—	—	27	—
			—	—	—	—	—	—	59	301
			—	17	—	—	—	—	1,402	1,419†
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Malta	156	6,279 (149)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M.E.A.C.	41*	1,069† (880)	—	—	122	254	—	—	376	—
			—	—	—	—	—	—	36	36
Totals	774	12,322 (2,650)	—	17	693	833	—	281	3,952	1,341

Total Sorties Flown = 18,389 or 1,657 every 24 hours.

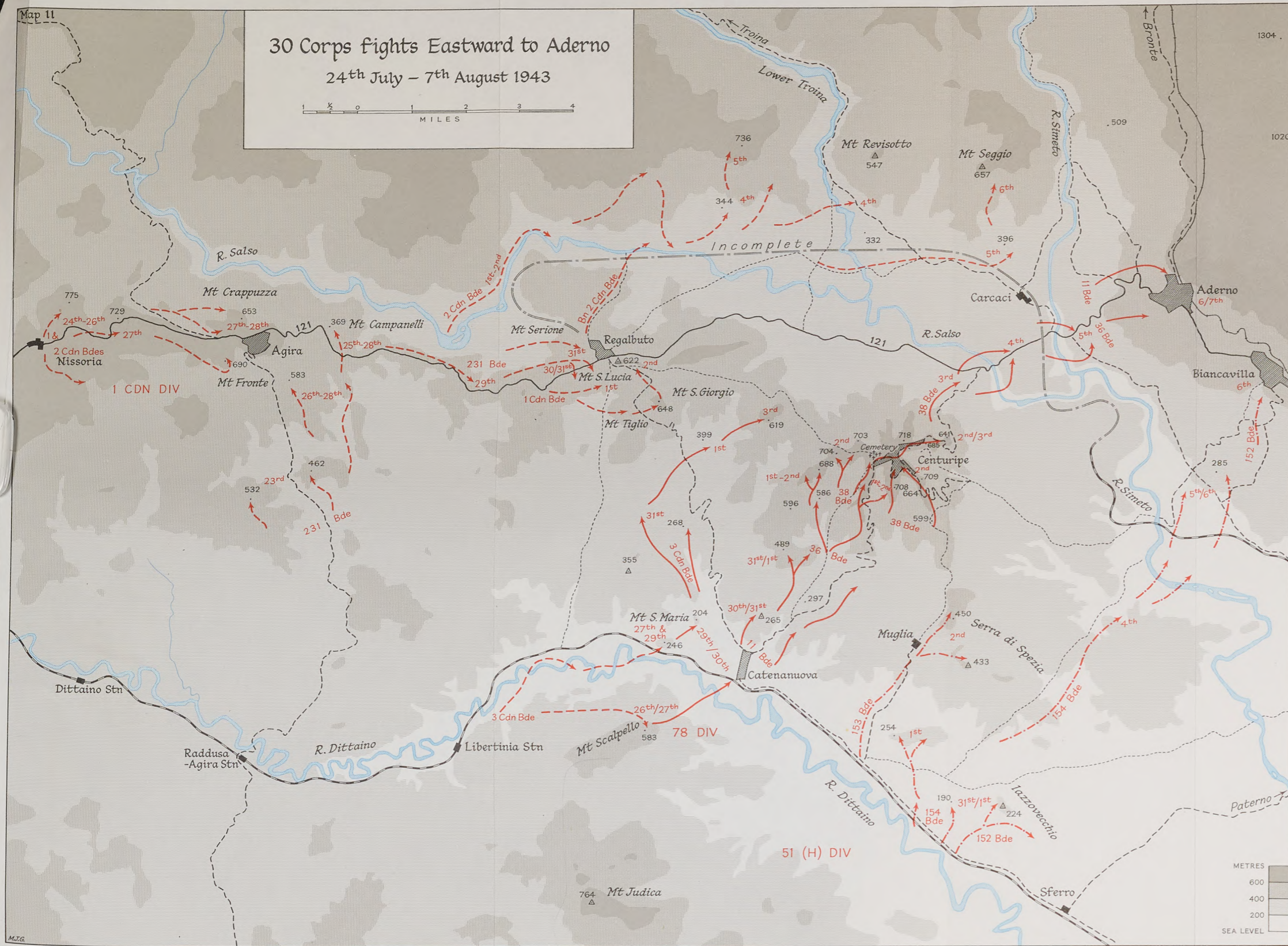
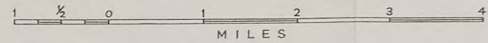
* Estimated sorties.

† W.D.A.F. and No. 205 Group R.A.F. (Wellington) sorties included in N.A.A.F. figures.

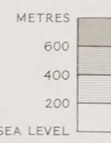
Note During the period 10th-21st July Allied bombers of all kinds dropped an estimated total of 8,500 tons of bombs on enemy targets in the Mediterranean area including ports and against shipping.



30 Corps fights Eastward to Aderno 24th July - 7th August 1943



1304
1020



CHAPTER V
SUCCESS IN SICILY
(23rd July to 17th August 1943)

(i)

See Maps 10 and 11

THE scene changes now to the operation named 'Hardgate', the Allies' attack to break the *Hauptkampflinie* into which, by 23rd July, all the German and Italian mobile field formations had moved or were moving. It was a major battle. The equivalent of three and a half British divisions was used in the main thrust against Aderno (to which alone, strictly speaking, the name 'Hardgate' applies). Four U.S. Divisions, in depth on a two-divisional front, were simultaneously pressing as strongly as possible against the northern sector of the enemy's defence line. It helps to make clear the general pattern of the battle if we bring together some points from directives which have been mentioned in earlier chapters and give a short summary of the plan.

On 20th July Alexander had given Highway 120 (Petralia-Nicosia-Troina-Cesaro-Randazzo) and Highway 113 (the north coast road) to the Americans and had ordered Patton to make strong reconnaissances eastward, and to back them up strongly if opportunity occurred. This direction, in part suggested by Montgomery and strongly requested by Patton as regards 7th U.S. Army, transferred from 8th Army the thrust towards Randazzo, one of the three ordered by Alexander on the 16th. On the 21st Montgomery discarded a second—the thrust northward through Catania—and declared that he would concentrate on the third: to Aderno and towards Bronte. He believed that a thrust eastward towards Messina by the Americans would help him greatly. Alexander therefore, on the 23rd, directed Patton to more forceful action. Patton was to make his eastern thrusts the strongest that he could maintain administratively, and to exert pressure continuously. On 21st July Coningham had defined the main tasks of the tactical air forces as: disruption of the enemy's supplies by sea, road, and rail; direct air support to the land forces; and fighter protection by day and night for the forward troops and for Allied shipping off the east coast of Sicily. D.A.F. was to continue to support the 8th Army and U.S. XII A.S.C. the U.S. 7th Army, helping each other if need be. Because of the dark, and therefore not very promising, night period ahead N.A.T.B.F. would

be able to concentrate on day bombing. From Malta the South African Baltimores and Bostons, the British Baltimores and the American Bostons were, generally, to be on call to D.A.F., and from North Africa the American Mitchells and the British Bostons to U.S. XII A.S.C., but both forces were to be mutually supporting.¹

Montgomery employed 30th Corps (Lieut.-General Sir Oliver Leese) for the thrust to Aderno, and the plan was for eight separate, but synchronized, operations between the nights 29th/30th July and 1st/2nd August. The main phases of this series would be as follows. By the night 1st/2nd August the Corps was to secure the dominating tactical features on the approaches to Aderno; 1st Canadian Division, on the left, capturing Regalbuto; 78th Division, in the centre, Centuripe; and 51st Highland Division, on the right Mt. Serra di Spezia (Point 433). The artillery of the Corps would then take up positions to support the attack on Aderno, which 78th Division would deliver from the south-west, and 1st Canadian Division from the west. Patton, on 23rd July, ordered Bradley with 2nd U.S. Corps to thrust eastward with the maximum force along Highways 120 and 113, and reinforced him for the purpose. These American movements resulted in the fierce battle of Troina and in some stiff fighting on the northern coast road. Most of the air support for the Allied armies was pre-arranged with the object of bringing to a standstill all movement in a wide area in rear of the enemy's line and of destroying his supply dumps there.

We must now cross to the enemy's side of the hill. The previous chapter mentioned the principal immediate results, for the campaign in Sicily, of Mussolini's fall: the belief that the defence of the *Hauptkampflinie* could not be drawn out indefinitely, and the preliminary arrangements to evacuate the island at some future date. However, at his conference on 27th July Kesselring impressed upon his subordinates that the political situation was obscure and that Sicily was to be defended at all costs until the course of events required other policies. Defence at all costs, in the present positions, was the present task of the 6th Army.

On 18th July the two battalions of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division so far transferred were joined by the rest of 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and an artillery battery. The remainder of the Division was ordered to Sicily on the 22nd, less the tank and reconnaissance battalions which were left on the mainland under command of 26th Panzer Division. When Major-General Fries arrived on the island on the 24th he therefore had under command his 15th and 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiments, an artillery regiment, Flak and engineer battalions, and an anti-tank company. 29th Panzer

¹ On 20th July one Flight of No. 651 A.O.P. Squadron became available to support 13th Corps and one Flight of No. 654 A.O.P. Squadron 30th Corps.

Grenadier Division was an agreeable reinforcement to Hube. Hube had been ironing out the untidy set of formations, mainly independent battle-groups, which had been carrying on the fighting since 10th July. By the 25th the Axis line of defence was fairly tidily organized in the following three sectors. On the right (north) under Fries: 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and remains of the Assietta Division, holding from the sea at S. Stefano to a point south of Mistretta. In the centre was Rodt's 15th Panzer Grenadier Division and the 5th Regiment of the Aosta Division; this sector's southern boundary included Nicosia. On the left of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, from north of Leonforte to the east coast at Catania, was Conrath's Hermann Göring Division and parts of the Napoli Division. The Hermann Göring Division still had under command the 3rd and 4th Parachute Regiments, and had received two more German units, 923rd Fortress Battalion and the Reggio Fortress Battalion. The morale of the Italian troops was low although the Assietta and Aosta Divisions had not yet been heavily engaged. The morale of the German troops was high, although Conrath had had occasion earlier to condemn some instances of confusion and panic in his division, principally in administrative units. The Axis had prepared two secondary lines both pivoting on Centuripe and extending to the sea north and south of Catania. The enemy intended to fight hard in his positions and he regarded the Centuripe massif as an extremely important pivot in the defences of Aderno.

(ii)

The greater part of 8th Army spent the seven days from 23rd to 29th July in regrouping and refitting. 13th Corps' task was to hold its bridgehead and to reach leftwards to take over 51st Highland Division's positions in the neighbourhood of Stimpato. In 30th Corps 51st Highland Division concentrated for the coming operation, and in a night attack by 2nd/4th Hampshires on 25th/26th July took Mt. Judica, a hill on its left flank, whence patrols made touch with the enemy on Mt. Scalpello in front of Catenanuova. The Canadian Division (now with 231st Infantry Brigade under command) began operations against Agira on 23rd and 24th July, and these will find their place in the account of the main battle. 78th Division which, since its hard fighting in Tunisia, had been training at Hammamet, landed on the Cassibile beaches between 25th and 28th July. It began to move into its assembly area south of Scalpello on the 26th and completed the move on the 30th—very close-run timing. There were no special difficulties in the administrative preparations of 30th Corps. These included sending forward 142,000 rounds of ammunition for the 264 25-pdr and 88 medium guns of the Corps: the

estimated requirement for the period 28th July to 2nd August. Some 400 local mules and donkeys had been collected to form an improvised train of pack-transport for 78th Division.¹

The projected sequence of operations by 30th Corps to capture Aderno is set out below, and the underlining indicates landmarks in the sequence, which may also guide the reader through the description, next to be given, of the topography of the area of battle.

Date Night of:	1st Canadian Division	78th Division	51st Highland Division
From 23rd July	Preliminary operations to <u>Capture Agira</u>	Arriving and concentrating	Concentrating
29th/30th July	—	3rd Canadian Brigade (on temporary loan to the division) to capture bridgehead across Dittaino river at Catenanuova	—
30th/31st July	<u>Capture Regalbuto</u>	Enlarge Catenanuova bridgehead, relieving Canadian brigade	—
31st July/ 1st August	—	Complete Catenanuova bridgehead	Capture bridgehead over Dittaino river between Catenanuova and Sferro
1st/2nd August	—	<u>Capture Centuripe</u>	Enlarge bridgehead, and <u>capture Mt. Serra di Spezia</u> (Pt.433)
2nd/3rd August	Artillery moves to positions to support next phase of operations		
When ready	<u>Capture Aderno</u>	<u>Capture Aderno</u>	Protect right flank of 78th Division, and the artillery areas

¹ 78th Division (Major-General V. Eveleigh). Main formations and units:

11th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier E. E. E. Cass)
 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, 1st Surreys, 5th Northhamptons
 36 Infantry Brigade (Brigadier B. Howlett)
 6th Royal West Kent, 5th The Buffs, 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders
 38th (Irish) Infantry Brigade (Brigadier N. Russell)
 6th Inniskillings, 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers,
 2nd London Irish Rifles
 56th Reconnaissance Regiment, R.A.C.; 17th, 132nd, 138th Field Regiments, R.A.;
 64th Anti-Tank Regiment, R.A.; 49th Light A.A. Regiment, R.A.; 214th, 237th, 256th
 Field Companies, R.E.; 281st Field Park Company, R.E.; 1st Kensingtons (M.G.).

The approaches to Aderno to be followed by the Canadian, 78th, and Highland Divisions were the most direct from the positions to which the plan of campaign and the turn of events had brought these formations. The tract of country in which 30th Corps was about to fight lies between the Salso river on the north and the Dittaino on the south. Both rivers flow almost west to east hereabouts, and are about eight miles apart. Between them lies a spur of the Erei Mountains some twenty-five miles long, ending in the east in the huge mass of Centuripe. East of Centuripe and beneath, two torrents meet in winter, and in summer become shrunken streams in wide boulder-strewn beds. For here the Salso, which has already received the Troina flowing down from the north, joins the Simeto which runs from north to south. About two miles east of the Simeto stands Aderno, on the lowest terrace of Mount Etna, yet at a height of 1,800 feet.

Along the spur between the Salso and the Dittaino runs Highway 121 and on it the hill towns of Leonforte, Assoro, Agira, and Regalbuto are situated. All of them, and Centuripe and Aderno too, had been strongholds in old times, acquainted with bloodshed and battle. From the Dittaino valley, which lies southward, only three narrow roads climb the spur: one from Raddusa-Agira Station to Agira; and one to Regalbuto and another to Centuripe from Catenanuova. On the right of the Centuripe road are tangled hills, one of the summits being Mt. Serra di Spezia. Whether a man goes east along the spur or climbs up it from the south, he must cross the grain of the country, formed by rocky ridges one after another athwart the roads. This is a broad impression, for this countryside is a jumble of ridges and hills and the hills are shaped in every mould; flat-topped, or round and swelling, or sharp and precipitous.

Though such was the general lie of this rugged and mountainous land, its detail baffles a summary. Yet something must be attempted. These heights and valleys though harsh were not bare and barren for they had been cultivated through the centuries. There were groves and belts of olive and almond and other trees and, within reach of irrigation, plantations of lemons and oranges. The hill slopes were terraced, often for vines, and cactus and prickly pear were planted as hedges and boundaries, and there were many patches of scrub. The hills were limestone and the soil was shallow, and time and the weather had carved, scarped, and gouged out pinnacles, battlements and cliffs, razor-backs and ravines, and had scattered boulders everywhere. In the river valleys and on any plateau there were fields, strewn with stones and at this season covered with stubble or withered grass laced with weeds and prickles. The river banks made curves and loops, and fell sometimes twenty feet or more to the river beds, and gullies, pits, and caves were plentiful.

The water channels ran from inches to three or four feet deep. The extremes of the terrain provoked some reflections by the Intelligence Officer of the 231st Infantry Brigade '... Christ! What a steep hill this is ... soon I am floundering about in deep wadis among trees and prickly pear bushes ...'

The very rugged country prevented ambitious deployments of troops who had very little pack transport or none. It was admirably suited to infantry tactics though in the nature of things the attacker toiled up, across, perhaps down to get to grips with an enemy whom often he could not see. Allied tactics sometimes showed the plain-dweller's tendency to underestimate the size of features, and used one battalion where two or three would have covered the ground better. The defender tucked himself in behind reverse slopes, among boulders, and in gullies, holes, and caves. Ensconced, with a good view and plenty of breath, he hoped to do execution until expelled or until orders came to slip away, and he pounded off, with lungs soon bursting and temples throbbing, through another position already held behind him, to a more distant position for himself. But the fighting was far from being all tip and run; the records of bloody combats witness the contrary. Dust, heat, and iron-hard ground spared nobody.

(iii)

As soon as 1st Canadian Division had taken Assoro on 22nd July General Simonds directed his 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade along Highway 121 on 23rd to capture Agira, to be helped by a synchronized attack from the south by 231st Infantry Brigade. This brigade, since 17th July, had been advancing northwards on the Raddusa road in an independent role under orders of 30th Corps. On the night 18th/19th it crossed the Dittaino, capturing 200 Italians, and hurried on, intending to reach Agira. But when this 'medieval town perched on the top of Scaffell' (such was an impression) came into view, it became clear that German troops, identified by prisoners as from 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, had just arrived on two heights (Points 462 and 532) on either side of the road three miles below the town. This was sheer bad luck. Simonds ordered 231st Brigade (now under his command from 30th Corps) to capture these heights and exploit to within about half a mile of Agira—to about the limit of the range of the Canadian divisional artillery supporting the whole attack. The brigade took all its objectives on the 23rd but 1st Canadian Brigade's attack was delayed, owing to divisional regrouping, until the 24th when it was ordered to capture Agira by nightfall. 231st Brigade's task now became to

shut Agira's back door on the Germans by seizing a height rather more than a mile east of the town.

A little east of Nissoria a rugged ridge crosses and commands Highway 121. The Royal Canadian Regiment and a squadron of Shermans of the Three Rivers Regiment attacked this in the late afternoon (4.30 p.m.) of the 24th with the support of five field and two medium regiments of artillery.¹ But the infantry could not keep up the pace set in the fire-plan and lost its help, while ten of the road-bound tanks fell to anti-tank guns. In the end a German battle-group, based on 2nd Battalion, 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, maintained its position. At midnight 24th/25th July the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment renewed the attack without success in the face of hot machine-gun and mortar fire. On the evening of 25th July 1st Canadian Infantry Brigade's remaining battalion, the 48th Highlanders of Canada fared no better. These reverses made vain the enterprise of two companies of 1st Hampshire who had gained the height east of Agira and had held on among the vines and prickly pears until withdrawn on the evening of the 25th.

On the evening of 26th July 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade entered the battle and Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry attacked under a barrage of some 80 guns at 139 rounds a gun. The fighter-bombers continued the support which they had been giving at intervals during the past three days. This attack succeeded, and on the 27th the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada and the Edmonton Regiment fought their way eastward, with strong artillery support, and the help of American Bostons, which struck at Agira while British Kittyhawk fighter-bombers strafed and bombed German positions west of that town. 1st Battalion 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment had arrived to reinforce the enemy, but on the 27th the Edmontons scaled the precipitous Mt. Fronte and took it by the morning of the 28th, when Mt. Crappuzza fell to the Seaforth of Canada. The loss of these heights overlooking Agira made the town untenable and the enemy withdrew. Meanwhile, each night, the Hampshires had regained their height, only to be withdrawn as often, by General Simonds' orders, from a position too isolated to hold. The Dorsets too pushed upwards towards Agira. Both battalions attacked successfully on the 28th but were unable to intercept the retreating enemy. 231st Infantry Brigade had sustained over 300 casualties in faithfully carrying out its task, and was deprived of its reward by the fortunes of the main attack. The Canadian Division had suffered 438 casualties in what was its biggest battle of the Sicilian campaign. Because the ground prevented wide deployment six Canadian battalions had been committed, in the early stages,

¹ 1st Field Regiment, R.C.H.A., 2nd and 3rd Field Regiments, R.C.A.; 142nd, 165th Field Regiments, R.A.; 7th and 64th Medium Regiments, R.A.

one by one against stubborn defenders, and had not been able to keep their attacks moving on narrow fronts scourged by cross-fire. At a desk this sort of tactical problem is solved in five minutes; in the field the solution unhappily required five days and cost nearly eight hundred casualties. German sources describe the fighting as severe.

Pending a decision at Agira, 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade had been halted since 24th July at Libertinia in the Dittaino valley. On 26th evening it advanced once more, directed at Catenanuova, and the Royal 22^o Regiment took Mt. S. Maria, and Mt. Scalpello, the first eight hundred feet high, the second nearly 2,000 feet, which dominated the Dittaino valley and the approaches to Catenanuova from west and south. The enemy temporarily regained Mt. S. Maria on 27th but withdrew towards Catenanuova next day. On 29th 3rd Canadian Brigade passed under command of 78th Division to open the main offensive by capturing Catenanuova. On the same day the rest of the Canadian Division, led by 231st Infantry Brigade, moved east along Highway 121 towards Regalbuto.

(iv)

The main present tasks of the Allied air forces were given at the beginning of this chapter, and at the end of it there is a table which enumerates the sorties flown by the Mediterranean Air Command between 22nd and 29th July and lists the main types of targets. The sorties amounted to an average of just under 1,160 every twenty-four hours, including attacks on evacuation shipping and craft but not on other shipping nor against ports. It was a week in which Allied domination of the air increased, and the enemy's air activity continued to drop. His bombers made a few attacks in Sicily against the Allied administrative areas and Allied night-fighters shot down eight near Augusta and Syracuse, besides four over Malta. Axis fighters do not appear to have ventured west of a line running from Cape d'Orlando on the north coast to Riposto on the east coast. The German tactical air force committed to Sicily, and disposed in the toe of Italy, seems not to have exceeded 25 F.W. 190 fighter-bombers, 25 Me. 110s used as fighter-bombers, and from 50 to 60 single-engine fighters. German losses in aircraft during the week were 80, and Italian at least 6 against an Allied total of about 45. It is therefore not surprising that the enemy's air force virtually ceased to influence very much the fighting in Sicily. The contrary is true of the Allied air forces although very few direct results of actions in the air upon events on the ground can be traced. The German formations acknowledge the continual obstruction caused by air action but nevertheless claim that it was offset by wariness, anti-aircraft fire, dispersion, and discipline. Guzzoni, however, on 30th July, reported

to *Comando Supremo* that the troops were being unremittingly harried from the air, and that communications were chaotic.

For the Allied tactical air forces the area of operations which Sicily afforded was small. The Desert Air Force was to operate against shipping in the Strait of Messina, and against traffic on the road from Messina to Catania, and on the roads girdling Etna, indicated by the names Catania-Randazzo-Fiumefreddo, and in fact against any targets, within this general area, chosen by itself or required by the 8th Army. The U.S. XII A.S.C. took Highway 113 from Messina to S. Fratello, Highway 120 and the lateral roads between.

The fighter-bombers were seldom called on for direct support, and indeed almost all their sorties, flown in the battle area, out of a total of roughly 1,000 for Sicily, were against communications. The aims of the attack on communications were to isolate the battlefield and freeze movement on it, and those operations were continuous west of a line—to give a very general indication—drawn from Cape d'Orlando through Randazzo to Acireale. Light bombers, fighter-bombers, and fighters all took part, and there were some noteworthy strikes. On 26th July British Baltimores and British and American Bostons flew 212 sorties against Regalbuto, and on the 28th 82 light bombers again attacked, bringing the total load of bombs dropped in the two days to 150 tons. Earlier, on the 22nd, 36 American Kittyhawks caught a road convoy at Randazzo and claimed a bag of 65 vehicles. Good targets were found on the air lines of communications. On the 18th July American Lightnings had destroyed 9 Ju. 52 air transports near the island of Ustica, and on the 25th 35 Spitfires from No. 322 Wing at Lentini, caught ten Ju. 52s, escorted by fighters, as they circled a strip near Milazzo (in north-east Sicily) before landing. The Spitfires shot them all down, as well as two Me. 109s, in a sky filled with blazing fragments of the petrol-laden air transports.

Beyond Sicily the air offensive against the lines of communication and the enemy's airfields continued.¹ On 22nd July 71 Fortresses bombed the railway at Foggia, and temporarily paralysed rail traffic, while American Mitchells attacked marshalling yards at Battipaglia and Marauders those at Salerno, as twice did Wellingtons. On the 24th 51 Fortresses inflicted much damage at Bologna, dropping six hundred 500 lb bombs, and on the 26th Mitchells and Marauders attacked communications near Catanzaro Marina and Paola in Calabria. Airfields in Italy received a heavier weight of attack than other targets, especially from the Fortresses whose effort against airfields was nearly double that which they applied elsewhere. On 23rd July they dropped eleven hundred and twenty-eight

¹ Air operations against ports and shipping are dealt with in Chapter XI.

500 lb bombs on La Verano (Foggia area) and shot down several fighters, and the same day Marauders destroyed five German and five Italian aircraft at Aquino (north of Naples). On the 27th 17 Fortresses damaged Capua airfield, while at Scalea (in Calabria) 36 Mitchells and 23 Marauders destroyed five German and one Italian aircraft, and damaged seven German. On the 29th July Marauders put Aquino out of action for twenty-four hours, and 54 Fortresses bombed Viterbo (north of Rome), destroying ten German aircraft and damaging three, wrecking hangars and cratering runways. R.A.F. Liberators and Halifaxes from Middle East twice attacked Reggio di Calabria; but the Middle East's American Liberators were occupied in training for a projected attack on the Ploesti oil refineries in Rumania.¹ Two detached operations are interesting. On 23rd July six Beaufighters and eight Baltimores from No. 201 Group R.A.F., and 94 Hurricanes and 12 Spitfires from Air Defences Eastern Mediterranean, raided Crete, unfortunately at the heavy cost of nineteen aircraft which fell to anti-aircraft fire. On the night 24th/25th July 33 Lancasters, returning to England from Algiers after a 'shuttle raid' on Italy, set fire to the marshalling yards at Leghorn.

(v)

We return now to the Allied advance on Aderno. On 29th/30th July, as planned, 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigade took Catenanuova, with scarcely a fight, from the German 923rd Fortress Battalion. On 30th/31st, again punctually, 78th Division's 11th Infantry Brigade enlarged this bridgehead in action with troops of the Hermann Göring Division and 3rd Parachute Regiment without great difficulty, although hostile aircraft twice appeared vexatiously. On the next night, 31st July/1st August, 51st Highland Division set about crossing the Dittaino on the right of 78th Division and protecting this flank. 154th and 152nd Infantry Brigades attacked the high Iazzovecchio ridge about a mile beyond the river. The fighting which followed with 1st Battalion of the Hermann Göring Division's

¹ *Enemy aircraft losses on airfields*

Little information has come to light concerning Italian aircraft losses, and it is particularly unfortunate that no details exist of the losses, described as 'severe', inflicted by the Allied raid on La Verano airfield on 23rd July. The Italian figure is therefore incomplete and represents only those losses about which we can be reasonably certain.

	<i>German</i>		<i>Italian</i>	
	<i>Destroyed</i>	<i>Damaged</i>	<i>Destroyed</i>	<i>Damaged</i>
Sicily	1	—	—	—
Italy	21	11	6	—
Total	22	11	6	0

2nd Panzer Grenadier Regiment was sharp at times, and on 1st August the Kluge battle group, of which this unit was a part, attempted a counter-attack with tanks. But the two Highland Brigades and tanks of 50th R.T.R. had the situation comfortably in hand, and during the night 1st/2nd August the enemy withdrew as a result of the pressure which he was feeling on his right flank in general. During the next few days 51st Highland Division continued its advance towards the lateral Carcaci-Paterno road in conformity with the events occurring on 30th Corps' left flank.

Just after midnight on 31st July/1st August the 36th Infantry Brigade (78th Division) began its advance to attack Centuripe. The town stands on a ridge jutting out from the main mass of the hills which look like a grim, terraced rampart when seen from the south. A narrow road approaches the town in hairpin bends and is commanded virtually everywhere from this point or that. The hill-side terraces form a series of six-foot steps, and elsewhere there are steep slopes of slippery, coarse grass or loose stone. The defence was in the hands of 1st Battalion 3rd Parachute Regiment, with detachments of the 2nd Battalion, a field battery, and an anti-tank troop of the Hermann Göring Division. General Eveleigh had intended to attack on the night 1st/2nd August, but the quick success at Catenanuova and his already completed preparations caused him to advance this time by twenty-four hours. 36th Brigade was to gain the high ground west and south-west of the town and assault from there. 38th (Irish) Infantry Brigade stood ready to push on through Centuripe, and down to the crossing of the Salso river. The divisional artillery was in support, deployed wherever positions could be found along the road. In Sicily there grew up the art, further advanced in Italy, of placing field and medium guns in positions which would have been seen, in earlier days, as freakish.

36th Brigade's move across immensely difficult country was well accomplished in spite of disconcerting interference from small knots of the enemy lurking here and there. But at dawn on 1st August the 5th Buffs on the right and the 6th Royal West Kents on the left found themselves under a deadly fire from well-placed light machine-guns and mortars. In such conditions ground can often be gained only in small bites, laboriously. The strokes of minor tactics are played, often without apparent result, and then played again. Movement is by small blobs round the braver men. The hours slip by. On this occasion the 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders at length passed through the Buffs but were held up south of the town. A night-attack was staged: Argylls on the right directed on the town; 1st Surreys (on loan from 11th Infantry Brigade) in the centre, directed on the Cemetery, five hundred yards west of the town and separated from it by a gorge; Royal West Kents up the spurs from the south-west. The

fighting in the dark was stubborn but by the morning of 2nd August the enemy had checked the attack. There was however, an impression that he was wavering because of the pressure here at Centuripe and at Regalbuto, and also from the Americans at Gagliano and Cerami (on Highway 120), and in the north. This was correct: and on the 1st the Hermann Göring Division as a whole was ordered to begin to thin out (not to withdraw) at midnight, and the Heilmann Group to thin out at 9 p.m. on 2nd August from Regalbuto-Centuripe.¹ General Evelegh decided to put in his 38th (Irish) Infantry Brigade against Centuripe during the afternoon, supported by 17th, 132nd, 138th Field Regiments R.A. and 57th and 142nd Field, and 70th Medium Regiments R.A. from 30th Corps Artillery. At about 6 p.m. the 2nd London Irish Rifles, supported by heavy concentrations and a barrage, opened the attack and in two hours captured important heights west of the town. Thereupon the 6th Inniskillings on the right struck the town itself, and the 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers at the Cemetery. The fighting was described as close, but by first light on the 3rd the enemy were driven from all their positions. 78th Division had added a spray to its Tunisian laurels.

Meanwhile the Allied air forces were active over the whole area of battle. On 31st July 53 American Marauders and 22 fighter-bombers raided Aderno as did Wellingtons the same night, and there were more attacks on 1st and 2nd August. Paterno and S. Maria di Licodia suffered also from the light bombers and fighter-bombers as, further afield, did Bronte, Cesaro and Randazzo. R.A.F. Baltimores and the fighters searched for and strafed battlefield targets such as gun positions.

While the fighting on 78th and the Highland Divisions' fronts was going on 1st Canadian Division had become engaged once more, at Regalbuto. Here Mt. Serione, on the north side of Highway 121, and the 'Regalbuto Ridge' running alongside it on the south, ending in the 2,000-foot Mt. S. Lucia, commanded the western approaches to the town. This stood where three hill features converged, and just to its south was Mt. Tiglio, 1,800 feet high, on the lip of a gorge, and less than a mile to eastward beyond this hill, the 2,100-foot Mt. S. Giorgio. To complete the ring of bastions there was the precipitous 'Tower Hill' (Pt. 622) on the town's south-eastern edge. There were some thick olive and almond groves in this very rugged and broken piece of ground. The garrison here was the Hermann Göring's Engineer Battalion, rather more than a company of its tanks, 4th Battery of the Hermann Göring Artillery Regiment, and a company of 3rd Parachute Regiment. An order by the Engineer Battalion

¹ Lieutenant-Colonel Heilmann commanded 3rd Parachute Regiment of 1st Parachute Division. He replaced Lieutenant-Colonel von Carnap, killed on 30th July, as battle-group commander.

directed that '... it must be made absolutely clear that the present position must be held at all costs. Any instructions for withdrawal are preparatory. There must be no doubt about this point ...'

On 29th July 231st Infantry Brigade led the way and towards evening the 1st Hampshires were held by a heavy cross-fire from machine-guns, mortars, and nebelwerfer on the western end of Regalbuto Ridge, though the 1st Dorsets on the right had somewhat better fortune. A reconnaissance decided Brigadier Urquhart to attack the Regalbuto Ridge with 2nd Devons during the night 30th/31st July. The Devons therefore attacked from a perhaps unexpected north-westerly direction, with the support of 144 guns, at 11 p.m. and at 2.35 a.m. on 31st their final success signal shot up.¹ The battalion had already had about 200 casualties in Sicily and therefore was thin on the ground when a strong counter-attack came in. The Germans regained the east end of the ridge, but at length were swept back by the Devons' reserve company counter-attacking too. Kittyhawk fighter-bombers attacked the enemy's artillery positions. Meanwhile three companies of Dorsets attacked Mt. Serione and took it in close-quarter fighting. On relief by 48th Highlanders of Canada (1st Canadian Brigade) the Dorsets prepared for a further attempt on Regalbuto itself. Their reserve company meanwhile had been sent on an enterprising battle patrol towards Tower Hill, moving by a detour south of Regalbuto Ridge. The stage was now set for 1st Canadian Brigade to assault Regalbuto. On the night 31st July/1st August The Royal Canadian Regiment made a flank move towards Tower Hill, following more or less the Dorsetshire company's route, only to be held up on the shale-littered slopes of the gorge below the town during the 1st. Strong fighting patrols of the Dorsets managed to get into the town's central square from the west, but were held in it by enemy posts in side-streets. That night, 1st/2nd August, the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment made another flank move to capture Mt. Tiglio and attack Regalbuto from there. They found Mt. Tiglio bare of enemy and before they could attack Regalbuto, a patrol of 48th Highlanders, at 4 a.m. on the 2nd, discovered that the whole town was empty. In fact General Conrath had ordered a withdrawal to begin at midnight. At Regalbuto the Hermann Göring Engineer Battalion was virtually destroyed. Of the British and Canadians the 2nd Devons had suffered most: 27 killed and 82 wounded on Regalbuto Ridge. Meanwhile 2nd Canadian Brigade had sent patrols north-eastward into the Salso valley, and on the 2nd the Edmonton Regiment, equipped with pack mules, plunged into the tangled wilderness north of the river to act as a flank-guard to the Canadian Division as it advanced towards Aderno.

¹ Canadian Divisional Artillery, and 165th Field, 7th, 64th Medium Regiments, R.A.

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30th Corps had now completed the first broad phase of its operations and, taking them as a whole, exactly on time. But before following the next phase, or considering how events were affecting Kesselring, Guzzoni, and Hube, it is necessary to take a view, which must be summary, of the northern half of the Allied front where Bradley's 2nd U.S. Corps, with the Mustang fighter-bombers of U.S. XII A.S.C. in direct support, was fighting important battles.¹ The 45th U.S. Division was advancing on Highway 113 (the northern coast road), and 1st U.S. Division and 39th R.C.T. (9th U.S. Division) on Highway 120, about ten miles to the north of the Canadians. The considerable Axis resistance hardened on 1st August on 1st U.S. Division's front at Troina, where were most of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division and a battalion of the Aosta Division. Here there followed a fierce battle. From the defenders' point of view the Troina position had every advantage. It was a complex of great hills and ridges, to be approached only by bare and rugged slopes, cut by deep gulches. The defenders had an excellent view and cover to mask their movements; the attackers had to toil and sweat under constant observation. The American Intelligence underestimated the Axis's strength, and misunderstood the Axis plan by seeing Troina as only a temporary outpost of a main defence line further east. When 39th R.C.T. began an attack on 1st August to drive in the so-called outpost, it was held, and immediately counter-attacked. This was the first of some twenty-four counter-attacks to be made by the Germans during this five-day battle. However, General Allen (1st U.S. Division), a commander of hard fibre and impetuous temper, did not appear to grasp what he was up against until further manœuvres by 39th and 26th R.C.T.s, with Mustang and Kittyhawk fighter-bombers in full support, had been repulsed on 2nd August. He then, on 3rd August, began a full divisional attack, and very heavy fighting continued until, during the night 5th/6th August, the enemy disengaged and withdrew to new positions west of Cesaro. In this battle the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division suffered heavy casualties, especially from continual bombing and the great weight of the American artillery. According to the Division's commander, 1,600 of its men were killed, amounting to about 40% of its current fighting strength. 1st U.S. Division halted on the scene of its victory, and 9th U.S. Division (Major-General Manton S. Eddy) took over the advance on the Troina-Cesaro axis.

On Highway 113 45th U.S. Division took S. Stefano on the night 30th/31st July in a hard fight with 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. 3rd U.S. Division then passed

¹ See Garland and Smyth, *op. cit.*

through 45th and advanced on S. Fratello, a formidable position held by 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and what was left of the Assietta Division. The Americans were much impeded by a series of large and clever demolitions on the winding corniche road, but were ready to begin their assault on 4th August.

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There is a little difficulty, when describing the reactions of the Axis commanders to the buffetings of the last days of July and the first days of August, in distinguishing between various 'lines' for there was no agreed set of names. The inverted commas here remind one that the lines were not systems of permanent or semi-permanent field-works. A geographical definition was attempted in Chapter III, and it may be remembered that S. Stefano, Agira, Regalbuto, and Catenanuova were key-points on the *Hauptkampflinie* or main defence line. By 2nd August the Allies had gained all these places, and the *Hauptkampflinie* was virtually a thing of the past for at its eastern end too, in the Catania area, signs of a general withdrawal were recognized by 13th Corps on 3rd August. S. Fratello, Troina, and Aderno were key points on the Etna or 'Old Hube Line', and the Americans breached this at Troina on 5th/6th August, though elsewhere it would last for two days or so more. Next to the east was the 'New Hube Line'—Mt. Pelato—Cesaro—Bronte—and then (on paper) over Etna to Riposto.

It is clear that from 27th July the Axis commanders believed that evacuation would be the outcome of the campaign. But they moved towards this, in the field, deliberately, regulating their steps in the way that their scheme and actual tactical pressures required. It may be said that the tactical situations mainly governed the scheme until about 6th August, and not that the scheme governed tactics. Again, though we cannot agree with a post-war assertion that 'this was the only ordered retreat by a fighting force during the war', there are certainly no grounds for inventing an Axis Dunkirk.¹ On 30th July Guzzoni sent a dismal report to *Comando Supremo*. The fighting power of Italian troops was now slight, and that of the Germans much reduced by losses of men and equipment and by exhaustion. The tactical situation meant that there must be successive withdrawals, and that final retreat into a line of ultimate resistance was not far off. Harrying from the air was unceasing, communications chaotic, and administrative traffic from the mainland irregular. The Italian troops were sure that negotiations for an armistice were in the air, and the Germans were visibly preoccupied with current political

¹ Assertion quoted from a post-war study by Major-General Heilmann, commander of 3rd Parachute Regiment in Sicily and later in Italy.

events. Nevertheless Guzzoni assured *Comando Supremo* that resistance would be offered to the uttermost. These opinions were not echoed by Kesselring, and on the 29th he had told Hitler that an evacuation could be accomplished in three nights and that successive defence positions had been prepared. The first extant written plans for evacuation, given the code-name '*Lehrgang Ia*', were dated 1st August.¹

These plans will be considered a little later. They dealt with general principles of the evacuation, preparatory and preliminary measures, and the final operation. The preparatory measures, to begin at once, included removal of unnecessary material and men, reconnaissance of delaying positions, working out details of movement and traffic control, training of ferry crews, and so on. On the 2nd *OKW* warned Kesselring to guard against landings in his rear by arranging mobile defence in Calabria. On the 2nd and 3rd August Kesselring judged that the Allies intended to break through between Aderno and Troina to Randazzo, and the contingent need to abandon Catania was accepted. On 4th August Hube, in conference with Guzzoni, proposed that a start should be made with the transfer of superfluous men and equipment to the mainland, but he dropped the subject after Guzzoni had said that it should be referred to Kesselring for discussion with *Comando Supremo*. The German commander then proposed a new line to be occupied when absolutely necessary, which was an altered form of the 'New Hube Line', that is taken back in the north to the Zappulla river and Randazzo, and then east to Riposto. Guzzoni accepted the idea as a precaution for the future but apparently assumed that Hube's aim was to resist to the last in the Etna region. But early on 5th August Kesselring informed *OKW* that 14th Panzer Corps would withdraw sector by sector into a line which he subsequently defined as a 'shortened bridgehead' and which was in fact more or less identical with the variant proposed to Guzzoni by Hube on the 4th. The withdrawal was made contingent on there being no marked tactical improvement in 15th Panzer Grenadier Division's sector, but as we have already seen there was no such improvement and retreat was therefore begun on the evening of the 5th. From the evening of 6th August the Axis operations in Sicily enter on their final phase in which the themes, except possibly for two fierce reactions to American amphibious hooks near Cape d'Orlando, were delay, disengagement, evacuation.

It is therefore probably suitable to say something at this point of the German arrangements for evacuation because these were out-

¹ *Lehrgang Ia* means literally 'Operations course of instruction'. A date and 'course planned' would convey the warning order; 'course to begin . . .' the executive order; and 'course called off' a countermand.

standingly thorough. This plan and its execution answer in part the interesting question why the Axis forces escaped from Sicily, and a knowledge of what the Axis commanders were intending to do makes it easier to follow the final operations of both sides.

The most important of the general principles for the evacuation (14th Panzer Corps' instructions of 1st August) were the following: strict discipline; men to take priority over material; consideration for the Italians to be held no longer necessary; firm and clear exercise of command from top to bottom. It will be recalled from Chapter II that Colonel Baade was German Commandant, Messina Straits, Kapitän von Kamptz German Naval Commander, Messina Straits Defences, and Fregattenkapitän von Liebenstein German Naval Officer in Charge Sea Transport, Messina Straits. Major-General Heidrich was 14th Panzer Corps' Mainland Commandant. The Italian *Piazzo Militare Marittima Messina—Reggio Calabria* was commanded by Admiral Barone, with Brigadier-General Monacci as commander of land forces, but it is evident that from May 1943 the Germans had strengthened their hold on the organization of the Messina Straits until it became virtually complete. Nevertheless both Italians and Germans deserve the credit for the fact that the Messina ferry-service was an efficient machine, well run-in by August. The evacuation of Italian forces however was an Italian operation, organized, directed, and successfully achieved by Admirals Barone and Parenti.

Colonel Baade enjoyed the powers of a Fortress Commander and the German organization which he controlled included the Naval Transport Headquarters at Messina and Reggio, and three Naval Landing Craft flotillas. By 6th August he had under command, apart from anti-aircraft artillery, a Fortress Battalion, a mainland battalion of 1st Parachute Division, 771st Engineer Landing Battalion, two Engineer Construction Battalions, a *Luftwaffe* construction company, signals, transport, and administrative units, and part of Naval Artillery Regiment 616. There are discrepancies about anti-aircraft artillery in the records known to us, but Baade's war diary for 16th August shows 41 heavy and 52 light A.A. guns on the Sicilian side of the straits, and 82 heavy and 60 light A.A. guns on the mainland.¹ The number of guns of position is uncertain; besides German naval guns there were two Italian batteries of 10-cm and 14.9-cm guns. The craft available to the Germans were 9 Siebel ferries, 7 ferry

¹ Baade refers to 65 troops of heavy A.A., but these may have included some of 38 troops of Italian A.A. guns and 14 troops of Italian A.A./Anti-shipping guns. General Ritter von Pohl, commander of all German A.A. artillery in South Italy, records as employed 36 troops of heavy and 10 troops of light German A.A. guns.

barges, 1 naval ferry, 12 landing boats, 41 assault boats, and 50 small rubber boats. The procedure of command was fairly simple. 14th Panzer Corps issued written instructions on the 1st, 5th and 9th August. Hube issued his warning order on the evening of the 8th and his executive order on the afternoon of the 10th. Throughout there were conferences and briefings, and Baade found time to write a kind of guide to evacuation for the troops. He seems to have overlooked virtually nothing and to have provided virtually everything, including caches of food, brandy, and cigarettes on the mainland for the troops last to leave Sicily, whose departure might be particularly hazardous. The Germans had a very stern side: Hube on the 10th gave unequivocal orders that anyone who showed signs of indiscipline or panic was to be clubbed or shot.

We have already noticed the preparatory measures and these need not be enlarged upon except to say that between 1st–10th August over 12,000 men and 4,500 vehicles, and nearly 5,000 tons of equipment were transferred to the mainland. On 5th August 14th Panzer Corps allotted embarkation routes and ferry-points to each of the German divisions; the evacuation itself was to be accomplished in five nights by using four ferry-crossings, though in practice there was traffic by day and night, and a prolongation of the operation was allowed for. The datum-line, or basis for regulating the phases and timing of the operation was Cape d'Orlando–Riposto. East of this line, once the executive order had been given (as it was on 10th August) each formation was to arrange a series of intermediate lines to be held to a time-table by strong rearguards. Each formation would send back in planned succession its groups for embarkation, in the first instance to allotted vehicle parks, thence on foot to

Formation	Roads (north to east)	Ferry-Route (Miles)
29th Panzer Grenadier Division	Highway 113	II. Ganzirri-Pezzo (2½)
15th Panzer Grenadier Division	(a) Randazzo-Novara di Sicilia (b) Randazzo-S. Domenica-Ucria-Patti then Highway 113	I. Torre Di Faro-Cannitello (2½)
Hermann Göring Division Right Wing	Bronte-Randazzo-Linguaglossa, then Highway 114	IV. Salvatore-Gallico (5)
Left Wing Corps Troops*	Various	III. Paradiso-Catona (4) V. Spare for emergency: Pistunina-Gallico (6½)

* Corps H.Q.s, Corps administrative units, Flak Regiment 131, other A.A. units (Major-General Stahel), details in Messina area, possibly some Italian units.

assembly areas for embarkation, and thence, when a craft was alongside and not before, across a start-line to the ferry-point. The whole area of embarkation was a prohibited zone which no one might enter or leave at will.

The roads and ferry-routes allotted to formations for withdrawal were as shown in the table on the previous page.

Some G.H.Q. and *Luftwaffe* units were affiliated to divisions and would travel with them, the remainder were allotted special passage on four successive nights. Troops in general were to embark with personal weapons, and heavy weapons and transport were to be separately embarked, or destroyed in the order trucks, weapons, if abandonment became unavoidable. There were arrangements for close co-ordination, particularly for control of ferry-points by picked engineer officers from the moment of the warning order (in fact from the 5th). From this moment, too, naval and anti-aircraft defences came to total readiness. In the event the full-scale removal of troops began at 6 p.m. on 11th August and continued until about 7 a.m. on 17th August.

The Germans and Italians made exceedingly good schemes for evacuation, but they also enjoyed some very favouring circumstances. The triangular shape of the north-east corner of Sicily made it fairly easy gradually to contract the fighting fronts. Therefore the Axis commanders were able to hold successive positions with an ever contracting number of troops who could thin out gradually and methodically. The nature and influence of the ground, from the Allied point of view, were summed up by Alexander in a message to Mr. Churchill on 2nd August: '... Progress may be slow, but the country must be seen to be believed. Only a few mountain roads which pass through gorges and round cliffs, which are easily defended and easier demolished.' These facts explain the delays which the enemy were able to inflict upon the Allies as they pursued by the two practicable roads. It is unlikely that plentiful pack-transport would have helped in the pursuit. Pack-transport moves at foot-pace, and a pursuer, to be successful, must have greater mobility.

The area astride the narrow straits was kept under frequent surveillance by the photographic reconnaissance aircraft which increased their cover from the end of July onwards. On 3rd August Alexander drew the attention of Cunningham and Tedder to indications of German withdrawal remarking 'You have no doubt co-ordinated plans to meet this contingency . . .' The same day Broadhurst suggested such a plan to Coningham, and on the 4th Tedder informed Portal that he expected to be called upon to throw the whole weight of the Allied air resources into preventing German evacuation of the island. Yet, from the German point of view, the narrow straits were easy to defend against air and sea attack. The

area into which Allied aircraft had to fly was covered by some 120 heavy and 112 light anti-aircraft guns sited on both sides of the straits so that anti-aircraft fire could overlap up to 23,000 feet. Coningham knew well how savagely this intense flak would clip the wings of daylight attack, and that any hope of success, however, slender, lay in night-bombing. He wrote '... the night is our problem, and though the increasing moon will help the air, only a physical barrier such as the navy can provide would be effective. The difficulty of operating naval forces in the narrow part of the Strait is obvious, and I do not see how we can hope for the same proportion of success as at Cap Bon ...' From the naval point of view the area of interception was a strait from two and a half to six and a half miles wide, swept by a six-knot current, and defended by upwards of two batteries of guns of from 10-cm to 24-cm calibre, 14 troops of lesser calibre, and searchlights. It was not justifiable in these conditions to try to maintain surface forces to intercept or, in August 1943, to risk major warships for the sole purpose of cutting off an unpredictable number of enemy troops. The targets at sea in the Straits were very difficult for air and naval attack, because very small and appearing at points which had to be discovered in a channel ten miles long. On shore the broken ground near the ferry points provided assembly positions which were convenient and safe. The Axis evacuation was brilliantly successful; it may interest the soldier, the sailor, and the airman to calculate what were the chances of spoiling it, and what this might have cost.

From the beginning of the Sicilian campaign light coastal forces of M.T.B.s and M.G.B.s, working on occasion together with landing-craft and sometimes supported by destroyers and even cruisers, had been busy off the east coast of the island and around the toe of Italy. These activities, which concentrated increasingly on attempts to interrupt Axis communications across the Straits of Messina, led to frequent brushes with E-boats, U-boats and on one occasion with an Italian cruiser. Among the known successes were the sinking of one German and two Italian U-boats and three E-boats, and damage to one U-boat and eleven E-boats. Three British M.T.B.s and one M.G.B. were sunk and several damaged, though mostly superficially. These operations discouraged the enemy from attempting naval operations of the same sort against the many attractive targets off the Allies' recently-won ports and beachheads. But they did not much affect a more important object, his traffic across the Straits. The bulk of this traffic crossed near, or north of, the latitude of the port of Messina itself and there was so much coast defence and mobile artillery both on the Sicilian and Calabrian coasts that only on three

nights did our light forces succeed in penetrating as far north as Messina port, and only on one night did they encounter enemy vessels and fire torpedoes, with unknown results.

(viii)

The foregoing pages on the Axis have interrupted the story of Allied operations on land and in the air at a point towards the end of the first week in August. These operations had been almost continuous especially in the air, and air operations must be taken up from about 29th July.

Between dusk of 29th July and of 17th August, and excluding attacks on ports and anti-shipping operations not concerned with the Axis evacuation of Sicily, Mediterranean Air Command flew a total of 27,620 sorties, or 1,454 during each twenty-four hours. A table (II) at the end of the chapter breaks down these figures in more detail than does the footnote.¹

In the above period the Allies lost some 200 aircraft, but destroyed 216 German aircraft, of which between 10 and 12 fell to the anti-aircraft guns and one was shot down by Italian anti-aircraft guns.² Known probable Italian losses are nine aircraft. From mid-May to the end of the Sicilian campaign over 900 German aircraft had been destroyed by the Allies, and, in addition, of over 1,100 aircraft in various states of repair abandoned by the enemy in Sicily it is known that at least 482 were German.

During these three weeks the Allied air forces concentrated on attacking the enemy's Lines of Communication in Sicily and Italy, and paid less attention to his airfields, while direct air support to the armies almost ceased, perhaps because called for so seldom. In the 38 days' fighting of the campaign 28 calls were passed through British Air Support Control. The American Ninth Air Force (Middle East Air Command) mounted two special operations (outside this chapter's scope) as part of the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany: the attack on oil refineries in Rumania, and one on a Messerschmitt assembly plant at Wiener Neustadt near Vienna.

There were five main Allied raids against airfields in Italy, and one

1	<i>Sorties</i>
Fighters (excluding operations against shipping other than connected with evacuation).	11,213
Fighters (Protection of shipping)	4,121
Bombers	9,889
Land reconnaissance	2,397
Total	27,620

¹ The Allied losses include 59 aircraft lost or irreparably damaged in a special operation, the raid on the Ploesti oil refineries in Rumania on 1st August. See Chapter VII.

very heavy attack at Istres near Marseilles. On 30th July 46 Fortresses destroyed 5 Italian aircraft and damaged hangars and runways at Grottaglie (Taranto), while at Pratica di Mare, near Rome, Mitchells destroyed a German and an Italian aircraft and damaged 11 more. At Capodichino, near Naples, on 1st August, 47 Fortresses destroyed 23 German aircraft and damaged three. At Foggia on the 16th American Liberators from the Middle East attacked a group of airfields, destroying an unknown number of aircraft. Up to 100 fighters attacked these Liberators and shot down seven over the target, one elsewhere. On the night 16th/17th Wellingtons destroyed two German aircraft at Viterbo north of Rome. Air reconnaissance had discovered nearly 150 bombers on Axis air bases in southern France. On 17th August therefore 182 Fortresses dropped 25,619 twenty-pound fragmentation bombs on the airfields at Istres which were also a base for parachute troops. Of the 106 aircraft destroyed 88 were gliders as were 65 of the 86 damaged. Between 15th June and 17th August Mediterranean Air Command dropped 7,450 tons of bombs on the enemy's airfields and destroyed on them, without doubt, 133 German and 6 Italian aircraft, damaging besides, also without doubt, 93 German and 11 Italian.¹

The attacks upon the enemy's Lines of Communication may be pictured as occurring in two areas, the nearer, Sicily and the toe of Italy, the more distant, the neighbourhoods of Naples and Rome and even farther away. But it is misleading to try to parcel out these operations; for example in Sicily the operations of fighters, fighter-bombers, and light bombers within the area of battle, say in the triangle Aderno-Cesaro-Bronte, were as much attacks upon the L. of C. as upon anything else. The limits of the fighters and fighter-bombers were indeed extended as far as a line joining the Gulf of Policastro and the Gulf of Taranto, the Desert Air Force taking the eastern part, U.S. XII Air Support Command the western part. It is perhaps simplest to see in progress a concerted attempt to disrupt the enemy's movements whatever purpose these may have been serving. Some landmarks must be indicated. It will roughly indicate the distribution of effort against the L. of C. if we tabulate the sorties between 29th July-17th August thus:

	<i>Day</i>	<i>Night</i>
Sicily	5,761	781
Italy	1,723	716

1

	<i>German</i>		<i>Italian</i>	
	<i>Destroyed</i>	<i>Damaged</i>	<i>Destroyed</i>	<i>Damaged</i>
In Italy	27	7	6	11
In Southern France	106	86	—	—

The Italian figures are incomplete for they take account only of casualties which are recorded. There are many gaps in the record.

Almost all were flown by Northwest African Air Forces. All these raids brought the total weight of bombs dropped on the enemy's L. of C. by Mediterranean Air Command between 15th June and 17th August to 15,500 tons.

During the first week of August N.A.A.F. stepped up the attacks in Sicily. Messina was a special target. Fortresses flew 121 sorties against supply points there, Wellingtons 225 sorties by night against railway marshalling-yards and the ferry terminals. The harbour attracted some 15 sorties by Wellingtons and 171 by fighter-bombers. Wellingtons attacked the small harbours at Milazzo in north-east Sicily and at S. Giovanni across the straits, and American fighter-bombers put 203 sorties into this general area. On the nights 8th/9th and 12th/13th August the Wellingtons dropped 800 tons of bombs in 435 sorties on Messina and its beaches. By day, between 8th and 17th August, Marauders and Mitchells flew a total of 576 and the fighter-bombers 1,883 sorties both sides of the Straits. Throughout these 'round the clock' attacks, particularly in daylight, the Allied aircraft had to face extremely intense Flak but, surprisingly, their losses proved to be remarkably light.

The German and Italian records available to us give only a general picture of the results of the offensive. We have remarked Guzzoni's report that communications were chaotic, and on 1st August Kesselring noted that Allied air operations were 'systematically sealing off important supply bases'. Other German reports refer to damage and disruption in the toe of Italy and at Salerno-Naples while the Italians mention damage to many bridges in Calabria. Interference with the evacuation from Sicily appears to have been inconsiderable, although the Germans record that 13 craft were sunk and three damaged. It is as easy to underestimate the effects of air operations such as these as it is to paint fanciful pictures based on claims which, though very probably true, cannot be proved. It is probably best, and nearest the truth, to form a mental picture of steady attrition which vexed the strong-willed and discouraged the irresolute among the enemy.

Activity against targets in the more distant parts of Italy was less sustained than the activity described above. The Fortresses of N.A.A.F. were allowed a slight relaxation after a long period of intense operations in exhausting weather. They turned-to again on 11th August when 71 bombed railway marshalling-yards at Terni, north of Rome. On the 13th 91 Fortresses, escorted by 45 Lightnings, and 102 Marauders and 66 Mitchells, escorted by 90 Lightnings, attacked the Littorio and S. Lorenzo marshalling-yards in Rome. Wellingtons had dropped warning leaflets during the previous night. About 75 Axis fighters opposed this raid, but only two Marauders were lost. Of this raid an *OKH* report states that much damage was

done to the railway installations and that traffic at the Termini station was suspended, while Kesselring reported that the line to Naples had been cut at Ponte Caselina causing an interruption estimated to last five or six days. Human casualties were said to be 221 killed and 565 wounded, fortunately many less than the 700 killed and 1,600 wounded attributed to the attack on 19th July. On 14th August the Italian Government declared Rome to be an open city.

The Wellingtons flew 170 sorties against Naples, spread over three nights during the first week in August, and on the last occasion supplemented their bombs with 180,000 propaganda leaflets for the 'Mothers of Italy' and over a million for their sons in uniform. The producers of such propaganda make large claims for its effect but others regard the claims with scepticism, and the material with disgust.

The operations of the fighters have been described in general, but it is of interest that sweeps and strafing missions led them to Sardinia, and they had some brushes with German and Italian fighters. On 5th August four American Mitchells each fitted with a 75-mm gun attacked the power station near Guspini 35 miles north-west of Cagliari. Nine rounds of high explosive shell were fired from a distance of about 700 yards at 300 feet and fire and flashes emerged from the building. The experiment was successful enough for it to be repeated elsewhere the following month. The night-fighters continued to make very deadly use of rather few opportunities. Nos. 108 and 219 Squadrons (Beaufighter) and No. 256 Squadron (Mosquito), all based in Malta, shot down six German aircraft, and No. 600 Squadron in Sicily shot down ten. Five of No. 600 Squadron's kills were made on the 11th/12th when about 30 enemy aircraft raided the Lentini and Agnone airfields and destroyed or damaged 30 Allied aircraft on the ground: one of the enemy's rare successes. No. 255 Squadron and the American 415th Squadron (each of Beaufighters), based in Tunisia, destroyed three German aircraft. Two more German aircraft fell to unknown night-fighters, bringing the total German loss to twenty-one. Some Italian aircraft were destroyed but the number cannot be confirmed from enemy sources.

R.A.F. Bomber Command from the U.K. continued to attack large industrial targets in northern Italy. On the nights of 7th/8th, 12th/13th, 14th/15th and 15th/16th August a total of 872 Lancasters and Halifaxes attacked Milan; on the 7th/8th, 12th/13th and 16th/17th Turin was attacked by a total of 359 Lancasters, Halifaxes and Stirlings; and on the 7th/8th 72 Lancasters struck at Genoa. The Germans reported considerable damage in both Milan and Turin, and an Italian report stated that in Milan on 14th/15th and 15th/16th fires of 'vast proportions' were caused. At Genoa the destroyer *Freccia* was sunk.

During the attack on Turin on 12th/13th August Flight Sergeant Arthur L. Aaron, Captain of a Stirling of No. 218 Squadron, R.A.F. Bomber Command, was grievously wounded by gun-fire from an enemy night-fighter. The navigator was killed and other members of the crew wounded. With part of his face shot away, his jaw broken and his right arm useless, Flight Sergeant Aaron controlled the aircraft by means of signs, and messages written with his left hand, to the bomb-aimer. After five hours of gruelling flight the aircraft touched down in North Africa under Flight Sergeant Aaron's remote control. He died a few hours later. He was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross.

The Axis air forces showed rather more enterprise than they had earlier in July in trying to damage, rarely with serious effect, Allied lines of communication, airfields and ports in Sicily and shipping offshore.¹ German fighters also appeared much more often during the last days of the campaign than earlier, but they scored little success.

The invasion of Sicily produced several problems for the Allied air forces, some new, and some old in new guises. Poor communications, both radio and landline, and the multiplicity of air headquarters have already been mentioned, and little imagination is needed to picture the consequent delay in the provision of air support. However, the rugged, hilly Sicilian terrain with its steep-sided valleys and natural cover posed a far more serious obstacle to effective army/air co-operation. Direct air support targets were more than often of a fleeting nature, difficult for the troops to find and report before they were 'on top of them' which left very little time in which air support could be called for, and just as difficult for the aircraft to find. It became patently clear that some new method would have to be evolved and so, during the last two weeks of the campaign, experiments were made by 8th Army and D.A.F. with new 'Rover' tentacles attached to the leading brigade of the leading division.² The 'Rover' technique was used successfully several times, and though it was only in its infancy it was to prove an important innovation in army/air co-operation.

The invasion of Sicily also saw the introduction of an air-to-ground recognition system which was destined to come closest, in

¹ Enemy air attacks on ports and shipping are described in Chapter XI.

² The 'Rover' tentacle consisted of an armoured scout car equipped with: radio sets for communication with the Army/Air Support Control and with the Air Liaison Officer at the Wing or Group supplying the air support; a V.H.F. set for direct communication with the aircraft when over the target area. The staff consisted of a R.A.F. officer and an A.A.S.C. army officer who worked 'hand in glove', and kept in close touch with the local army commander. They advised him on any call for air support, and the A.L.O. at the Wing or Group which was to provide it was then briefed. When the aircraft arrived over the area the R.A.F. officer directed them on to the target.

U.S. 7th Army and U.S. XII A.S.C. carried out similar experiments with a V.H.F. set mounted in a Jeep for the direction of the fighter-bombers.

combination with other methods, to a solution to this seemingly insoluble problem. Luminous triangles were issued to individual soldiers, red panels surmounted by a white star to platoons, and special pennants to A.F.V.s. A combination of these forms of recognition was used, particularly for set-piece attacks.

We have now followed British and American operations on land up to about 4th August, up to a rather later date in the air, and have described something of what was passing in the enemy's mind concerning the last stages of resistance and the final matter of evacuation. We turn therefore to Alexander for a moment, and then to the Allied operations which closed the campaign. It is perhaps disappointing that there was no final drama of encirclement and thunderous battle.

On 3rd August Alexander signalled to Cunningham and Tedder that there were signs that the enemy was preparing to withdraw to the mainland, and that he might begin before his front collapsed and sooner than expected. Alexander assumed that co-ordinated naval and air plans existed and promised timely warning of the right moment to strike. In fact there was no cut and dried plan, and commanders seem to have been more cautious in their views than in July, for on 5th August Eisenhower reported to the Combined Chiefs of Staff '... No certain indications that enemy already intends withdraw behind Etna, but ability to maintain anticipated line depends mainly on successful defence of Adrano. My present estimate is that a feeling of restrained optimism with regard to Sicily is justified and that the clean up may come sooner than the 30 days estimated by some of our commanders last week...'

On 4th August Montgomery ordered 30th Corps to continue its thrust to Aderno and then through Bronte to Randazzo; 13th Corps to advance northwards, maintaining contact but without incurring heavy casualties. He announced too that H.Q.s 13th Corps would be required at a later date to prepare for invading Italy, and that the Canadian Division was to be withdrawn to Army reserve after the capture of Aderno, and 5th Division after the capture of Belpasso, for the Italian operation. Leese, also on 4th August, directed 78th Division to force the Salso river north of Centuripe the same night, the Simeto on the night 5th/6th, and to attack Aderno on the night 6th/7th. The Canadian Division was to secure the left flank by taking Mt. Seggio on the 5th/6th and then crossing the Simeto. 51st Highland Division was to protect the right flank and to attack Biancavilla on the night 6th/7th. 13th Corps' objectives were the general line of the Catania-Misterbianco road including Catania. These advances were achieved without difficulty although with sharp

fighting. 38th Irish Brigade of 78th Division carried the Salso, and then the Simeto on the 5th, with heavy artillery support. On the 5th a Canadian mobile force had made touch with 38th Brigade, and on the 6th 2nd Canadian Brigade took Mt. Seggio. American Mitchells supported the Canadians and knocked out some 88-mm guns in their path. On the 6th the Highland Division occupied Biancavilla from which the enemy had withdrawn, and during the night 6th/7th 78th Division entered Aderno unopposed. During the past week the air effort in support of 1st U.S. Division and 13th Corps had risen daily, reaching its peak on the 6th. The incessant Allied air attacks prevented 14th Panzer Corps moving its troops and supplies by daylight, and Aderno itself was subjected to constant attack by medium, light and fighter-bombers which flew a total of over 450 sorties against the town in the seven days. The Germans recorded that the approach road was made impassable and that their gun positions were bombed and strafed from dawn to dusk, the treatment continuing relentlessly against those of their forces retreating to Maletto.¹ This, then was the end of the 'Hardgate' operation in something more of a diminuendo than had been expected. For this diminuendo the Axis policy of delay and withdrawal was partly responsible, but still more the fact that the Allies had driven in each succeeding front, spoiling the enemy's intention to delay in each position until it suited him to go.

13th Corps meanwhile had been dealing with rearguards, minefields and demolitions but occupied Catania and Misterbianco on 5th August, and entered Belpasso and Paterno on the 6th. The streets of Catania were blocked with debris of bombing, but the harbour was found to be almost undamaged, as were four large tanks for bulk petrol. The town's water supply was in working order but its powerhouse was in a sorry state owing to bombing and neglect.

It was on the 5th that von Senger conveyed to Guzzoni Hube's opinion that retreat to the Zappulla-Riposto line was unavoidable, and the suggestion that H.Q. 6th Army should move to Calabria. Guzzoni refused to entertain this suggestion and asked von Senger bluntly if Hube had decided to evacuate Sicily. von Senger, with formal truth, replied that Hube had not. But next morning Guzzoni was surprised and displeased to learn from his Intelligence Officer, whose German colleague may have been considerate or indiscreet, of the German plan for evacuation. Guzzoni then informed the Army General Staff in Rome that there was no longer any doubt that the Germans intended to evacuate, and that they presumably wished to obtain a free hand by getting the Italian H.Q. out of the way. The upshot of this matter was that on the 7th Guzzoni informed his High Command

¹ On the 4th N.A.T.B.F. had begun to move into Sicily, eight squadrons of American Mitchells arriving that day and two of R.A.F. Bostons the next.

that it seemed that the Germans no longer intended to fight to the last; and that though he had made plans for a 'last ditch' stand in the north-eastern tip of Sicily this stand, without German troops to help, could only be short. Next day Hube, according to Faldella's post-war account, again suggested to Guzzoni that he should take away his Headquarters and any Italian troops who were not at the moment in action against the enemy.¹ Guzzoni again refused and reported the interview to Rome, again pointing out that a 'last ditch' stand by Italian troops must be short and fatal. On the 9th General Roatta, Chief of the Army General Staff, ordered Guzzoni to extend his sphere of command to Calabria, and to transfer there any troops and equipment which would usefully reinforce this quarter. Guzzoni replied on the same evening that whatever the Italians might command, Hube would regulate his movements according to the orders of German superior authority. He had therefore decided to transfer H.Q. 16th Corps, the remains of the Livorno and Assietta divisions, and anything else Italian that could be saved, to the mainland, and to order H.Q. 14th Panzer Corps to continue the struggle for as long as possible. On the 10th Guzzoni informed Hube that he (Hube) was responsible for the defence of north-eastern Sicily, and that Italian coastal units in this area and the garrison of Messina were under his command. On the evening of the 10th Guzzoni, and the Italian part of 6th Army H.Q., and the H.Q. of 16th Corps, crossed to the mainland, leaving Admirals Barone and Parenti to organize the Italian evacuation.

In considering the relations between the Axis commanders as the campaign in Sicily moved towards its close it is relevant to recall (Chapter II) that the General Staff of the Italian army had on 30th July authorized Guzzoni to transfer to Hube complete command of the whole front, and that the responsibility had been formally transferred on 2nd August. There seems to have been on the German side some callousness and some disingenuousness in dealing with the Italians, and on the Italian side some possibly face-saving show of resolution. Relations were undoubtedly bad, but it must be remembered that by this stage the whole structure of the Axis alliance was crumbling, and that at High Command level co-operation between Germans and Italians had virtually ceased to exist.

An appreciation by 8th Army, made in the first week of August, very accurately foresaw the enemy's probable moves, weighed the obstacles to frustrating them, and contained the sentence 'It is unlikely that, with such obstacles to deployment, we shall be able to hasten the enemy's retreat to any extent.' With the capture of Aderno it became evident that the country alone made it necessary

¹ Faldella, *Lo Sbarco e la Difesa della Sicilia*, 1956. General Faldella was Chief of Staff to Guzzoni.

to regroup 8th Army, and besides this factor there were the preparations to invade Italy which were now greatly occupying Montgomery and his staff. A first step was the relief of 1st Canadian Division from operational responsibility on 6th August. 78th Division continued to advance towards Bronte and Maletto, and in 13th Corps 50th Division on the coast road, and 5th Division on its left by poor secondary roads.¹ On 8th August the enemy stiffened his resistance at Bronte and then at Maletto. He was becoming sensitive about Randazzo—a junction of roads which was very important to his plans for withdrawal. At Maletto it became clear that 78th Division must stage a strong attack.

On the 9th Montgomery decided, in view of the slowing-down on 30th Corps' front, that 13th Corps must make every effort to speed-up. He directed 50th Division on Fiumefreddo and Calatabiano and 5th Division on Linguaglossa and Castiglione. Then on the 10th he decided that it was time to disengage H.Q. 13th Corps and 5th Division. He directed that when 13th Corps reached the line Taormina-Linguaglossa-Francavilla, the control of operations to clear Sicily would pass to 30th Corps. 30th Corps would have under command 50th, 51st Highland, and 78th Divisions, 231st Infantry Brigade and 4th Armoured Brigade. The Canadian Division passed under command of 13th Corps on 10th August, and the Highland Division was instructed to replace 5th Division probably on 12th August.

After the fall of Troina on 6th August 9th U.S. Division passed through the 1st, and on the 8th captured Cesaro. Then it pushed on, rather more slowly than Eddy, its commander, wished, and on 12th August made touch with 78th Division near Maletto. In the north the 3rd U.S. Division advanced along the very difficult route afforded by Highway 113 and the mountains above it, helped often by naval bombardments, until on the 4th it reached the very strong position at S. Fratello and S. Agata on which Fries (29th Panzer Grenadier Division) intended to fight hard. The Americans attacked systematically and determinedly but not until the 8th did they have the satisfaction of driving Fries away. There occurred during this battle the first of the landings from the sea which Patton and Bradley had had in mind since 30th July. There were enough craft to lift a battalion with some guns and tanks, and a naval force was provided consisting of two cruisers and six destroyers, and American fighter-bombers gave air support. The battalion group landed easily about two miles east of S. Agata on 8th August and secured surprise. But very soon it became an open question whether it was cutting off the Germans or fighting for its life, for the Germans reacted like hornets.

¹ On 3rd August Major-General G. C. Bucknall succeeded Major-General H. P. Berney-Ficklin in command of 5th Division.

The American historians have written '... The landing at best, deprived a few Germans and Italians of the coastal highways as a withdrawal route and prevented the Germans from using the Rosmarino River as a defensive phase line. Otherwise it accomplished little.' There are few more attractive or easier operations than a landing from the sea to cut off a retreating enemy—in the imagination. In real life there are seldom the craft or the time to mount a large enough force to be sure of success, rather than to be in danger of catching a Tartar. And Nature does not often provide a suitable beach in the right place.

3rd U.S. Division pressed on and on 10th/11th August attempted another amphibious hook with a battalion group at Brolo two miles east of Cape d'Orlando, in conjunction with a divisional attack. The divisional attack was successful, and in time to relieve the amphibious force—Colonel Bernard's hard-hitting and hard-pressed 2nd/30th Infantry, his two batteries, and his tanks. This was 2nd U.S. Corps' last big engagement for by the 12th it secured the line of the Naso-Floresta-Randazzo road.

Turning back now to 8th August and 8th Army it was on the 8th that 11th Infantry Brigade cleared Bronte. It was now typical advanced guard work against rearguards. 36th Infantry Brigade took the lead and cleared Mt. Rivolia, and in the afternoon of the 11th 38th Infantry Brigade passed through directed on Maletto. Here a brigade attack was required, which cleared Maletto by 3 p.m. on the 12th. Next day the brigade entered Randazzo. This place was in ruins for it had been the target of a total of 1,200 sorties by medium, light, and fighter-bombers.¹ 13th Corps had reached the general line Riposto-Milo by the evening of the 12th after a steady advance against rearguards which made good use of mines and demolitions. Since the 4th the Navy had been helping by coastal bombardments. These had been delivered almost daily, to a total of about 14, as a rule by forces of three destroyers, although the cruiser *Mauritius* made three appearances, the cruiser *Uganda* one, while the monitor *Roberts* and the Dutch gun-boats *Soemba* and *Flores* took part also. The target areas were Acireale, Giarre, and Riposto, and the undercliff road and the railway tunnel at Taormina on four occasions.

In attempting to assess the value of the support given by naval guns immediately after the landings and in subsequent operations, we have allowed something for the glow caused by successful operations, and for proper and felicitous compliments between Services. There can be no doubt, however, that at Gela an ugly situation was

¹ During 10th-12th August two R.A.F. Baltimore and four American Boston squadrons moved from Malta to Sicily. This brought the total strength of the Allied tactical air forces in the island to 58½ squadrons. In addition, and continuing to give support from Malta, was No. 3 (S.A.A.F.) Wing with its two Squadrons of Bostons and one of Baltimores.

averted and American troops much heartened by powerful assistance from U.S. warships in halting the Axis counter-attacks. It is also clear that Italians were often demoralized and British troops encouraged by fire from guns of heavy calibre close inshore, mounted in shallow draught vessels such as gunboats and L.C.G. and L.C.S. Subsequently, naval guns, either by pre-arrangement or when called for, gave frequent and valuable help to 8th Army on the east and to 7th Army on the north coast as these Armies advanced.

Whatever the effectiveness of the results, general and particular, in Sicily which are difficult to evaluate, the experience gained by both Army and Navy was of real practical value for the future and this would be demonstrated at Salerno, and Anzio, and in Normandy and the South of France during the great amphibious operations of the following twelve months. It had been learnt that the basic disadvantages suffered by high velocity, flat trajectory, weapons mounted on moving platforms could be off-set, at least in part, by a combination of technical development and practical experience, but perhaps most of all by close personal co-operation between the Services.

On the 12th it was decided that 78th Division should stand fast at Randazzo, and that 7th U.S. Army should take over the advance except on the east coast. On this flank 50th Division continued along Highway 114. 51st Highland Division began its side-step of over 50 miles on the 12th, and on the 13th was in contact with the enemy near Mascali, relieving 5th Division.

Returning now to 14th Panzer Corps, we find that the full-scale withdrawal of troops began on the evening of 11th August. At this moment there were in use 5 ferry-barges, 11 Siebel ferries, and 10 craft of various other types. Hitches developed very quickly because the work of the northern ferry routes was interrupted by constant air attack, while troops arrived at the points of embarkation on the southern routes sporadically and traffic therefore was sluggish. In fact the effects of air action turned out to be very much what Coningham had predicted. The Allied aircraft were able to delay and even suspend traffic across the straits during the hours of darkness, but daylight brought virtual freedom from air attack and the enemy successfully cleared each night's back-log. An exception occurred on the 16th when daylight air attacks badly damaged three Siebel ferries and put a jetty at Salvatore out of action; the emergency was met by using relief craft and an alternative embarkation point. There were other difficulties owing mainly to delays in transport moves on the narrow roads, and the consequently irregular arrival of troops for embarkation. Yet the very detailed plan of evacuation proved to be flexible enough to meet changing situations including switching troops from their allotted ferry-routes to others, and the exodus went

on steadily. Illustrative figures for the Germans are given in the note below.¹

The foregoing paragraph concerning embarkation slightly anticipates those of the enemy's activities on the ground that may be summarized as final measures of control. On the 12th August 14th Panzer Corps' general line of contact with the Allies (as seen by the enemy) was from Piraino on the north coast—S. Angelo—Randazzo—Giarre. That evening Hube ordered all formations to retire about fifteen miles to their first 'lay-backs' on the general line Oliveri—Novara—Francavilla—Taormina. On the night 13th/14th formations withdrew a further half-dozen miles to the line Barcellona—Castroreale—Mandanici—S. Teresa. Although Hube was confident of holding this line until the night 15th/16th if need arose, he in fact broke contact and disengaged on the night 13th/14th. The last German unit to record an action with British troops was a company of the 2nd Battalion of the Hermann Göring Division's tank regiment at Barracca (south of S. Teresa) on the 15th. A diarist of the Hermann Göring Division remarked on the 13th that the mines which the Germans laid, and the demolitions and other obstacles which they contrived, kept the nearest Allied troops at extreme range of the German guns. Hube found time on the 14th to send to *OKH* some rather sweeping suggestions for a communiqué, but Kesselring was content on the 15th soberly to express the hope that the bulk of the German troops would be brought safely back to Calabria. He mentioned that a fairly large number of Italian troops and some guns had been removed in German craft.

The Allied commanders recognized almost immediately that the enemy had broken contact, but the delaying effects of demolitions and obstacles were already obvious, in spite of the great exertions of the engineers of both armies, and it was unlikely that the obstacles would become fewer. On 15th August Alexander signalled to Sir

¹ The figures known to us are neither complete nor consistent: characteristic features of the statistics of evacuations. The figures below, drawn from various enemy sources, probably give an accurate general impression

Date (24 hours)	Troops	Casualties	Vehicles	Guns	Equipment (tons)
11th August	3,631	—	801	—	1,128
12th "	3,249	—	950	—	1,370
13th "	6,142	440	1,131	36	1,673
14th "	7,424	600	1,380	42	1,728
15th "	4,810	200	923	16	956
16th "	No figures				

Engineer Landing Battalion 771 which was responsible for ferry-routes I and II gives the following figures for the period 1st to 15th August.

—	14,282	13,532	4,560	35	9,936
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Alan Brooke ' . . . Two amphibious operations by both Seventh and Eight Armies are planned for tonight to get behind the Germans but the enemy is now retreating so rapidly that these two operations may hit the air . . .' In fact the operations did hit air, to all intents, as will shortly be told but here we may take up again for a moment the question of interception by amphibious forces which has already been touched on. Admiral Cunningham, when reporting on the campaign, wrote ' . . . There were doubtless sound military reasons for making no use of this . . . priceless asset of sea-power and flexibility of manœuvre; but it is worth consideration . . . whether much time and costly fighting could not be saved by even minor flank attacks . . .' Some reasons have been given for the small success of some minor flank attacks. Large amphibious operations were precluded, apart from the same reasons, by difficulties concerning landing-craft. The numbers of serviceable British craft fell rapidly after the first landings owing to the want of spare parts and on 31st July stood at 65% of the total. On 4th August Patton reported to Eisenhower that the American naval commander required all American craft to return to Bizerta by 10th August (the demand was slightly relaxed later) for repair and maintenance for future operations. These operations—in fact the invasion of Italy—were cast in final form by 16th August, but during this fortnight it was by no means easy to work out firm figures for ships and craft. It was certain, however, that craft were scarce and to be husbanded. In the event 13th Corps was allotted, to cross to Calabria, only enough craft to lift four battalions and to build up slowly.

The 8th Army's intercepting force consisted of No. 2 Commando (Lieut.-Colonel J. M. Churchill) and detachments of tanks, artillery and engineers, the whole commanded by Brigadier J. C. Currie (4th Armoured Brigade). The force, prepared in feverish haste, sailed from Augusta and Catania to cut Highway 114 at Scaletta, ten miles south of Messina. The American force was composed of 157th R.C.T. and a parachute battalion, to land and drop in the Barcellona area. The parachute drop was in fact cancelled, and General Bradley did not share Patton's enthusiasm for the landing because he expected that it might in fact impede the 3rd U.S. Division which was now advancing fast towards Messina.

The British force landed at 4.30 a.m. on the 16th, three miles north of the correct beach.¹ The landing was unopposed but the day passed in brushes with isolated lorryloads of the enemy and with demolition parties. Towards evening Currie was ordered to push on

¹ An interesting example of the difficulty of recognizing a beach. The key land-mark, fixed by a naval air reconnaissance, was a white house. This turned out to be invisible from sea-level owing to a line of trees. Whereas another white house, to the northward, was visible in the moonlight and was naturally but wrongly taken for the correct mark.

to Messina, and told off a mobile force of two troops of Commandos, a half-squadron of tanks, and some self-propelled guns and a party of engineers. Meanwhile on Highway 113 the 7th Infantry of 3rd U.S. Division was nearing Messina, outstripping the landing-force as Bradley had expected. A patrol under Lieut. Ralph J. Yates entered the outskirts of Messina shortly after dark: the first Allied troops to reach the city. Early next morning, the 17th, other troops of the 7th Infantry entered, and at about 9 a.m. Colonel Churchill and his force arrived and a little later greeted a justifiably proud General Patton.

Meanwhile the German and Italian craft had been plying across the Straits of Messina during the night of the 16th/17th. At 8 p.m. on the 16th Hube had given his opinion that the ferries could be withdrawn at 7 a.m. on the 17th, leaving assault boats to carry any troops remaining. At 6.35 a.m. on the 17th Captain Paul, commander of Engineer Battalion 771, reported 'Lehrgang completed' to Baade, although a few boatloads may have sailed later. *OKW* on the 18th recorded that about 60,000 German troops had been brought back safely to Calabria. The figure for Italian troops was about 75,000.

Among the last German troops to leave were a party of the 2nd Battalion of the Hermann Göring's tank regiment and another of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division's engineers. The tank battalion's diarist wrote 'The campaign in Sicily is over. We were far from fond of the country in which we have been fighting, but for all that we felt strange when the ferry pulled away from Messina, and we had to leave the island to an enemy who was superior to us only in the material sense.' The Engineers, as they approached Italy, cracked a bottle of wine which they had been towing in the sea to cool, and on landing (so the report runs) felt that 'with the mainland under our feet, and with the knowledge that we had not been left behind to fall into the hands of the enemy, we could breathe again'. Both reports ring true, whereas it is simply a pleasant fancy to put into the mouth of some British or American soldier the Virgilian tag:

'. . . sic denique victor
Trinacria finis Italos mittere relictā'

Thus at last victorious you will leave Sicily
behind and be sent to the borders of Italy.¹

¹ *Aeneid* III, 439-40.

TABLE I
Sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command dawn 2nd-dusk 29th July 1943
(excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports)

Command	Land Reccs	Fighters Includes shipping protection shown in ()	Bomber and Fighter-Bomber						Night	Bomber Totals
			Greece, Aegean & Crete		Italy		Sicily			
			L. of C and other Targets	Airfields and L.Gs	L. of C and other Targets	Airfields and L.Gs	L. of C and other Targets	Airfields and L.Gs	Day	
N.A.A.F.	888*	4100† (1039)	—	—	128	140	—	—	268	—
			—	—	184	238	—	—	422	—
			—	—	—	66	74	5	637	145†
			—	—	43	—	—	20	1235††	20
Malta	100*	524 (114)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M.E.A.C.	38*	854† (507)	—	—	—	—	20	—	—	20
			8	—	—	—	—	—	8	—
			1	4	—	—	—	—	5	—
Totals	1026	5478 (1660)	9	4	355	378	1821	8	2575	185

Total Sorties Flown = 9,264 or 1,158 every 24 hours.

* Estimated sorties.

† W.D.A.F. and No. 205 Group R.A.F. (Wellington) sorties included in N.A.A.F. figures.

‡ Includes attacks on evacuation shipping by fighter-bombers amounting to 180 sorties.

Note: During the period 22nd-29th July Allied bombers of all kinds dropped an estimated total of 3,000 tons of bombs on enemy targets in the Mediterranean area including ports and against shipping.

TABLE II

*Sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command dusk 29th July—dusk 17th August 1943
(excluding anti-shiping operations (other than against evacuation shipping) and attacks on ports)*

Command	Land Recce	Fighters	Bomber and Fighter-Bomber										Bomber Totals	
			Sardinia	Italy	Sicily	Greece	Rumania	Austria	Southern France	Malta	Day	Night		
		Includes shipping protection shown in ()	L. of C. and other Targets	Airfields L.Gs	L. of C. and other Targets	Airfields L.Gs	L. of C. and other Targets	L. of C. and other Targets	L. of C. and other Targets	Airfields L.Gs	Airfields L.Gs	Airfields L.Gs	Day	Night
N.A.A.F.	2210*	13250† (2892)	—	162	93	142	—	—	—	—	182	—	579	—
			—	905	200	1162	—	—	—	—	—	—	2267	—
			—	12	585	49	717	—	—	—	—	—	1255†	1351†
			88	644	102	3214	63	—	—	—	—	—	3946††	165†
Malta	78*	483 (90)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			—	2	—	—	8	—	—	—	—	—	8	2
			—	27	85	—	1	136	65	—	—	—	286	29
M.E.A.C.	109*	1601† (1139)	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	2397	15334 (4121)	88	1723	378	5761	9	136	65	182	—	—	8342	1547
			—	716	49	781	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Total Sorties Flown = 27,620 or 1,454 every 24 hours.

* Estimated sorties. † W.D.A.F. and No. 205 Group R.A.F. (Wellington) sorties included in N.A.A.F. figures.

‡ Includes attacks on evacuation shipping—M.B.s 11 sorties; L.B.s 29; F.B.s 1160.

Note During the period 30th July to 17th August, Allied bombers of all kinds of the Mediterranean Air Command dropped an estimated total of 11,200 tons of bombs on enemy targets in the Mediterranean area including ports and against enemy shipping. An additional total of about 320 tons of bombs were dropped on targets in Rumania and Austria in support of the Combined Bomber Offensive.

CHAPTER VI

THE BREAKING OF THE ROME-BERLIN AXIS

(i)

SIR Winston Churchill, in the fourth volume of his memoirs of the Second World War, has described the autumn of 1942 and the spring and summer of 1943 as the turning point of the war. But the events of the campaign in Sicily have so far almost excluded from our narrative the great strategical matters which must have suggested Churchill's description. Some account of these matters must therefore be given.

At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, the main objects of strategy which were relevant to the Mediterranean theatre, in addition to defeating the Axis in Africa, had been agreed. Generally speaking, these were: to weaken Italy by occupying Sicily; to divert German attention and resources from the Russian front and from north-west Europe; and to produce some military activity in the Western theatres until operations in France could be mounted perhaps late in 1943 or assuredly in 1944. Very soon after Casablanca the Prime Minister and the President, and the British and American Chiefs of Staff, whether in their national committees or as the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff, began to review strategic concepts and to frame plans, and to measure methods and means. The view extended to Europe, Russia, the Mediterranean, South East Asia, the Pacific, and the war economy.

The great formative conferences were at Washington between the 12th and 25th May ('Trident') and at Quebec between the 14th and 24th August ('Quadrant'). These were the full dress affairs, and there were besides continuous consultations, arguments and examinations on many levels by every method of liaison.

The Washington conference affirmed the overall strategic concept for the prosecution of the War. This, shortly put, was to bring about at the earliest possible date the unconditional surrender of the Axis in Europe; and simultaneously to extend unremitting pressure against Japan with the purpose of continually reducing her military power and attaining positions from which her ultimate surrender could be forced. As regards the Mediterranean theatre, Eisenhower was to be instructed to plan such operations, in exploitation of the Sicilian

campaign, as were best calculated to eliminate Italy from the war, and to contain the greatest number of German forces. The Combined Chiefs of Staff would decide which of these operations were to be adopted and prepared.

The Quebec conference reaffirmed the overall strategic concept. It defined three main phases of Mediterranean policy. First, the elimination of Italy as a belligerent, and the establishment of air bases in the area of Rome or farther north. Second, the seizure of Corsica and Sardinia. Third, unremitting pressure on German forces in northern Italy, the creation of the conditions required for the Allied campaign in north-west Europe (Overlord) in 1944, the creation of a situation favourable to the eventual entry of Allied forces into southern France. Operations in the Balkans were to be restricted to administrative support for the guerrillas, to commando activities, and strategic bombing. Overlord would be 'the primary United States-British ground and air effort against the Axis in Europe'. Where resources became scarce because of the rival claims of Overlord and of the Mediterranean theatre, they would be distributed and employed with the main object of ensuring the success of Overlord. The strategic concept sketched above was never changed.

These great decisions showed the main stream of Allied resolution, but beneath it there were currents of opinion among the Allied leaders which must be indicated.

The Prime Minister and the President, if we look back as far as the Casablanca conference, believed that Allied armies must engage the Axis, and especially German, forces in the period between the end of a successful campaign in Sicily and the beginning of a campaign in north-west Europe. Mr. Churchill always believed in creating a range of 'options' to be taken up when and where they might contribute to the enemy's discomfiture. He was convinced that in the situations which 1943 seemed to promise, the first objective lay in the Mediterranean, and that the great prize there was to get Italy out of the war. He kept Overlord and some remoter prospects steadily in view, but on 13th July he added a revealing postscript to a personal minute to his Chiefs of Staff headed 'Post Husky [Sicily] Operations'. The postscript was seven famous lines from 'Julius Caesar' beginning

'There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune . . .'

and ending

'And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.'

The President shrank from the idea of putting large armies into Italy. He believed in attrition, the steady wearing down of human

and material resources, as an effective weapon, but considered for the time being that the Allies in committing large forces to the Italian mainland might turn this weapon against themselves, and play into Germany's hand. As the Sicilian campaign prospered, and the political and military state of Italy grew more perilous, the President's reluctance became less but he still viewed an Italian campaign as a calculated investment for calculable returns.

The British and American Chiefs of Staff were responsible, more than most other men, for evaluating strategic policies and turning them into practical plans and measures. They looked at ends broadly, scrutinized means narrowly, and trod boldly but circumspectly. The British Chiefs of Staffs' first step was towards approval of operations on the mainland of Italy. Their second step, in July, was to approve such operations with the object of eliminating Italy from the war. The American Chiefs of Staff guarded carefully the status of Overlord and of the operations against the Japanese. They desired that any operations in the Mediterranean theatre, after the occupation of Sicily, should have clear limits of extent, time, and resources. They feared that so broad an object as the elimination of Italy might lead to a 'Mediterranean' policy becoming paramount, to the prejudice of Overlord and the Japanese theatres. At Quebec the Staffs agreed upon the elimination of Italy, but the American Chiefs were determined that the operations should be carried out only with the resources which in their view (and this was questioned) had been allotted to the Mediterranean at the Washington conference.

General Eisenhower, as Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean, had to prepare and, in the broadest sense, to conduct the campaign in Sicily. He had to plan whatever further operations the Combined Chiefs of Staff might direct. He had to choose which of these operations to recommend for execution. He had to work amid the pressures and uncertainties which play upon a commander of forces actually in the field, influences which are different from those which are at work in the august chambers of statesmen and their military counsellors. He had to organize and apply his resources and to ask for more. It was not his business to give opinions on grand strategy, but his opinions naturally coloured his recommendations. He would not say anything, in spite of the Prime Minister's blandishments, that might be taken to mean that he favoured an all-out campaign for winning the war by an Italian approach. However, shrewdly attentive to the changing scene in his theatre, in July he recommended carrying the war to the mainland of Italy.

(ii)

The political and diplomatic account of the fall of Mussolini and the Fascist regime, of the breaking of the Axis, and of how Italy became the co-belligerent of the Allies, is to be found in other books. We are concerned with the military aspects.

Between May and the end of September the Italians themselves, the Germans, and the Allies would have been glad to know the answers to several Italian riddles. For the uncertain and the contingent conditions in the crisis of Italian affairs, as it visibly approached and when it occurred, persistently tangled the Italian, German, and Allied skeins of 'politic and shrewd design'.

Mussolini remained loyal to the Axis alliance but most of his commanders were entangled in the plots and intrigues of political factions. There were several factions, of two main kinds broadly speaking: those who wished to get rid of the Duce, the Fascists, and the Germans, and to take Italy out of the war; and those who hoped that a Fascist regime of some sort would continue and that Italy might slip out of the war. Few Italians apart from doctrinaires and opportunists, could have seen future advantage in continuing at war, but an attempt to leave it seemed to mean running at once into every kind of danger. For the Germans, powerful, suspicious, and grim, were in Italy and on her northern and western frontiers. On the other hand the Allies had spoken at Casablanca of 'unconditional surrender' for the Axis peoples, and in June Mr. Churchill explained the notion in a public speech; '. . . they must yield themselves absolutely to our justice and mercy'. His words cannot have sounded comfortable to his faltering Italian enemies even though in the event unconditional surrender was not pressed upon them. The Italians' dilemma had more than two horns. And so the Italian High Command had to practise procrastination and dissimulation; it lived in anxiety, only to collapse in the confusion of September.

Some stages in this dreary road are described in more detail later, as are the main developments in German military plans before the Italian surrender. The German High Command indeed had by the end of May resolved to defend Italy and the Balkans with or without its Italian ally. The Germans had two principal strategic aims, based on the assumption that the Allies were planning an important offensive in the Mediterranean theatre. The first was to prevent a penetration of Europe's southern boundaries which might later bring the war to Germany's frontiers. The second was to safeguard the Balkans, which they valued more than Italy, rich in minerals and oil, against attack from without and subversion from within. If Italy cracked or broke, possibilities which *OKW* freely discussed from May onwards, the German task would be more difficult and

it would be the more important for the Germans to gain, and keep, military control in Italy and the Balkans. Hitler's entourage was full of suspicion and distrust of the Italians, and he himself, while keeping a regard for Mussolini, doubted increasingly whether the Duce was able to overcome his own ill health and sabotage at home. Hitler believed, moreover, that Italy's political problems could not be understood by soldiers, and he held his military advisers in these matters on a tighter rein than usual. His advisers had to make their plans under their master's domination which became more pronounced when Mussolini fell.

The highest German commanders, moreover, were in the grip of the Russian front with its constant drain on man-power and resources. For example, in August 1943, *OB West* (and not only he) was ordered to find 45,000 front-line replacements for the East and was promised 18-year-old youths from the class of 1925 in exchange. Infantry divisions in Russia were reduced in establishment by three battalions apiece, a measure which in October was applied in Italy and the Balkans. The Territorial Reserve known as the *Landsturm* was called up for service in the Armed Forces; in 1943 its men were between 50 and 60 years of age. By September the Eastern Front was occupying about 165 German divisions out of a total of about 236. In short the German High Command had not got a reserve of disposable field formations and therefore could not act without laborious contrivance. This labour, as regards Italy, was made more troublesome by uncertainty. The Germans had no foreknowledge of Mussolini's fall or of the Italian negotiations for an armistice although they had their suspicions. They too had to dissimulate and move cautiously. Secret measures to fulfil some of their plans to seize control in Italy and the Balkans began on 26th July and further orders, of a preliminary kind, which brought both sets of plans together under the code-name operation '*Achse*', went out on the 28th.¹ On 30th August a detailed directive amplified and replaced yet another set of instructions which had issued on 1st August, and the executive order was given on 8th September. Then, in contrast with earlier tedious constraints, German commanders in Italy acted within six and a half hours. Thanks to their preparations and to Italian confusion they succeeded in disarming the Italian army, and in gaining control of Italy's communications and industrial potential, without the serious fighting which they had expected.

¹ Plans to send German divisions into northern Italy (operation '*Alarich*') and to take over Italian-held sectors in the Balkans (operation '*Konstantin*') had existed since mid-May. '*Achse*' carried these plans further and included such measures as: disarmament of Italian troops; occupation of the main ports in north Italy; control of Italian frontiers. In the Balkans German troops were to seize and occupy key points on the mainland and the islands. The Balkan theatre, including the Aegean, was to be placed under German command.

The uncertainties which the matter of Italy presented were as unwelcome to the Allies as they were to the Axis. They did not, it is true, greatly impede the broad sweeps of Allied strategical planning, but at a great many points they raised questions to which the answers were sheer speculation, and which embarrassed proposals and plans. Some such questions were: In which of two or three different ways would Italy fall? How strong would Axis resistance be to operations in Sicily and Italy? What would the actions of the Germans be in various and equally likely situations? What new type of Government might be expected to emerge if Mussolini's Government fell?

(iii)

From these general considerations we turn to a closer look at the Mediterranean scene, and it will become apparent that there was in 1943, as there is in this description, some repetitiveness owing to the statement and restatement of alternatives on a conjectural basis.¹

From the Casablanca conference in January until the Allied landings in Calabria and at Salerno in September the year falls into three parts so far as planning of operations is concerned. The first covers the months before a directive came from the Washington conference, on 26th May. During this period many courses were examined, but no decisions were made because the President and Prime Minister, with their Chiefs of Staff, had not settled what were the objects. The second period lies between the end of the conference at Washington on 25th May and the first week of the campaign in Sicily, 10th to 18th July. The broad objects of policy were now known, but decisions on what actually to do next were delayed because important questions awaited answers which only success, failure, or stalemate in Sicily could give. The third period was that during which plans grew bolder and firmer, though still difficult to cast in final shape, as the campaign in Sicily prospered, as the fall of Mussolini occurred on 25th July, and as Marshal Badoglio's Government, successor to Mussolini's, made peace feelers beginning on 4th August.

During all these periods the makers of Allied policies and plans had to take into account an unusual number of situations which were equally likely to arise, all different, and each requiring different treatment. Thus a general Italian collapse, including Fascism, might follow an Allied victory in Africa or a successful landing in Sicily. Or Italy might survive these events and continue at war with impaired morale. Or the Italian armed forces might defend Italy as stubbornly as the British had proclaimed in 1940 that they would

¹ The phrase is Mr. Churchill's, in expostulating with his Chiefs of Staff on 2nd July.



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Sardinia and Corsica might become stepping stones to Italy or the South of France but it seemed that it would be too late, by the time that they had been captured, to mount a further operation in 1943, say to make a lodgement in central Italy. Some American and British opinions, however, held probably rightly that if Italy survived an Allied victory in Sicily without a collapse, the capture of Sardinia as well might not be enough to cause one.

An invasion of Italy itself offered valuable prizes besides a possible break in the Axis and the removal of Italy from the war. Some were: the containment of German forces; the elimination of the Italian fleet; a jumping-off place for Balkan operations; airfields which were nearer to bombing targets in south Germany and the Rumanian oilfields. The attractions of these and other prizes seemed greater or less or even vanished with changing circumstances and points of view, but as a whole they were strong. There was no suggestion that the Allies should fight their way up the long leg of Italy against steady German opposition. A more modest undertaking in southern Italy to include a good port like Naples and the Foggia airfields appeared to be much more practicable and sufficiently profitable. It was absolutely necessary that any area of landing should lie within range of land-based, single-engine fighter cover, and the limit of this cover ran from a little short of Naples on the west coast to Taranto on the heel. Moreover, in Italy the country favoured defence. The mountains are rugged and the Apennines make a continuous barrier between the eastern and western sides of the country. Many rivers, some fast-flowing between precipitous banks, lie across the path of forces advancing from the south. The winter is severe. The rough, cramped terrain would prevent the Allies from exploiting their expected superiority in artillery and armour. The enemy would have a land L. of C. running right into Germany. However, Allied air power might deprive them of much of the benefit, and the Allies would command both sea flanks. Even if the Italians collapsed and the Germans withdrew, to occupy growing areas of Italy or all of it was not an inviting prospect because of the huge logistic burden which occupation would impose. There were very good reasons to avoid campaigning up the length of Italy.¹ In fact the compelling necessity of fighting the Germans wherever possible in order to contain the greatest possible German forces, coupled with Italy's natural features, brought about just this campaign up the length of Italy.

Just before the Washington Conference attention and plans in London, Washington, and Algiers were in fact directed towards two

¹ 'Why should we crawl up the leg like a harvest bug, from the ankle upwards?' Mr. Churchill to Chiefs of Staff, 13th July.

sets of operations: landings on and near the toe of Italy and on its heel, with intent to advance towards Naples; and the capture of Sardinia and Corsica. Eisenhower and Cunningham recommended Sardinia and Corsica. They believed that the state of Italian morale at the end of the Sicilian campaign would be a most important factor in choosing between the islands and Italy. Because it was not easy to foresee this state it was preferable not to commit all forces to a major campaign in Italy of unforeseeable length and requirements. Tedder differed from his colleagues in thinking that Sardinia would not be as easy to occupy, or as useful, as they supposed. Moreover, he believed that his colleagues did not fully recognize the main advantage of gaining airfields in Italy. This was that the air routes from those airfields to bombing targets in south Germany and the Balkans would not encounter massive systems of fighter and A.A. defence, because it would be quite impossible for the Germans to set up in these quarters anything resembling the systems which guarded the north and north-western approaches to Germany.

We have already summarized the decisions of the Washington conference. Mr. Churchill has written that to follow up the conquest of Sicily by the invasion of Italy was the main purpose for which he had crossed the Atlantic.¹ His Chiefs of Staff were at that time agreed that to bring about the collapse of Italy would impose the maximum additional commitments upon the Germans and therefore would give the most relief to the Russians. They had not made up their minds on the best methods of causing an Italian collapse. Bombing alone might cause it, or operations against Sardinia and Corsica, or against the Italian mainland. If, after Sicily, the Italians seemed about to collapse, an invasion of south and central Italy would be justified. But if the Italians stood firm or if the Germans moved strong reinforcements into Italy, operations against Sardinia and Corsica were to be preferred. The American Chiefs of Staff were distrustful of any Mediterranean operation which might lead to a prolonged commitment on the European mainland, which in turn might prejudice Overlord or even enterprises in other theatres. But when the British showed themselves to be resolved upon Overlord and ready to fix its date (1st May 1944), agreement upon some Mediterranean operation followed. However, in May, in spite of searching examination, the Combined Chiefs of Staff could do no more than give Eisenhower the instructions noted at the beginning of this chapter. Too much depended upon forecasts so nicely balanced that neither the joint Intelligence Staffs nor anyone else could discover a clear pointer to this operation or to that. It is worth remarking that the utter collapse of Italy was seen as a peculiar

¹ *The Second World War, Volume IV. The Hinge of Fate* (London 1951), pp. 723-4.

situation which would require special treatment with a view to quick exploitation.

At Washington an inquiry was made for the first time to estimate what military resources were available world-wide, to meet all the undertakings in view. It is an irony that the document, an astonishing feat by the staffs for it was produced in 48 hours of almost continuous work, came to be treated as an agreement between rival dealers rather than as an amicable weighing up of assets between partners. As regards the Mediterranean the paper showed that 19 divisions, British or controlled by them, 4 United States divisions and 4 French divisions would be available at the end of the Sicilian campaign. The estimate excluded three British and four American divisions which were to be held ready from 1st November for the purposes of Overlord and two British divisions for possible commitment to Turkey.¹ The estimate of aircraft available after Sicily was 3,648.² This figure excluded the twelve squadrons of American Liberators which were to be made available from the United Kingdom for the Sicilian campaign but not for operations against Italy, and the three Canadian Wellington squadrons on loan from the United Kingdom only until 15th September. The estimate of naval vessels depended upon actual plans, and the requirements would have to be approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. But limitations in principle were determined for landing-craft because it was necessary to begin to prepare at once, in the United Kingdom, for cross-Channel operations. It was assumed that half of the 1,642 major and minor craft earmarked for the Sicilian invasion would be lost. The crews which survived, together with the maintenance and base staffs, repair equipment and spare gear which had been assigned to the lost craft, would be withdrawn from the Mediterranean and Levant. If losses were less than a half, any craft and crews which accrued from this cause might have to be returned to the United Kingdom in addition to the men and material which had accrued from actual loss. These calculations provided General Eisenhower with an approximation of the forces which he would have at his disposal for operations after Sicily.

¹ Existing plans for supporting the Turks and making use of the facilities which they could provide produced an assumed commitment of the order of 48 squadrons of the Royal Air Force, 10 anti-tank and A.A. regiments, and two divisions.

² The total included:

Heavy bombers (day and night)	242
Medium bombers " " "	519
Light bombers; dive bombers	299
Fighters	2,012
Air transports	412
Army co-operation aircraft	164

ITALY

0 50 100 150 Miles

RAILWAYS ROADS



(iv)

See Maps 12 and 13

Mr. Churchill had in all sincerity acted with the President in approving the final report by the Combined Chiefs of Staff at Washington. But he has described his inner thoughts thus: '... I was extremely concerned that no definite recommendations had been made by the Combined Staffs to follow up the conquest of Sicily by the invasion of Italy . . .' Mr. Churchill therefore crossed the Atlantic once more, to Algiers. He was 'determined to obtain before leaving Africa the decision to invade Italy should Sicily be taken'. He felt that it would be awkward to discuss these matters with the Allied commanders in the Mediterranean unless a United States representative of the highest standing was present. He suggested this to the President who agreed that General Marshall should accompany him. There followed the most rigorous discussions with Eisenhower, Alexander, Cunningham, Tedder, and Montgomery, and meetings on 29th and 31st May and 3rd June. There was no doubt that all these leaders wished to go forward in the boldest way, but there was not as yet a common idea of what that way was. The result may be summarized. Eisenhower, though reserved, inclined to favour operations against the Italian mainland. Alexander and Cunningham favoured such operations, if all went well in Sicily. Marshall reminded all that they should not set their hearts on this or that operation until the early results of the invasion of Sicily had been examined. All the commanders in fact agreed that the progress of this campaign would be an essential factor in a future decision. After these deliberations Eisenhower was left to his planning.

He and his colleagues considered at this stage, broadly speaking, three sets of operations using forces not committed to Sicily. The operations were landings in the toe of Italy by the British 5th and 10th Corps, in Sardinia by the American 5th Army, and in Corsica by French forces. The possibility of the 8th Army 'jumping' the Straits of Messina in exploitation of success in Sicily was borne in mind. On 30th June Eisenhower put the alternatives to the Combined Chiefs of Staff as landings in the toe of Italy or in Sardinia and Corsica. But he was not willing to recommend one or the other because so much depended upon the outcome of Sicily and the future state of the Italians and the future dispositions and strength of German forces. However, he pointed out that the operations in the toe of Italy would require six divisions, and that it would be an unsound investment to commit this force if it was doubtful whether it would be able to go on to occupy the heel of Italy or exploit to Naples. Tedder once again expressed (through the Chief of the Air Staff) a different opinion on the general issue. This was that the

benefits to be gained from operations in Italy were understated and their difficulties overstated, whereas the difficulties of an operation against Sardinia were treated too lightly. The Combined Chiefs of Staff deferred further discussion until some results should appear from the Sicilian invasion, now ten days ahead. The British Chiefs of Staff nevertheless on July 3rd came down with their '... conviction that the full exploitation of Husky [Sicily] will best be secured if offensive action be prosecuted on the mainland of Italy with all the means at our disposal towards the final elimination of Italy from the war'. Their minds in fact were now made up, as they had not been at Washington in May.

But now, as reports of success in Sicily began to follow one another, minds began to move quickly towards decisions although reasonably accurate and up-to-date information of the enemy's moves was proving hard to come by. On the 13th July Mr. Churchill set the planning staffs in London to prepare a scheme for a landing on the west coast of Italy having the port of Naples as an objective, and thereafter an advance on Rome.¹ On the 16th General Marshall suggested that the Combined Chiefs of Staff should let Eisenhower know of their interest in an operation against Naples instead of an operation against Sardinia. On the 18th Eisenhower, with the agreement of his three Commanders-in-Chief, reported to the Combined Chiefs of Staff that in view of the situation now developing 'and assuming that substantial German reinforcement of Southern Italy has not taken place, I recommend carrying the war to the mainland of Italy . . .' The utter collapse of Italy was still seen as a peculiar situation. Eisenhower was in fact preparing seven possible courses of action in order to be free to take advantage of whatever opportunities might present themselves. They were the theme Heel-Toe in varied sequences and combinations, but actual events were to lay them aside. Among them was a proposal to take Naples by an overland advance, and to introduce reinforcements through that port, while a proposal for an assault landing near Naples was being examined. However in London, on the 19th, Mr. Churchill's idea of the 13th took shape in a plan and was named 'Avalanche'.

On the 21st the Combined Chiefs of Staff, in approving generally Eisenhower's proposals for operations in the Toe and Heel signalled '... You should, however, extend your amphibious operations northwards as far as shorebased fighter cover can be made effective.'²

¹ A note on the position of planning staffs in the British scheme of things may be of interest. A British planning staff, whether of a particular Service or Joint, had as its main function to examine in detail any matter referred to it by the framers and makers of policy. It was usually instructed to report, or to make recommendations, or even to give an opinion. It was not a policy-making body.

² Six of Eisenhower's proposals were more exactly:

(i) A landing in the Toe (Gulf of Gioia) by the British 10th Corps.

[continued on facing page

On the 23rd the American Chiefs of Staff received the British proposals for the assault on Naples but would not agree to it as it stood, because it assumed that certain warships and merchant vessels earmarked for other purposes would be available. Here cropped up again the underlying American opinion that the British, at heart, were prepared to sustain their Mediterranean purposes by poaching on the preserves of other theatres. This will be referred to again, for sharp disagreement arose.

Mussolini's fall on 25th at once changed the scene, bringing in a stage of transition, as Mr. Churchill noted. The Combined Chiefs of Staff on the 26th instructed Eisenhower to plan at once to mount the assault on Naples at the earliest possible date, using the resources deemed to have been earmarked for the Mediterranean at Washington in May. Eisenhower had already ordered the preparation of this operation, using 5th U.S. Army and 10th British Corps, and, as an alternative, the landings in the Gulf of Gioia. He awaited the military results of the political changes in Italy before deciding which plan to use.¹ On 1st August he decided that a lodgement in the Reggio area must precede an operation against Naples in order to secure the useful sea short cut through the Straits of Messina, and as a diversion and a threat to enemy forces defending Naples. The lodgement, he hoped, could be made by 8th Army. The Italian political scene was still obscure, though on the 4th August a hint came, from the Marquis d'Ajeta at Lisbon, that King Victor Emanuel and Badoglio wanted peace.² On the 6th, at Tangier, Signor Berio, an Italian diplomat with authority to negotiate, expressed a genuine desire to treat. These happenings had no military effect.³ On the 16th August Eisenhower announced that a force from the 8th Army would cross the Straits of Messina into Calabria on a date between 1st and 4th September, and that he would try to launch the assault on Naples on 9th September. It happened that on the 15th August Brigadier-General Castellano, a plenipotentiary of the Italian High Command, called secretly on Sir Samuel Hoare in Madrid to say that as soon as the Allies landed on the Italian mainland the Italian government

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- (ii) Quick exploitation into eastern Calabria.
 - (iii) A landing at Crotona on the east coast of Calabria by the British 5th Corps.
 - (iv) Repeated outflanking movements by small amphibious forces.
 - (v) A landing in the Heel if sufficient landing-craft were available.
 - (vi) Capture of Naples by an overland advance; introduction there of a reinforcing Force.

¹ Eisenhower was preparing in addition 'an ad hoc Avalanche' of about one division to take instant advantage of a complete Italian collapse.

² For some unexplained reason Eisenhower, his Chief of Staff, Bedell Smith, and Alexander were not informed of the 'peace-feelers'.

³ Mr. Churchill, en route to Quebec, signalled to the Foreign Secretary on 7th August: '... Badoglio admits he is going to double-cross someone, but his interests and the mood of the Italian people make it more likely Hitler will be the one to be tricked . . . Meanwhile the war should be carried against Italy in every way that the Americans will allow.'

was prepared to join them against Germany. The outcome is told later in this chapter.

(v)

From the moment that plans for an actual operation began to take shape, the problems concerning the detailed allotments of resources began to appear. Such problems were to crop up for many months, and the fact that most were solved shows that the Allies worked well together in spite of their sharp differences of opinion upon occasion, and their unsparing arguments.¹ The problems very often took the prosaic form of how to get the right men and material to the right places at the right time, and the availability of ships and craft lay at the heart of the matter in all the technical complexity of types and numbers, tonnages, turn-rounds, time and season, and so on. Sometimes it seemed almost that simple parochial theatres of war had merged in a universal theatre of war so complicated that no plan could approach adequacy without putting some other equally important plan awry.

The Washington Conference had made an estimate or an allotment (for opinions differed on which of these things the document was) of the resources that General Eisenhower might use. It had seemed that he would require from sources outside the Mediterranean something like 33,000 British and 30,000 American troops for operations after Sicily.² These figures represented for the most part various ancillary units such as signals, anti-aircraft, and administrative, which would be required to meet a growing commitment in occupied enemy territory as well as the needs of field forces. But the 63,000 turned out not to be all for Eisenhower had several shortcomings to remark in his 'prospectus' of operations dated 30th June. In general, he found the British quota of shipping to be sufficient, but the American quota to be less than his needs. He therefore asked to keep for a time seven ships, representing a lift of some 50,000 troops, which were due to return to convoy service between the United States and the United Kingdom. But the co-ordinators quickly discovered the snags. To meet the commitment for the '63,000' punctually and simply it would be necessary to divert to the Mediterranean one complete convoy which was arranged to sail from America to Britain. But this measure, which suited the Mediter-

¹ Extract from background by British Joint Staff Mission, Washington, to a formal meeting on 26th July: '... King was at his worst. He wouldn't budge an inch... Cook abetted King and put chits across whenever latter ceased for a moment to be completely uncompromising... Our side battled well... advanced all the arguments we could think of but we were battling against a brick wall.' In this argument there was no factiousness or ill-nature. It was a tough debate on differences of opinion.

² It is convenient shorthand to understand here the word 'troops' as often covering men of the three Services, and not soldiers alone.

anean scheme of things, would badly interfere with the planned trooping programme from the United States to Britain. Moreover, if Eisenhower were allowed to keep in the Mediterranean the seven ships for which he asked the interference with the trooping programme would be worse. This prospect was seriously objectionable because a large number of the troops whose arrival in Britain would be postponed represented administrative units which had to be in position by certain dates if the build-up for Overlord was to keep to time-table, and air units which had to arrive without delay if the current bombing offensive against Germany was to continue at full pitch. On the other hand if the needs of the Mediterranean were not met, it seemed probable that operations projected there would have to be curtailed.

Attempts to solve the main problem uncovered stubborn related problems. It is possible to illustrate the matter, shortly, by abstracting some questions, major and minor, from the detailed discussions. The British hoped to be able to make up the shortfall in the Overlord programme by March 1944 because they expected certain easements to occur regarding shipping. But was their hope well enough grounded to be acceptable? For the task now was to produce hard facts: troops and equipment actually delivered at certain places by certain dates if actual blows were to be struck. If a reduction of ships in one convoy could be made good by augmenting the numbers of ships in others, would the number of ships in any of the augmented convoys exceed unacceptably the number that available naval and air escorts could protect? If a block of ancillary units was sent to the Mediterranean instead of to Britain, did a duplicate exist to replace it in a certain convoy, or could one be made ready in time? If certain units were not in position in Britain by certain dates, *precisely* what interruptions would occur in the planned build-up? Could these interruptions be tolerated? If they could not be tolerated, what *precisely* was to be done? Puzzles like these occupied the staffs in London, Algiers, and Washington day in, day out during July and August.

We turn again to General Eisenhower and some of his other needs. Besides the seven ships already mentioned he asked to be allowed to keep in the Mediterranean for a time eighteen American destroyers, and some submarine chasers and minesweepers. He gave notice that it might be necessary to increase his long-range fighter forces by borrowing outside his theatre. As regards what he could do for himself, he pointed out that he would probably have to strip the equipment from divisions in the Middle East, which were unlikely to be required for operations in the near future, to make good the deficiencies of the formations which he proposed to put into the field. This was tantamount to a deferred demand for equipment. He remarked

that the training in amphibious operations of formations which would be making assaults would be considerably lower than was desirable because he had no ships and craft to spare for training purposes.¹

The above is the gist of his notes on short-comings at 30th June. It is convenient to mention some of later dates before summarizing what could be done for him. On 28th July Eisenhower, after consultation with Tedder, asked for the loan until 15th September of four groups of Fortresses from the United States Eighth Air Force in Britain. This was in addition to his earlier request to keep the Liberator groups loaned for Sicily. With this reinforcement he hoped almost to paralyse German air action over south Italy and to immobilize German ground troops, thus compensating, in particular, for the relatively weak fighter cover which he expected would be all that he could give to his assault forces. On 26th August Eisenhower proposed to move into the Mediterranean two anti-submarine squadrons of aircraft from Port Lyautey in Morocco, but the Chiefs of Staff demurred because this move would interfere with operations against U-boats off the Atlantic coasts of Spain. Eisenhower, supported by Cunningham, continued to press the matter. A rather similar problem arose concerning 8th Indian Division which Eisenhower proposed to withdraw from the Middle East but which the Commander-in-Chief there was counting upon for operations projected against the Dodecanese.²

We have referred often to the differences between British and American points of view and the arguments by which decisions or compromises regarding the matters which we have been considering were reached. One further matter, however, requires mention before we draw the threads together, because it was viewed by the Americans as a unilateral British decision on a question of common interest. On 20th July, when the exact operations which Eisenhower should undertake were still undecided, the British Chiefs of Staff concluded that it was most important that none of the resources likely to be required by Eisenhower for operations after Sicily should be dispersed from the Mediterranean. They telegraphed this proposal to the Combined Chiefs of Staffs on the 21st.³ However, on the 20th the Admiralty, on the Chiefs of Staffs' instructions, had telegraphed to the Naval Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean to '... hold

¹ When ships and craft were barely sufficient for 'the real thing', it was scarcely practical to expose them to the risk of damage in training exercises which were realistic enough to be valuable.

² The whole question of the operations in the Eastern Mediterranean requires separate treatment, although it was closely connected, from the point of view of resources, with that of the operations in the Central Mediterranean directed against the Italian mainland. See Chapter XV.

³ It will be remembered that when the British Chiefs of Staff were physically in England, the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington were the American Chiefs of Staff plus the principals of the British Joint Staff Mission, who represented the British Chiefs of Staff.

everybody and everything you think may be required for Priceless [operations after Sicily] . . .’ The haste was because it was believed that two naval force commanders, some naval staff officers, and certain ships and craft were on the brink of departure to India for operations pending against Burma. The American Chiefs of Staff looked askance at their British colleagues’ proposal, but not until the matter had been discussed at Quebec was the British ‘standstill’ order revoked, on 19th August. In the meantime the order’s existence strengthened the American impression that the British were ready to poach a little to keep the Mediterranean larder well stocked, and the impression coloured the exchange of views upon all Eisenhower’s proposals.

These proposals were dealt with as follows, briefly speaking. The difficulties concerning the conflicting demands for troop-carrying ships and for troops to arrive here or there were gradually overcome because the British managed to provide more shipping in an acceptable time-table. Eisenhower was permitted to keep the destroyers and minor war vessels. His request for the loan of four Fortress groups from the U.S. Eighth Air Force, although at first supported by Mr. Churchill, was refused because it would impair the bombing offensive against Germany. The prospect of a loan of long-range fighters was dismissed. The temporary transfer of one anti-submarine squadron of aircraft from the Moroccan coast to the Mediterranean was approved.

The discussions and arguments which have been touched on lasted, so far as concerns this part of our story, from the end of June until the beginning of September, including the Quebec conference. Their importance lies in showing the practical difficulties of mounting operations in the Mediterranean which everyone came to desire, in relation to the difficulties of waging world-wide war, because the Chiefs of Staff, when considering what might be done against the mainland of Italy, had to consider also what was going forward in places as remote from it as the Caroline and the Marshall Islands and Burma.¹ It emerged during this phase that the Mediterranean was subsidiary in all respects to Overlord, and the American Chiefs of Staff gained their point that Eisenhower must do the best he could with the resources which the Washington Conference in May had estimated to be available for him. These were principles and both sets of Chiefs of Staff would in fact allow themselves and the Mediterranean commanders discretion in applying them. Even so, the difficulties were to persist, and there were some immediate

¹ Mr. Churchill, addressing the House of Commons on 21st September 1943: ‘. . . When I hear people talking in an airy way of throwing modern armies ashore here and there as if they were bales of goods to be dumped on a beach . . . I really marvel at the lack of knowledge which still prevails of the conditions of modern war . . .’

consequences for Mediterranean operations. The most important related to ships and craft.

Throughout this volume, and overflowing into the next, a shortage of landing-ships and craft recurs as a problem which handicapped the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the higher Allied commanders in the field in their planning and drew, on occasion, the Prime Minister and President themselves into urgent and time-consuming discussion. Plans for Normandy, southern France and the Indian Ocean, and indeed the Pacific, were all involved, but chiefly affected were those for the campaign in Italy.

The problems of how to overcome or evade the shortage was an intractable one and of the highest consequence. It brought forth from Mr. Churchill more than one of his arresting phrases. To General Marshall he wrote, 'How it is that the plans of two great empires . . . should be so much hamstrung and limited by a hundred or two of these particular vessels [L.S.T.] will never be understood by history.' Yet history will surely appreciate a many sided viewpoint, and while the requirements of strategy should ideally dictate the development and provision of material it is salutary to be reminded that the limitations of material may, on occasion, dictate the strategy adopted. Between the summer of 1943 and of 1944 compromises in a number of highly desirable operations had to be made because much sought after L.S.T. could not be in two places at the same time.¹

Neither lack of foresight nor of action could be blamed for this shortage. During the years between the wars staff studies of assaults from the sea by both British and Americans had been frequent and both countries had staged exercises to gain practical experience. The British had made little money available for material development because they had, quite reasonably, not foreseen that in the next war they would be thrown out of Europe and out of Malaya and Burma. When they were, the need for special equipment for re-entry was at once understood, but first many more pressing problems of production had to be solved. It was some time before the British and Americans began to turn out landing-ships and craft in fair numbers and by the end of 1943 they had still not been able to catch up on their ever-mounting requirements.

By that time, in spite of a late start and fluctuating priorities, the Americans had completed nearly 25,000 landing-ships and craft (many of them to British design) of a gross total of over one million tons. Among these were 398 L.S.T. (2), 458 L.C.I.(L), 641 L.C.T.,

¹ Appendix 3 gives some details of the types of landing-ships and craft in use in 1943-44.

5,400 L.C.M., 3,238 L.V.T. (amphibians), and 9,242 L.C.V.(P). Also by that time Great Britain, with an earlier start but with her productive capacity absorbed by many other demands, completed some 2,400 landing-craft, for the most part L.C.T., L.C.M., and L.C.A., and a few first experiments in L.S.T. Demands on American production were conflicting and pressing. The Pacific, by virtue of the nature of its war and in spite of the policy of 'Germany first', got the most. The European theatre came second; the Indian Ocean a very poor third. In this history it is the rival interests within the European theatre which are remarked. These were the requirements of Overlord (including the related landing in the south of France, 'Anvil'/'Dagoon') versus those of the Italian campaign, which itself had as its primary purpose the creation of conditions favourable to Overlord. As the date of Overlord grew nearer, examinations of how ships and craft could continue at work in the Mediterranean until the last possible moment, consistent with arriving in the United Kingdom in time to be ready for Overlord, grew keener. Seldom can the control of resources essential to the success of widely separated operations have presented a more tantalizing problem or been more penetratingly investigated. The relevant factor in space was some 2,000 miles of frequently stormy sea; the factor in time was too short not to alarm the planners. No risks with the Overlord arrangements were justified nor was postponement at first acceptable. It is, however, understandable that those responsible for progress in Italy sometimes felt the safety margins for Overlord excessive.

As numbers and types of landing-ships and craft increased so did appreciation of their value as maids of all work, and this tended to increase variance between what London and Washington insisted were available and those which theatre Commanders-in-Chief could muster for operations. The difference consisted in, for example, vessels refitting or in need of repair and those allocated to special duties not directly connected with the next prospective operation, but none the less legitimate and important in the eyes of the Commanders-in-Chief.

That is the general picture. Practical examples will be found in this volume in connection with preparations for the British crossing of the Messina Straits and during the Salerno landings. They occur more strikingly and draw in the highest authorities as the Italian campaign develops. But let the point be made here that, although these recurring problems entailed discussions at the highest level and occupied much valuable time, practical solutions were found almost without exception. An exception, and that debatable, is the Italian campaign as a whole, of which Mr. Churchill has written 'the long fight about trying to get these small easements and to prevent the scrapping of one vast front [Italy] in order to conform

to a rigid date upon the other [Normandy] led to prolonged, unsatisfactory operations in Italy'.

Even as the invasion of Italy was being examined, the number of assault ships and craft available for operations seemed certain to be reduced. Broadly speaking, only about half the number of landing-craft which had been provided for the invasion of Sicily would be available for further operations. It was postulated that such of these craft as would take part in Overlord must reach the United Kingdom before winter weather in the Atlantic set in. The number of these craft increased when the Prime Minister insisted at the Quebec Conference that the leading assault forces in Overlord must be strengthened by a quarter. Relief in the matter of landing-ships and craft was unlikely to be provided by production because the American output was bespoke for the Pacific, and there were the demands also of operations in the Indian Ocean. The clash between rival claims for these ships and craft was to continue up to the launching of Overlord and after it. Apart from ships and craft General Eisenhower was justified in pointing out that many of his divisions were short of equipment and training. He, and his principal commanders, were fully aware that the assaults at Salerno and across the Messina Straits would be made with somewhat meagre resources. On 30th August Cunningham sent a personal and private telegram to the First Sea Lord: '. . . It appears to me that the [Quebec] decisions assume the certain success of Avalanche and the collapse of Italy. It is our task to ensure that this is in fact the case but if our resources are not kept up to the necessary standard we might not succeed . . . My concern lies in the fact that I am not sure that the Chiefs of Staff do realize how tough a proposition we are taking on . . . if we whittle away our resources now to build up Overlord our chances of success will be greatly reduced and if Avalanche fails Overlord may be stillborn . . . I hope it is quite clear that there is no wavering in our intention to carry out the operation. My concern lies only in making absolutely sure of its success.' This opinion is peculiarly interesting and valuable. Admiral Cunningham had greater experience by far of waging war in the Mediterranean than any other Allied commander. As a fighting commander his judgment was superb, and he was as brave and resolute a leader as has ever breathed the air of battle. There is no doubt that those concerned in London and Washington understood that risks were being taken, but it is open to question whether those in Washington appreciated the extent of the risks until this was measured by the course of events.

(vi)

The Quebec conference resembled a series of technical staff conferences, whose results were surveyed by the President and the Prime Minister at two formal meetings. The main strategic guidance for the whole war and for the Mediterranean theatre has been summarized at the beginning of this chapter. Some further decisions concerning the Mediterranean were added to the guidance given at earlier conferences. Offensive operations were to be undertaken in Southern France to make a lodgement in the area of Toulon-Marseilles, and then to exploit northward to create a diversion to help Overlord. French forces, trained and equipped with the help of the Americans, were to join in these operations, as were French guerrillas perhaps in the Southern Alps. Eisenhower was invited to submit an outline plan for these undertakings to the Combined Chiefs of Staff by 1st November, after consulting those concerned with Overlord.¹

Air operations in the Mediterranean theatre were to include the following. Strategic bombing from Italian and Central Mediterranean bases to complement the bombing offensive against Germany from the United Kingdom. The development of an air ferry route through the Azores, since negotiations with the Portuguese for general facilities in these islands were being conducted by the British Government. Air supply for guerrilla forces in the Balkans and in France.

The defensive garrison commitments in the Mediterranean theatre were to be reviewed from time to time to obtain economy of force. But as long as even a remote possibility existed of the Germans invading the Iberian Peninsula, so long would Allied forces be disposed in north-west Africa to make certain that the lines of communication through the Straits of Gibraltar were secure.

We have seen that the operations projected in the Mediterranean theatre were linked with the operations which were being planned for north-west Europe in 1944. It is therefore important to remark three conditions for the success of Overlord which General Morgan had set forth and which the American and the British Chiefs of Staff had accepted. First, that the strength of the German fighter force in north-west Europe should have been greatly reduced by the date of the assault. Second, that means must be devised to maintain a force of eighteen divisions in the assault area, without such 'outside' help as a captured port in the initial stage of the operations, and with

¹ In April 1943 Lieut.-General F. E. Morgan had been appointed Chief of Staff to the as yet non-existent Supreme Allied Commander for the invasion of north-west Europe. General Morgan, with an Anglo-American nucleus staff, then began to draw up plans for Overlord.

little help of this nature for a further two or three months.¹ Third (and here expressed in the simplest form) that on D-Day the enemy's reserve in France and the Low Countries should not exceed twelve mobile German field divisions, and that the Germans must not be able to transfer from other fronts more than fifteen first-class divisions during the first two months of the campaign in France.

Almost from the first the power of a campaign in Italy to contain Axis forces directly or by diversion had been a principal argument in favour of undertaking one. It is therefore probably legitimate to apply to the idea of containment words written by Alexander, after the war, about the Washington Conference's directive to Eisenhower: 'It is essential that this . . . be constantly borne in mind for it continued to rule all strategy in Italy up to the final surrender of the German armies in the field, and the campaign can only be rightly understood if this is firmly grasped. The campaign in Italy was a great holding attack.'

(vii)

We must now add some details to the broad sketch of Axis affairs which has been presented in pages 188-89.

On 14th July, four days after the Allies had landed in Sicily, Marshal Badoglio, who had been dismissed from the post of Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces in December 1940 after the debacle in Greece, and Bonomi, an elderly Socialist, met to draw up a joint Shadow Cabinet to be urged on King Victor Emmanuel. They agreed on a provisional plan for the overthrow of Fascism and the withdrawal of Italy from the German Alliance. The King rejected their proposals. He did not wish to intervene to form a political ministry, but preferred an administration of the Civil Service. On the 16th Scorza, secretary of the Fascist Party, with some of its leading members, met the Duce and asked that the Grand Council be summoned and that the Fascist constitution, particularly in relation to consultation, be allowed to function. The progress of events was interrupted on the 18th by an urgent invitation from Hitler to an immediate conference for, alarmed by a report on the situation in Italy, he was willing to come himself to visit Mussolini. The meeting took place on 19th July at Feltre in the Dolomites.

Hitler began with a two-hour discourse which most of the Italians present could not understand and which Mussolini endured spiritlessly. The Germans were harsh and uncompromising and the Italians

¹ This meant in effect maintenance over the beaches, and led in the end to many wonderful devices, for example artificial harbours, floating breakwaters, under-sea pipe lines, etc. Many of these devices embryonic or in development, were examined at the Quebec conference.

were told, in something like an ultimatum, that they must show their will to fight by undertaking bigger military commitments and by reinforcing their troops in southern Italy. If they did this by transferring divisions from the north, the Germans might reciprocate by sending two infantry divisions to Calabria. But this German help was contingent upon an overhaul by the Italians of their army and air organization. The Germans refused reinforcements in aircraft or armour. As regards the Balkans the Germans demanded an immediate change in the structure of command in Greece for which they had been pressing since early in July. This change would give them command over the Italian 11th Army, at present the highest Axis headquarters in Greece. Mussolini, who had been almost tongue-tied during the conference, seems, when alone with Hitler, to have pleaded his country's need for military help. His plea fell far short of what Ambrosio had insisted he should say to Hitler: that Italy was at the end of her tether. When Ambrosio learned that Mussolini had not stood up to Hitler he tendered his resignation in disgust, on 20th July. The Duce refused to accept it.

Meanwhile Grandi, as President of the Fascist Chamber, had written to the King and to Mussolini to convey the substance of a motion which he intended to put to the Grand Council. The motion demanded in effect: first, a thorough reform of national affairs, and that the Chamber, the Council of Ministers, and the Grand Council must be allowed to perform their functions. Second, separation of the conduct of the war from the conduct of political affairs, and the return of the affairs of war to the Crown's control. In brief, to unseat Mussolini.

It can be imagined that political and military happenings were much mixed up, and it will be clearer to keep them separate. The Grand Council, on 24th July, carried Grandi's motion by nineteen votes to seven. The King let it be known that he would give Mussolini an audience on the 25th and the Duce's enemies arranged to arrest him after it. At 5 p.m. on the 25th the King told Mussolini that he had decided to appoint Badoglio as head of a Government for 'administrative purposes and the continuation of the war'. He guaranteed the Duce's personal safety. Mussolini, half stupefied, stepped from the Villa Savoia into the arms of a party of Carabinieri who were waiting for him. He was secretly conveyed first to a barracks in Rome, on the 28th to the Pontine islands in the Gulf of Gaeta, to Maddalena off Corsica on 6th August, and to the mountain district named Gran Sasso on the 28th August. His captors eluded until 12th September the German hunt, clandestine and open, which Hitler raised to recover him. During the first hours of the Duce's captivity the King took command of the Armed Forces and appointed Badoglio Military Governor. He appointed as Ministers a group of

politicians already chosen, among whom Guariglia became Minister for Foreign Affairs. Ambrosio continued as Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces (*Comando Supremo*) and Roatta as Chief of the General Staff of the Army, while Admiral Raffaele de Courten became Minister and Chief of Staff of the Navy. General Renato Sandalli replaced General Rinso Fougier as Chief of the Air Staff, and also became Minister for Air. There was not much public disorder, and proclamation was made that Italy would carry on the war.

Before considering German reactions to the Italian crisis it is necessary to outline the important and very confused development in the organization of the German higher command in Italy and the Balkans which occurred in late July and in August.

In May Hitler had earmarked Rommel to take command in Italy whenever the Germans might act to seize military control in that country. This appointment-to-be was kept secret, even from Kesselring, Commander-in-Chief, South (*O.B. Süd*). Rommel therefore did no more in May, June, and for three weeks of July than occupy himself with forming an 'under-cover' Headquarters and making plans for an indefinite future situation in terms of an always changing Order of Battle. His Headquarters received operational status in July but was still concealed on the 26th.¹

In the Balkans, to go back to May, the highest German Headquarters was that of the Commander-in-Chief, (*O.B. Südost*, Colonel-General Löhr) which was known also as Army Group E. This H.Q. had subordinate territorial commands in southern Greece, Serbia, Croatia, and Crete. However, the Italian 11th Army was, in name at least, the highest Axis tactical headquarters in Greece, and the Germans were anxious to subject all Greece to their own actual and formal command. The Italians were unwilling to make the change but, as we have seen, were forced to accept it at the Feltre conference.

On the eve of this conference representations from Göring, and from von Mackensen the German ambassador to Italy, caused Hitler to give up an earlier notion of telling Mussolini that Rommel was the C.-in-C.-designate of the German forces in Italy. Instead, he told Rommel on 20th July that he was to take temporary command in Greece 'to be able to jump over into Italy later on'. His headquarters would be styled Army Group B and his command would include Greece, Crete, and the Aegean islands. Löhr would lose the style of *OB Südost*, and as C.-in-C. Army Group E would control

¹ The cover names of Rommel's Headquarters were first *Arbeitsstab Rommel* (Rommel's Planning Staff), and later *OKW Auffrisschungsstab München* (OKW-Refitting H.Q., Munich).

Serbia and Croatia. No date was fixed for the change, but on the 25th July Rommel arrived in Greece, in obedience to personal orders from Hitler on the 23rd, to survey the Greek situation and report. At 11.15 p.m. on the 25th *OKW* recalled him to Hitler at Rastenburg, and gave him the news of Mussolini's fall. He arrived on the 26th to learn, in brief, that he was to return to his Italian assignment at some future date, and that his under-cover H.Q. would emerge at Munich as Army Group B. The intention was that Rommel and Army Group B would take command of all German formations in northern Italy. *OB Süd*, Kesselring, would keep command of all German formations in southern Italy and those which might return from Sicily, but would conform to instructions issued to Rommel by *OKW* and also obey orders which Rommel might give to him. Almost at the same moment (24th) Kesselring was assuring Ambrosio, à propos of the abortive proposals for the command in Greece, that he could not serve under Rommel. There followed endless discussions at Hitler's headquarters about the actual structure of command and troop movements. German-Italian hedging, tactical considerations, and personal rivalries among the Germans inhibited decision by Hitler or anyone else. However, on 8th August *OKW* decided to form an improvised Army H.Q., subordinate to *OB Süd*, to command German formations in southern Italy. On 22nd August this army had its official birthday as *AOK 10* under General Heinrich von Vietinghoff.¹ Meanwhile Rommel sat impatiently in Munich, and in the Balkans a new command group headquarters, Army Group F, was ordered into being by Hitler on 26th July. Löhr retained his original style of *OB Südost* for another month, however, as it was not until 26th August that Field-Marshal Maximilian von Weichs formally assumed command of Army Group F and thus became *OB Südost*; at this point Löhr, with Army Group E, took over command in Greece and the Aegean islands.

(viii)

The news of Mussolini's fall released a flood of German military activity, but this during August took the form of orders and instructions rather than of dramatic military movements. The Germans had two objects in view: first, to ensure that all the functions performed by the Italians would continue even if Italy collapsed; secondly, to provide for the defence of southern Italy against a possible Allied attack.² Therefore it was necessary for German troops to be assembled

¹ von Vietinghoff had joined the German army in 1906. He was an 'armoured' General; commander of 46th Panzer Corps in the Balkans and Russia 1940-2; acting commander of 9th Army in Russia, June-December 1942; and then commander of *AOK 15* in France until his appointment to Italy.

² The remainder of this chapter deals only with the affairs of the Italian mainland.

and ready to take over in northern Italy—in fact for scheme ‘*Alarich*’ to be realized. Yet, militarily speaking, it was desirable to establish working relations with the Badoglio Government and even to support it, because it was preserving order in Italy and because the German High Command needed time to translate paper schemes into facts, and particularly to refashion its Italian commands. In early August Rommel, with Jodl’s support, proposed a structure which would give him command of two German armies in Italy viz. *AOK 10* in the south and the emergent Army Group B in the north, and empower him to give orders to Italian troops. Hitler hesitated till mid-month but on 16th August he decided, and on the 18th it was announced, that Rommel would command all troops in north Italy under the style of Army Group B. The boundaries of his command were on the south the line Pisa–Arezzo–Ancona; on the west the Franco–Italian frontier; and on the east the Italo–Croatian frontier of 1941. He was directly subordinate to *OKW*, but his relations with *Comando Supremo* and his powers of command over Italian troops were not settled. South of the line Pisa–Arezzo–Ancona *OB Süd* was to keep command of all German formations on the mainland and in the islands which had been subordinate to him before 18th August. Army Group B was responsible for co-ordinating its own L. of C. organization and that of *OB Süd* through a special *OKH* staff known as ‘*Qu-Italien*’.

Three Corps Headquarters were earmarked for Army Group B. Two of these were functioning in Italy by mid-August: namely 87th Corps from France, and 2nd S.S. Panzer Corps which had been transferred from Russia at the end of July as one of the first moves in operation ‘*Alarich*’. The third headquarters, 51st Mountain Corps, was still forming in Innsbruck. Eight German divisions had either crossed or were poised near the frontiers which it was Rommel’s task to guard and hold open at the main entrances. Such entrances were, for example, the Brenner, Mont Cenis, Ventimiglia, and Tarvisio/Laibach or Ljubljana. Six of the above eight formations were re-formed ‘ex-Stalingrad’ divisions from France or Denmark; one had been brought from Holland; and one, the S.S. Division Adolf Hitler, had come from Russia.

The Italians first heard of Rommel’s appointment during a conference at Bologna on 15th August, at which the principals were Jodl, Roatta, and Rommel himself. This was the second meeting of Axis personages during August for Ribbentrop, Guariglia, Ambrosio, and Keitel had met at Tarvisio on 6th August. On that occasion Ribbentrop declared that the purpose was to discuss the changed situation in Italy and its political and psychological consequences. There was scarcely a pretence of friendship. The Germans asked if the Italians had been having conversations with the British and Americans, and the Italians denied this. The Italians complained of

German troop movements into Italy without their agreement, and Keitel replied that it was important to form at once a mobile strategic reserve in view of the danger of invasion. There was talk of a meeting between Hitler and King Victor Emmanuel which came to nothing, and when the conference at Bologna assembled it was graced, or surrounded—on Hitler's orders—by so formidable a S.S. 'guard of honour' that the Italians, and von Rintelen also, protested at the insult.¹ At this meeting Rommel's new command was announced and some minor moves of Italian troops from France and the Balkans were agreed, but the German and Italian delegates went home distrusting each other more than ever.

The Germans kept up a show of consultation concerning troop movements since they needed time to overcome their logistic problems. Moreover the formal Axis alliance prevented too open an assumption of authority. The German deployment in Italy was also hampered by conflicting High Command views on future strategy. *OKW* did not, at this stage, contemplate a long-term defence south of the Apennines, and as a result Kesselring was kept much in the dark on matters of policy, and at the same time required to carry out instructions regarding the Italians of which he often disapproved.

He was particularly dismayed to learn on 26th July, that Hitler had charged General der Flieger Student with carrying out an operation to seize control of Rome, arrest all the leading Italian 'traitors', and rescue Mussolini. This wild scheme was also opposed by Rommel, Jodl and Dönitz, and although the search for the Duce went on, the plan was abandoned on 20th August, after 2nd Parachute Division had been flown into the Rome area from France and 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division had moved closer to the capital, from Tuscany. These measures were particularly obnoxious to the Italians, and Kesselring had a difficult time explaining them away. On 14th August, when Kesselring learned that Rommel was to represent Hitler at the Bologna conference, to which he himself was not bidden, he tendered his resignation. This was refused but for the time being *OB Süd* remained out of favour and Rommel was still earmarked for the supreme German command in Italy.

The Italians reacted to the steady infiltration of German troops with growing hostility, but although *Comando Supremo* disputed every move it could do little to prevent the German build-up, or to organize resistance. At the end of July Ambrosio issued secret verbal orders that Rome was to be defended against a German coup de main and assembled five divisions in its neighbourhood. After the

¹ General Enno von Rintelen had been German Military Attaché in Rome since 1938, and German General at Headquarters Italian Armed Forces since 1940. On 1st September 1943 he was replaced by General Rudolf Toussaint, Military Governor in the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia.

Tarvisio conference he moved two divisions to Spezia, to protect the warships there, and two more towards the Brenner. On 11th August the Italian Army General Staff confirmed earlier and secret verbal orders, that headquarters, supply bases, bridges and so forth were to be guarded against surprise attacks. But it directed that offensive action was to be taken only if German troops began acts of 'collective hostility', which were not to be confused with 'ordinary incidents'.

By the end of August the Axis was on its death-bed. *OKW*, expecting an early Italian collapse, issued a directive on the 30th which gave to its Mediterranean commands their orders for operation '*Achse*'. Execution of the orders was to await a further instruction. The most important task was to disarm quickly the Italian forces, except those willing to continue fighting under German command. *OB Süd* was to remove all German troops from Sardinia to Corsica; to occupy Elba, and to pull back *AOK 10* to the Rome area. In the north, Army Group B was to increase precautions at the mountain passes and to occupy Genoa, Spezia, Leghorn, Trieste, Fiume, and Pola. The more important Apennine crossings were to be secured and the Army Group was to advance its defences to the line Elba-Perugia-Civitanova in order to join up with the forces of *OB Süd*. *OB West*, Field-Marshal von Rundstedt, was to occupy the sector west of the Franco-Italian frontier at present occupied by Italian troops. In the Balkans, German troops were to occupy strong-points, including those in coastal sectors and the islands. *OB Südost* was to assume supreme command of the whole south-east theatre, including the Aegean.

The German Navy was to take over Italian war and merchant ships and the supply of transports for the evacuation of Sardinia. Vital traffic lanes were to be kept open and support given to the Army in occupying Maddalena and Elba and other islands. The defence of coastal sectors was to be taken over from the Italians.

The German Air Force was to take over the functions and ground organization of the Italian Air Force and A.A. installations, particularly A.A. guns acquired from Germany. All these measures were to be prepared in detail but were to await the executive order.

It is difficult and perhaps needless to present an exact German Order of Battle in Italy on a precise date because the situation was fluid and the territorial areas of the Corps and their composition were not permanent. However, by about the first week in September the main German forces on the Italian mainland were taking the shape shown in the table. It will be evident that Army Group B was better disposed for operations against the Italians than as a strategic reserve, and that *AOK 10* was placed to deal with an Allied enterprise against southern Italy.

ARMY GROUP B (ROMMEL). H.Q. AT CANOSSA

Corps	Division	Area	
51st Mountain (Feuerstein)	65th Infantry	South-west of Parma	Lent from 2 S.S. Panzer Corps Lent from 87th Corps
	305th Infantry	Carrara- Viareggio	
87th Corps (von Zangen)	76th Infantry	North and west of Genoa	
	94th Infantry		
2nd S.S. Panzer Corps (Hausser)	24th Panzer Adolf Hitler S.S.	Parma-Modena	
—	44th Infantry	Brenner Pass- Bolzano	Unallotted to a Corps
—	71st Infantry	Trieste-Gorizia	Unallotted to a Corps
—	3rd Panzer Grenadier	Rome	Controlled by Fliegerkorps XI
—	2nd Parachute	Rome	Controlled by Fliegerkorps XI

OB Süd (Kesselring). H.Q. at Frascati
A.O.K. 10 (von Vietinghoff)

14th Panzer (Hube)	15th Panzer Grenadier	Gaeta-Volturno River	
	Hermann Göring Panzer	Naples	
	16th Panzer	Gulf of Salerno	
76th Panzer (Herr)	29th Panzer Grenadier	Reggio- Catanzaro	3rd and 4th Regi- ments lent to 26th Panzer Division
	26th Panzer	Catanzaro- Castrovillari	
	1st Parachute	Altamura	

(ix)

The Italian Government and High Command continued in August their very secret approaches to the Allies. The next move, after the first feelers by the diplomatists d'Ajeta and Berio, occurred when Badoglio and Ambrosio, with the King's approval, sent General Castellano to Madrid. He arrived there on 15th August and explained to the British Ambassador that he was empowered to discuss armistice terms, to explain the Italian military situation, to learn the

Allies' intentions, and to say that Italy could not detach herself from Germany without Allied help. Castellano explained that his overt mission was to meet the Italian ambassador to Chile in Lisbon, and he asked that an Allied staff officer should meet him there. Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt, at Quebec, decided to admit this approach and open negotiations through the military channel. On their instructions Eisenhower sent to Lisbon his Chief of Staff, General Bedell Smith, and his senior Intelligence officer, Brigadier Strong. Bedell Smith took with him the final military terms of surrender, decided by the statesmen at Quebec, and the short terms for an armistice. On the night of 19th/20th August the emissaries met, but Castellano could speak only in terms of his instructions and Bedell Smith could only discuss unconditional surrender.¹ Castellano, covering his tracks, returned to Rome, carrying with him the terms, and leaving a promise to signal a reply. He reached Rome on the 27th.

Meanwhile the Allies waited, and the Italian Government became alarmed as they too awaited Castellano's arrival. They sent therefore another emissary to Madrid, General Zanussi and with him General Carton de Wiart, a British prisoner of war.² Zanussi arrived in Lisbon on the 28th, but his bona fides was suspect and his purpose far from clear. He was sent secretly to Algiers, proved his credentials to Eisenhower, and was sent to Sicily where too went Bedell Smith and Strong, and where too, on 31st August, appeared Castellano, post-haste from Rome.

The Italians disclosed military information, reported the strengthening of German forces in Italy, and pleaded helplessness. If an armistice was granted, they urged that the announcement should follow the landing of at least fifteen Allied divisions north of Rome. They most anxiously wished to learn the Allied plans to be sure that these would guarantee the security of the King and Government from German retribution. Bedell Smith refused information, and demanded acceptance or rejection of the terms by midnight 1st/2nd September. He said that an Allied landing would occur, somewhere, six hours after the Allies and Badoglio had broadcast, in turn, the announcement of an armistice. At about the same time an American parachute division would land near Rome.

¹ ' . . . It is difficult to make hard-cut military negotiations fit in with flexible diplomacy . . . ' Mr. Churchill, *Closing the Ring*. London, 1952, p. 95. ' . . . All these long and at times exasperating negotiations . . . ' General Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, London, 1948, p. 205.

² In April 1941 General Carton de Wiart was flying to Cairo, en route to Yugoslavia to form a British Military Mission. His aircraft crashed in the sea off Bardia and he, gaining the shore, was captured. The Italians sent him with Zanussi as a token of their good faith. Carton de Wiart had no part in the negotiations, and in Lisbon chivalrously offered to return to captivity. Zanussi as chivalrously released him. A. Carton de Wiart, *Happy Odyssey*, London, 1950, pp. 180-2, 227, 230.

Castellano returned to Rome with Zanussi and reported on 1st September to a conference headed by Badoglio, Ambrosio, and Guariglia. With one dissentient the conference agreed that to accept the Allies' terms was inevitable. The King approved, and a signal was sent that a 'known personage' would reach Sicily on 2nd September with an affirmative answer. Castellano arrived in Sicily and on the 3rd signed the short armistice terms on behalf of Badoglio's government at Alexander's H.Q. in Cassibile. He remained there to arrange details. It was agreed that Eisenhower and Badoglio would broadcast their announcements at 6 p.m. on 8th September.¹

Eisenhower meanwhile was arranging to switch 82nd U.S. Airborne Division from its role in the forthcoming assault to a landing near Rome, provided that the Italians undertook to seize and protect airfields for it. Brigadier-General Maxwell B. Taylor arrived secretly in Rome on 7th September to arrange details. The Italians were in the dark about Allied plans and when Taylor told them that the division would land within twenty-four hours they were flabbergasted. Taylor, realizing their impotence, was in time to cancel the airborne landings.

Early on the 8th Badoglio sent a message to Eisenhower pleading for a postponement of the joint announcement of the armistice. Eisenhower could not possibly agree to temporizing and refused. He broadcast at 6 p.m.; the B.B.C. announced the news; and at 7.45 p.m. Badoglio made his broadcast. At 8 p.m. Hitler ordered his forces into action, and the Italian government and armed forces became enveloped in total confusion.

During the night 8th/9th the Germans began to encircle Rome and Badoglio decided that the Royal family, the Government, and some senior officials must fly. They escaped in cars to Pescara on the Adriatic, and took passage in an Italian corvette to Brindisi, arriving on the 10th. There an anti-Fascist Italian government was set up in territory occupied by the Allies.

The greater part of the Italian armed forces greeted the announcement of the armistice as a signal that all wars were over for them, and the Germans had small trouble in disarming them. The Italian Fleet, however, passed into Allied hands in a manner that this chapter's concluding pages will tell. The Italian forces in and around Rome surrendered on the afternoon of 10th September, but the Germans preserved it as an open city in view of its value as a communications centre. In northern Italy, certain specified areas along the coasts and Alps were designated 'operational zones' under

¹ The Allies had crossed the Straits of Messina on 3rd September, and were to land at Salerno at 3.30 a.m. on 9th September. These operations are described in Chapters VII, VIII, and IX.

full German military control, and on 12th September *OKW* applied this term to all the territory under Kesselring's command.

And so, four years and four months after the signing of the Pact of Steel in Berlin the Axis was broken. Was it curiously fitting that a German S.S. unit on 12th September rescued Mussolini from his mountain prison on the Gran Sasso in the Apennines? He was taken to Germany to begin a shadow life, Hitler's puppet in very truth.

(x)

The Italian fleet was a great prize. The fourth clause in the short armistice terms required 'the immediate transfer of the Italian fleet and Italian aircraft to such points as may be designated by the Allied C.-in-C. . . .' At 3 a.m. on the 9th September the main body of the Italian fleet left Spezia and was joined by three cruisers from Genoa.¹ The ships in company then comprised the battleships *Roma* (Flag of Admiral Bergamini), *Vittorio Veneto* and *Italia* (formerly the *Littorio*), six cruisers and eight destroyers. They followed the route prescribed by the Allies, which lay down the west coast of Corsica and Sardinia but on reaching the Straits of Bonifacio, which separate the islands, course was altered, for reasons which cannot be definitely established, to the east, across the Gulf of Asinara. Shortly before 4 p.m. course was reversed to the west and almost immediately afterwards eleven German Do. 217s attacked the fleet, using P.C. 1400 F.X. radio-controlled bombs.² Believing the aircraft to be Allied, the Italians were slow to take counter-action. The flagship, *Roma*, was hit near the fore magazine, caught fire and blew up,

¹ C.-in-C. Mediterranean had instructed them to sail as quickly as possible after dark on the day the armistice was promulgated, i.e. 8th September.

² Twenty-eight Do. 217s were despatched in three formations from Istres (southern France) to attack the Italian Fleet with two comparatively new types of weapons. These were the Hs. 293 radio-controlled glider-bomb and the P.C. 1400 F.X. radio-controlled bomb.

The Hs. 293 bomb was constructed in the form of a miniature jet-propelled aircraft, with a normal thin-cased 1,100 lb. bomb as the nose and which probably gave the lightly built airframe its rigidity. Total all-up weight was probably about 1,800 lb. It was equipped with radio-control, and an electric lamp in the tail enabled the bomb-aimer to guide the bomb in its downward powered flight to the target. No bomb-sight was necessary, and the release point was normally 3-5 miles distance from the target at 2,000-6,000 feet according to the distance of release and this could be measured accurately by A.S.V. This type of bomb was intended for attacks on merchant shipping.

The P.C. 1,400 F.X. bomb was the normal 1,400 kilogram (about 3,000 lb.) armour-piercing, free-falling variety adapted for radio-control. This was achieved by attaching fins to the body at the centre of gravity, a tail extension in the form of a cone to house the radio-control mechanism and guiding tail lamp, and a tail unit comprising the moveable surfaces for control while falling. The radio-control mechanism was almost identical with that in the Hs. 293, but the method of attack differed considerably. This bomb was intended primarily for attacks against large warships, and considerable height was needed to achieve the necessary penetration against armour. The bomb-aimer had to use a normal bomb-sight in the initial stages of sighting and release, and thereafter relied on the bomb's tail lamp to help him keep the bomb directly over target until impact. When available, A.S.V. was used first for locating the target. It was this type of weapon which sank the *Roma*.

losing most of her ship's company, including Admiral Bergamini. The *Italia* was slightly damaged. A cruiser and some destroyers which picked up survivors subsequently proceeded to Minorca in the Balearics, since all ports in Sardinia and Corsica were by now known to be in German hands. The remainder of the fleet continued down the west coast of Sardinia and were met next morning and escorted by a British force, a detachment from Force H, under command of Rear-Admiral A. W. La T. Bissett, which included the battleships *Warspite* and *Valiant*. Malta was reached early on the 11th.

Other major Italian warships, including the battleships *Doria* and *Duilio*, which had been at Taranto, sailed on the 9th just as the British warships carrying the 1st Airborne Division were approaching the port. They arrived at Malta on the 10th and were followed a few days later by the remaining Italian battleship, *Cesare*, which had come from Pola. Other smaller Italian warships and a number of submarines had, meanwhile, been arriving at Allied ports.

On 11th September Sir Andrew Cunningham was able to signal the Admiralty: 'Be pleased to inform their Lordships that the Italian Battle Fleet now lies at anchor under the guns of the fortress of Malta.' It was a fitting end to this great sailor's long and immensely distinguished service in the Mediterranean. Yet he was quick to point out that what had been achieved by the Allied fleets and merchant navies in the Battle of the Mediterranean in just over three years of war had been accomplished in close concert with the sister Services. Five weeks later he would take up his duties as First Sea Lord in succession to Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound who was a dying man.

The terms of the Italian Armistice also included the immediate transfer of Italian aircraft to Allied bases to be decided by Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, and elaborate arrangements were made for their reception in Sicily, Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Cyprus. At the time of the Armistice it is probable that the total strength of the Italian Air Force, operational and non-operational, amounted to well over 3,000 aircraft. The Allies ultimately received 329 aircraft, mostly front-line, the German Air Force about 200 air transports and an equal number of training aircraft, and 225 were retained by the Fascist Republican Air Force which was formed by Fascist elements to continue the war against the Allies. Some of the remainder had been sabotaged by the Italians to prevent them falling into the hands of the Germans, who reduced the rest to scrap. The Germans recovered large hidden dumps of air force materials and spare parts, and finished products in great quantity, all of which

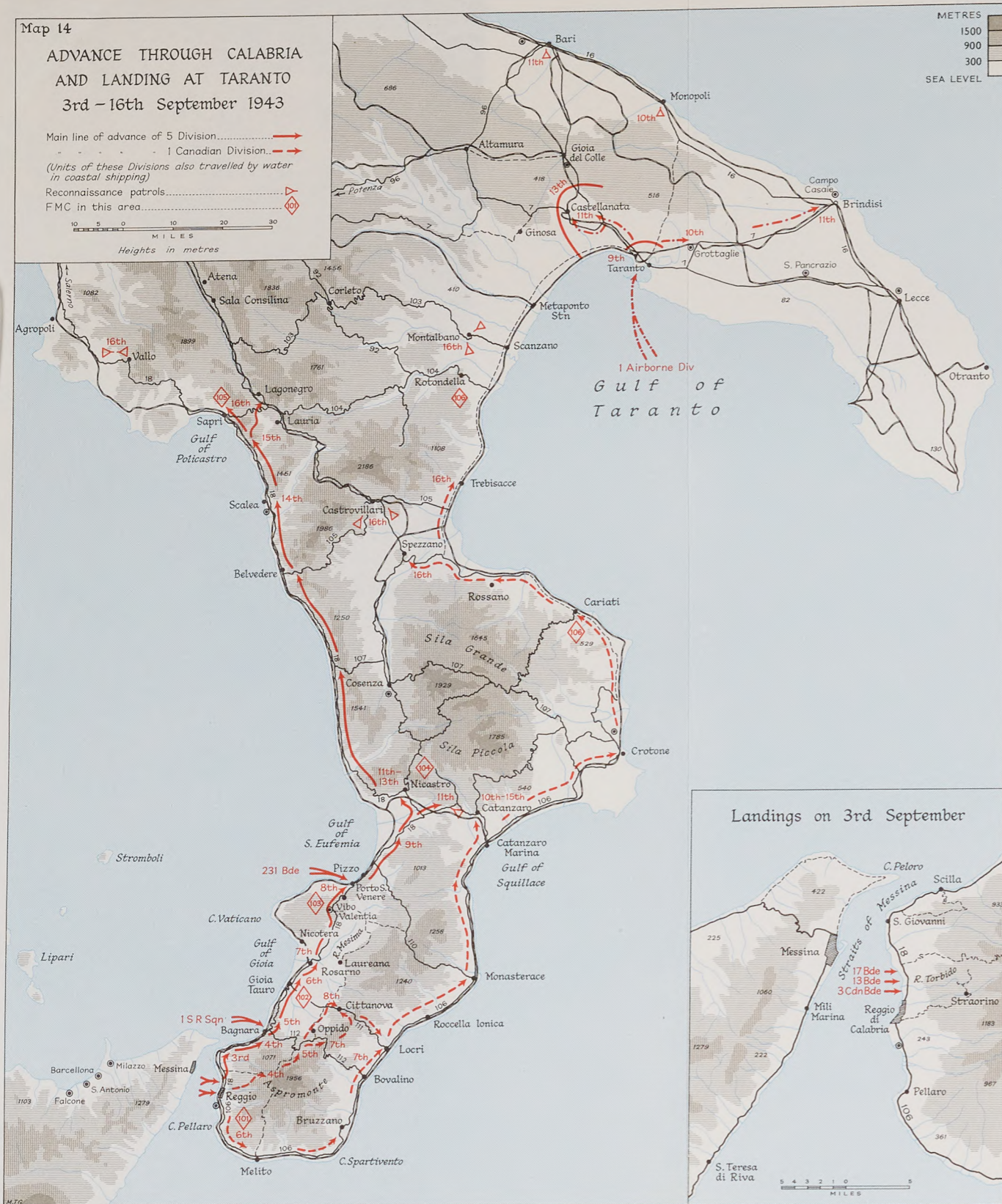
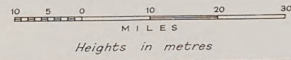
had been supplied by them to the Italians. In von Pohl's words 'This did nothing to sweeten the subsequent Italo-German relationship.'

Two further documents were signed during September to conclude British and Italian agreements. The first signed on the 23rd, was concerned with Italian battleships and some cruisers which were to be placed on a care and maintenance basis, and other cruisers and all destroyers and smaller craft which were to be kept in commission and gradually brought into service with the Allies. The second was the so-called 'long terms' entitled 'Instrument of Surrender of Italy'. General Eisenhower and Marshal Badoglio signed this document on 29th September.

Map 14

ADVANCE THROUGH CALABRIA AND LANDING AT TARANTO 3rd - 16th September 1943

Main line of advance of 5 Division.....→→→
 1 Canadian Division.....→→→
 (Units of these Divisions also travelled by water
 in coastal shipping)
 Reconnaissance patrols.....→→→
 FMC in this area.....→→→



Landings on 3rd September



CHAPTER VII
THE INVASION OF ITALY:
ALLIED PLANS:
OPERATIONS IN CALABRIA
(3rd to 16th September 1943)

(i)

BEFORE we take up the story of the landings of Allied forces in Italy in September, it is necessary to digress to the first fortnight of August to describe two very remarkable attacks, made by American air forces from bases in Africa, against Rumanian oilfields at Ploesti and a Messerschmitt aircraft assembly works at Wiener Neustadt in Austria. These operations stand outside the pattern of the Mediterranean war and are part of the strategic air offensive against Germany briefly referred to in Chapter VI. Nevertheless they claim their place here as an example of the value of Mediterranean air bases in applying strategic air power. In all bombing operations several factors determine whether a target is accessible, and three of them, especially pertinent in this instance, can be described somewhat as follows in non-technical language. First, is the target within effective range? This means does the bomb-load which can be delivered make the journey worthwhile? Second, the quality of the enemy's air defences, and third, the weather. The distance from air bases in the United Kingdom to Ploesti, some 1,300 miles, required a load of petrol, including a reasonable reserve, in the aircraft so heavy as to mean that virtually no worthwhile bomb-load could be carried to the target. Much of the very long flight would have been beyond fighter escort by day, and by night would have been exposed to considerable interference from enemy fighters. Moreover there was the always present uncertainty of the weather, certain only to have ruled out the flight more often than to have allowed it, especially in winter. On the other hand although Ploesti was 1,000 miles (via Corfu) from the air bases at Benghazi, various technical factors of favourable application in this particular case resulted in a bomb-load which was considered worthwhile. Moreover, there was not a massive system of fighter and A.A. defences, such as existed in the West, to penetrate, and the weather was less unpredictable and as a rule more favourable in the Mediterranean.

The raid on Wiener Neustadt shows how complex were the factors which affect the consideration of range. It was about 800 miles from the air bases in the United Kingdom to Wiener Neustadt whereas from the Benghazi area the distance was about 1,100 miles. But, to offset its greater length, the route from the south lay mainly over the sea, the enemy's air defences on the approach to target over land were fairly weak, surprise was obtainable, and the weather much more favourable than in the West.

It is not then surprising that Tedder pressed so hard to secure airfields in Italy because they would afford still more advantages of the type which we have been discussing.

The Americans had begun in January 1942 to study whether it was practicable to attack Ploesti, and thirteen Liberators of Halverson Detachment made a fruitless attack in June of that year. Since then the American heavy bombers had been fully occupied in Mediterranean operations, but when the end of the campaign in Africa became imminent Ploesti came once again to the fore, particularly because oil supplies were one of the main targets of the Combined Bomber Offensive from the United Kingdom.

The new raid on Ploesti was made by Liberators of the U.S. Ninth Air force of M.E.A.C. and the formations engaged were that Air Force's 98th and 376th Heavy Bombardment Groups, the 389th (destined for the United Kingdom though for a time on loan to M.E.A.C.), and the 44th and 93rd lent from the U.S. Eighth Air Force in the United Kingdom. Brigadier-General Uzal G. Ent commanded the force. Very thorough training preceded the operation, for example in close formation flying in successive waves of aircraft, and in practice attacks upon a replica of the oil refinery complex laid out, in plan, on the desert. The aim was to destroy selected key installations in each of nine large refineries, and therefore more than forty distilling units, cracking plants and boiler houses were grouped into seven general targets.¹ The raid was to be at low level.

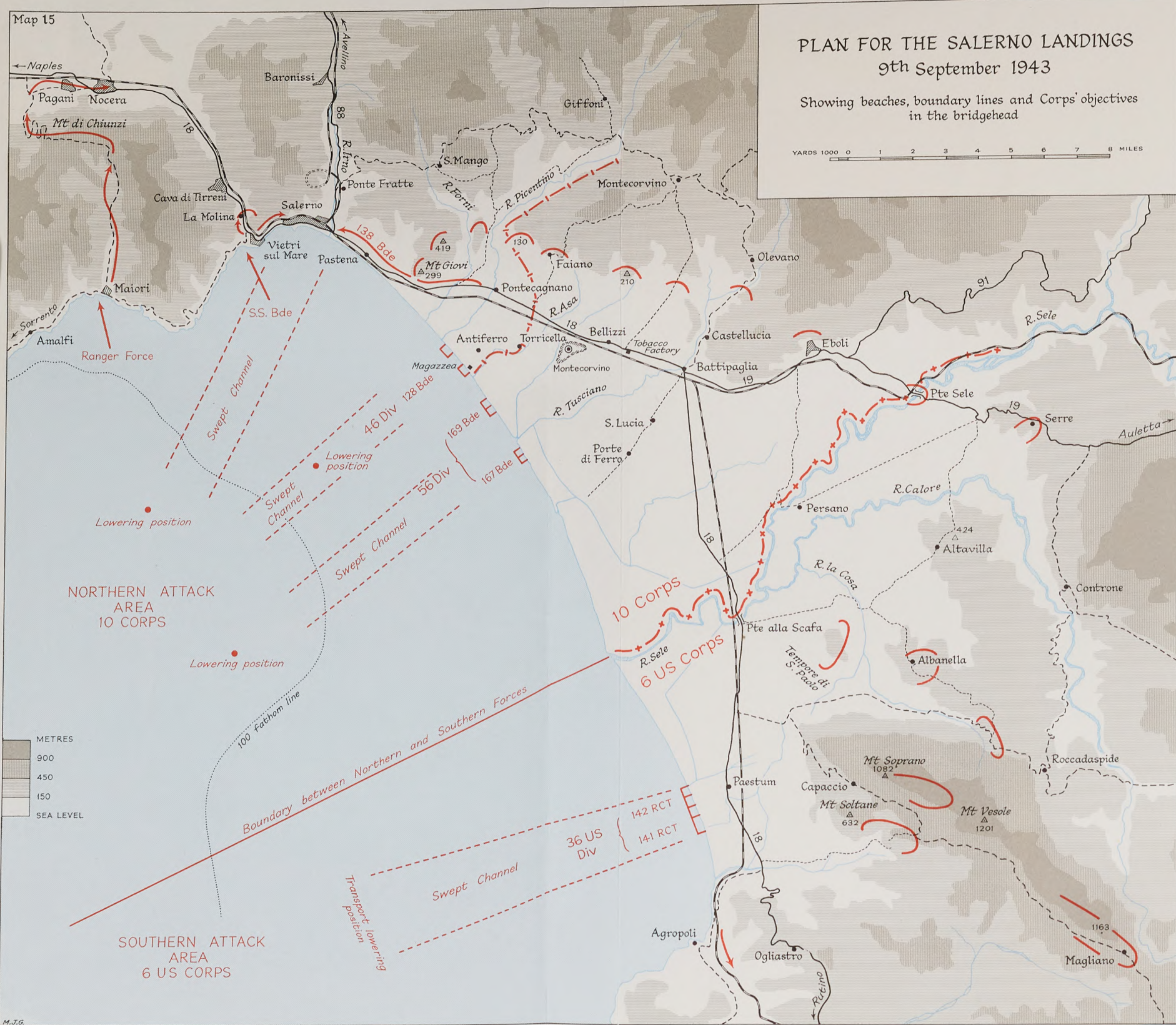
On 1st August, between 4 and 4.30 a.m., the aircraft took off from the neighbourhood of Benghazi. Each aircraft had, with extra tanks, fuel for a round trip of 2,000 miles or so, estimated to occupy between twelve and thirteen hours. The force carried a total bomb-

¹ <i>Situation of Target</i>	<i>No. of Targets</i>	<i>Groups assigned to Targets</i>
Ploesti	Five	93rd—37 aircraft 98th—46 „ 376th—28 „
Ploesti, and Braza about 4 miles from Ploesti	One	44th—37 „
Campina, about 15 miles from Ploesti	One	389th—29 „
		<u>177 aircraft</u>

PLAN FOR THE SALERNO LANDINGS 9th September 1943

Showing beaches, boundary lines and Corps' objectives in the bridgehead

YARDS 1000 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 MILES



load of 280 tons, and 1,725 aircrew. Squadron Leader G. C. Barwell, D.F.C., represented the Royal Air Force in this all American exploit. The route lay to Corfu, then across Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria, and then on to Ploesti.

As the aircraft flew across Bulgaria huge cumulus clouds broke up the force and some Groups straggled. When 65 miles short of Ploesti the 389th Group split off and set course for Campina, while the remainder flew on towards Ploesti and Braza. A navigational error caused the leading Groups, 376th and 93rd, of this second portion to find themselves over Bucharest, and their appearance put the whole hostile air defence on the alert, and made inevitable a fierce reception from the very powerful A.A. defences around Ploesti.

Thus it was that when the aircraft reached their targets they had to fly into a tornado composed of missiles, smoke, flames shooting up to 800 feet, and the explosions of bombs and stricken targets, as well as among tall factory chimneys and the cables of barrage-balloons. The Americans drove home their attacks with splendid courage and resolution, but many of the Liberators fell to earth. The 93rd Group for example lost eleven out of the thirty-seven aircraft when going in at between 100 and 300 feet, and six of the 376th came out from the flames black with soot. The bombing was relentless and accurate, although some targets received more attention than had been planned, and others less. The losses were grievous, and those in the area of attack were increased owing to attacks by fighters which persisted until the Liberators were well out over the Adriatic on the journey home. 54 aircraft were lost, five damaged beyond repair, and 532 pilots and aircrew were killed, captured, missing, or interned. Stricken aircraft landed in places as scattered as Turkey, Cyprus, Malta and Sicily. Probably six German fighters were shot down, while Rumanian and Italian losses are unknown. About 75 serviceable German and Rumanian single- and twin-engine fighters were available in Rumania; Italian fighters were stationed in Albania; and Italian and German in Greece.

It is believed that between 127 and 155 Liberators released their bomb-loads on target. *OKH* estimated on 8th August that the processing of crude oil in the refineries would be halved. In fact the damage was quickly repaired or made good but to do this consumed all spare or surplus plant. Here lay the origin of the fall in output, catastrophic because Ploesti supplied a large part of German requirements, which followed further, though less damaging, Allied raids in 1944.

The same Liberator Groups which attacked Ploesti made the raid on the Messerschmitt works at Wiener Neustadt, and 93 aircraft set out from the area of Benghazi on 13th August. Heavy, dense cloud on the way reduced the number which reached the target to



65. These gained complete surprise and bombed from 17,500–22,500 feet, through $\frac{4}{16}$ th thin cloud, dropping 112 tons of bombs. Later photographic reconnaissance showed substantial damage to hangars, assembly-plant, machine-shops, and aircraft on the ground. A few Me. 109 fighters engaged the Liberators over target, and a few others intervened off the heel of Italy during the return flight. Two Liberators were lost.

(ii)

See Maps 14 and 15

In setting out to describe the actual operations of the invasion of Italy it is useful to mark off a first phase. This phase can be taken to begin with the landings of the 8th Army's 13th Corps in Calabria, across the straits of Messina, on 2nd/3rd September, and the landings of 5th U.S. Army's 6th U.S. and 10th British Corps at Salerno. The phase ends when, on 16th September, Allied troops had reached a line from Salerno to Bari.

These two sets of operations, one in Calabria and the other in the Salerno bridgehead, were not controlled by a master plan but were nevertheless connected. For Salerno had, almost from its genesis, enjoyed the first call on Mediterranean resources and this fact affected the mounting of the operations in Calabria. Moreover, the stress of events at Salerno caused Alexander to demand of Montgomery an effort to press his operations in Calabria further and faster than had been planned. The two sets of operations were further connected in their air aspect, because they could be treated from an airman's point of view as one, and were therefore covered by a single broad air plan, although this of course had detailed provisions which applied separately to each operation. The links between the two sets of operations suggest that it is convenient to give broadly first the plans for both, and then to describe the outcome in separate chapters.

As regards 8th Army, Eisenhower has written '... The original objective ... had been the Castrovillari isthmus for which the facilities for maintenance in the Toe had been considered sufficient.' But on 19th August Montgomery complained to Alexander '... I have been given no clear object for the operation but assume the object to be to secure the Straits for the Navy and to act as a diversion for Avalanche ...'¹ Alexander replied: 'Your task is to secure a bridgehead on the toe of Italy to enable our Naval forces to operate

¹ 'Avalanche' was the code-name for the landings at Salerno, and 'Baytown' was that for the landings across the Straits of Messina.

through the Straits of Messina.¹ In the event of the enemy withdrawing from the "Toe" you will follow him up with such force as you can make available, bearing in mind that the greater the extent to which you can engage enemy forces in the southern toe of Italy the more assistance you will be giving to Avalanche . . .'

On 22nd August Montgomery understood his directive thus for the minutes of a conference, over which he presided, record:

'3. The limit of operations at present envisaged is the capture of the TOE as far as the NECK at Catanzaro.²

... ..
... ..

5. One of the main objects of Baytown is to withdraw enemy troops from Avalanche area. To do this it is necessary for Eighth Army to "crack about" . . .'

Montgomery had already chosen 13th Corps (Lieut.-General M. C. Dempsey) for this task, which had been in prospect for some time, and had withdrawn that H.Q. from operations in Sicily on 13th August, and the formations earmarked for it—1st Canadian Division and 5th Division—respectively on 6th and 12th August.³ The Corps was to assault across the Straits of Messina on the night 2nd/3rd September; to capture Reggio, S. Giovanni, and the airfield south of Reggio; and to advance north and east as rapidly as possible.

To cross the Straits of Messina was in a sense a natural extension of the campaign in Sicily.⁴ In contrast, complex considerations lay behind the choice of the assault beaches in the Gulf of Salerno. Minefields, net barrages, coast defence guns and the opposition to be expected from the Germans made a direct attack into the Bay of Naples itself impracticable. The choice lay between landing north or south of it. To the north the plain of Campania, one of the few plains on the west coast of Italy not dominated by nearby mountains, offered many advantages to rapid deployment and the full use of armour. A quick success there would threaten all German formations to the south. But to this northern assault area there were two serious objections; the beaches themselves were unsuitable for

¹ To have a mine-free route through the Straits of Messina would, it was believed, reduce by some days the turn-round of shipping which might be plying between Middle East Ports such as Tripoli and the west coast of Italy. It was very important to reduce turn-rounds, particularly of landing-craft engaged in the service of supply, in order to use scarce shipping most productively.

² The Catanzaro neck is the isthmus between the gulfs of S. Eufemia and Squillace. Catanzaro is about 80 miles from Reggio.

³ An outline order of Battle of 13th Corps is at p. 234.

⁴ ' . . . We are prepared to jump a bridgehead on to the mainland at the first opportunity.' Alexander to Churchill, 22nd July. This chapter will show that the commander of the 8th Army considered, wrongly as it turned out, that elaborate preparations for the 'jump' were necessary.

landings and in parts were obstructed by off-shore sandbars, and it was well beyond effective fighter cover.

At Salerno the actual beaches were the best for an assault on the whole west coast. A twenty-mile stretch of sand with good approaches and gradients between one in forty and one in eighty, was highly suitable for landing-craft. Most of the coast defences were no more than fieldworks. The Montecorvino airfield, large enough to hold four fighter squadrons, lay only three miles from the shore. Conditions for an assault were therefore very favourable. Inland however the plain is narrowed by mountains which offer a defender excellent observation and fire positions, or a whole strong defensive position to which to withdraw if necessary. Moreover, a rocky spur runs down into the Sorrento peninsula, and separates the Bay of Salerno from the Bay of Naples. This spur is pierced only by two narrow gorges.

The choice of the landing place was much argued. The decisive factor was that Salerno was the furthest north that the Allies could strike without losing shore-based fighter cover.

The task of the 5th U.S. Army was 'to seize the port of Naples and to secure the airfields in the Naples area with a view to preparing a firm base for further operations'.¹

The 6th U.S. Corps was to land at the southern limits of the Sele River plain, and to advance and occupy high ground on the line Ponte Sele—Altavilla—Albanella—Roccadaspide—Mt. Vesole—Magliano, and key points in the mountain arc as far as Agropoli. 10th British Corps was to land in the northern part of the Sele plain about nine miles northward of the American left flank. Its first main objectives were the airfield at Montecorvino, the road and rail junction at Battipaglia and a bridge over the Sele River at Ponte Sele. 9th September was to be the day of landings, and 3.30 a.m. the hour.

Even an outline of the air plan is lengthy because the air forces were large and their tasks intricate. The principal considerations which led Sir Arthur Tedder, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Allied air forces, to look on the landings in Calabria and at

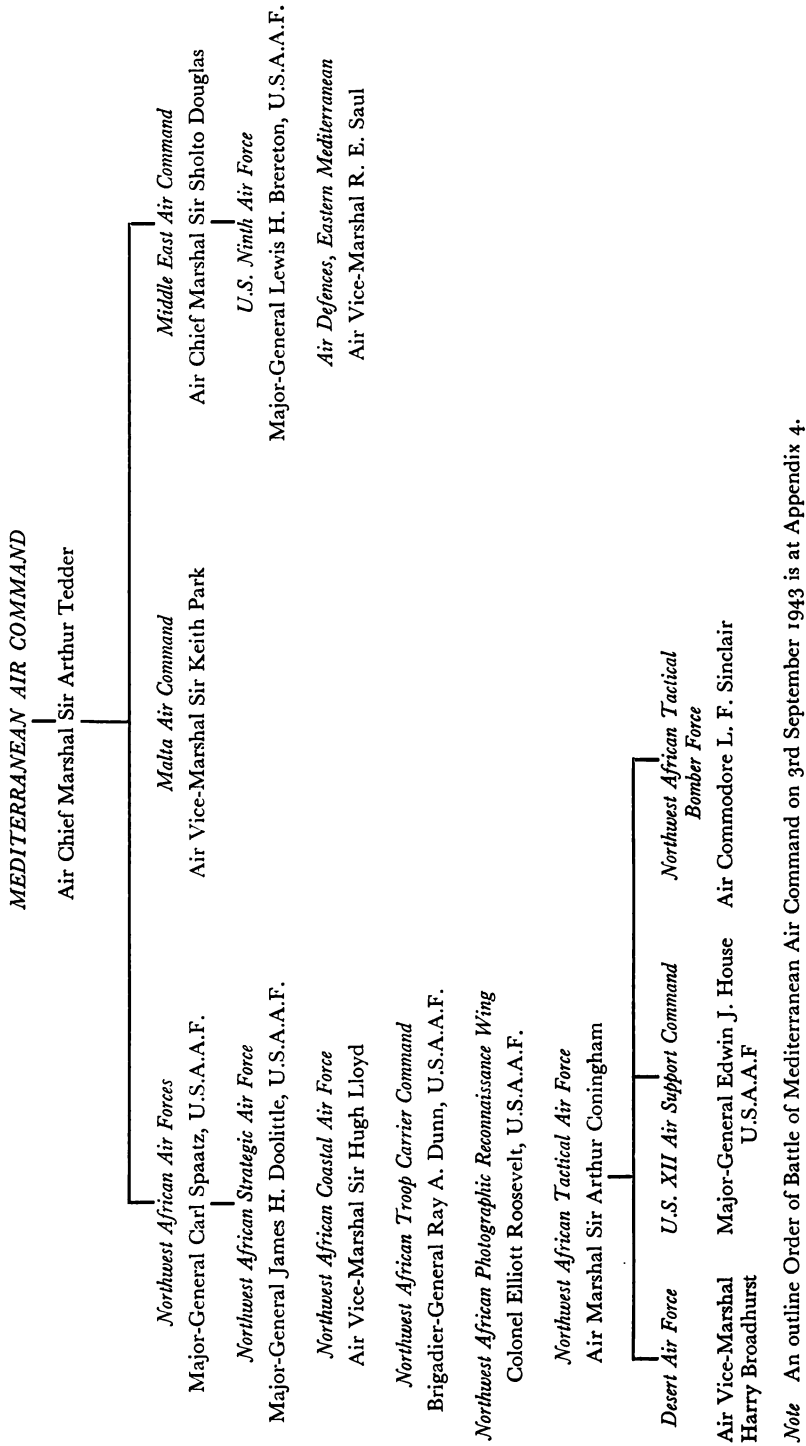
¹ The 5th U.S. Army had begun its existence at Oujda in French Morocco in December 1942–January 1943. Its main role was to protect the lines of communication of the Allied forces in French North Africa from possible attack by Axis forces through Spanish Morocco or from major internal disturbances in the Allied zone of operations. Its composition varied. Its commander, Lieut.-General Mark W. Clark, had accompanied General Eisenhower to England in June 1942, where he commanded 2nd U.S. Corps. He was appointed Deputy Commander in Chief, Allied Forces (i.e. the 'Torch' Expedition) in August 1942, an appointment which he held during the operations in French North Africa, as well as the command of 5th U.S. Army. The assault at Salerno marked General Clark's debut in battle in World II. An outline Order of Battle of 6th U.S. Corps and 10th British Corps is given on p. 255.

5th Army is the short title of 5th U.S. Army in this volume.

Salerno as one were the following. Reggio and Salerno were no more than about 180 crow-flight miles apart, and the landings were close to one another in time. Therefore preparatory air operations against the enemy's main airfields and L. of C. in Central and Southern Italy could clearly serve both, and the flexibility in operation which had been gained since the tactical air forces became established in Sicily could be applied to both. Moreover, from the point of view of fighter protection, once the Salerno expedition was launched, Sicily and south-eastern Italy from Calabria to Salerno, and the seas to west and south (through which passed the convoy routes) would constitute a single, indivisible area. There were, however, broad qualifying factors. The landings in Calabria were within easy reach of the Allied fighter bases in Sicily, and the air opposition was expected to be weak. Hence the demand upon Tedder for air support for these landings was likely to be small. Salerno on the other hand was far from the air bases in Sicily and near those of the enemy, and it was believed that the enemy's land forces would oppose the landings strongly. It was evident that Salerno would require all the fighter protection and all the direct and indirect air support that Mediterranean Air Command could muster. In consequence the general air planning took more account of the needs of Salerno, than of the needs of the Calabrian operations which it aimed to meet with an effort which was unlikely to interfere with plans for Salerno, or which could be applied before that operation took place. Mediterranean Air Command, in planning for Salerno, took the Calabrian operations in its stride.

The several air forces under Tedder's command and their close interaction in the forthcoming operations invites attention to the diagram of Mediterranean Air Command on page 226.¹ It will be useful too at this point to compare broadly the Allied and Axis air strengths. Mediterranean Air Command estimated that it would have 3,280 operational aircraft and that 75% would be serviceable; in other words that 2,460 aircraft would be available. This figure includes some U.S. Liberator Groups loaned from the United Kingdom, 305 serviceable troop-carrier aircraft, and 400 gliders. The estimate was made with an eye to the needs of Salerno, and therefore does not include a nucleus of British and American Kittyhawk fighters and fighter-bombers which was firmly committed to the Calabrian landing. Nor does it include coastal and photographic reconnaissance aircraft and Seafires of the Fleet Air Arm. The estimate of the strength of the Axis air forces in Italy and Sardinia was at first oddly high, but by early September it was reduced to 260

¹ An Order of Battle, in terms of operational control, of Northwest African Tactical Air Force on 9th September is at Table I at the end of this chapter, and an outline Order of Battle of the Axis air forces is at Table II in the same place.



fighters and fighter-bombers and 220 bombers, of which half might be serviceable. These figures were too low for the Germans in fact had 324 aircraft (including 155 fighters and 68 fighter-bombers) south of Rome, and 104 north of it. There were 64 German aircraft in Sardinia and 120 in southern France.¹

For the support of the Calabrian landings Tedder delegated control of all tactical air forces to Sir Arthur Coningham, commanding Northwest African Tactical Air Force. Under Coningham, Air Vice-Marshal Broadhurst (Desert Air Force, a part of N.A.T.A.F.) controlled the air support for 8th Army. The plan was that Broadhurst should have in addition to his own Desert Air Force, until the eve of Salerno, the greater part of Northwest African Tactical Bomber Force (also a part of N.A.T.A.F.) under Air Commodore Sinclair. But Sinclair was to retain a general responsibility for directing whatever tactical bomber operations were required of his force.

For the support of the Salerno landings it was again Coningham who controlled all tactical air forces. He controlled in addition, through Tedder's Command Post, whatever portion of the strategic air effort might be diverted from N.A.A.F. and M.E.A.C. to support the operations at Salerno.² Under Coningham, Major-General House, U.S.A.A.F. (U.S. XII A.S.C. which was part of N.A.T.A.F.) was responsible for all fighter and fighter-bomber operations in support of the Salerno landings. And when the operations were launched, there came also to House's operational control a part of Broadhurst's Desert Air Force, and Sinclair's Northwest African Tactical Bomber Force (less one R.A.F. Wing and one U.S. Group). As before Sinclair retained a general responsibility for tactical bomber operations as a whole. Northwest African Coastal Air Force (Air Vice-Marshal Sir Hugh Lloyd) and Malta Air Command (Air Vice-Marshal Sir Keith Park) were jointly responsible for protecting sea convoys from all forms of attack, and in particular strike forces stood ready in North West Africa and Malta to deal with attacks by surface warships.

The dispositions of the German air force were obviously highly relevant to Allied air plans. Field-Marshal von Richthofen (*Luftflotte 2*) had been, since the loss of Sicily, withdrawing his ground and technical installations to northern Italy. In conformity with this 'stand-back' policy, General Buelowius (*Fliegerkorps II*) based well back most of the aircraft intended for the defence of the 'Toe', and treated the airfields there as advanced landing grounds. In consequence the threat from fighters to the landings in Calabria did not

¹ The figures exclude German coastal and air transport aircraft. The Italian air force faded out of the picture as the negotiations for an armistice advanced.

² Tedder's Air Command Post was at La Marsa in Tunisia.

cause the Allied air commanders much anxiety. It was another story at Salerno. There were eight principal Axis airfields within 110 miles of Salerno, and three just beyond this distance.¹ But from the Allied air bases in Sicily to Salerno the distances were roughly: Messina 175 miles, Palermo 190 miles, Gerbini 215 miles. The ranges at which Allied fighters would have to operate would produce two main effects: the wiping-out, almost, of the nearly overwhelming numerical superiority in day fighters; and a strain on the pilots which would cause a quick decline in effort.² These were great disadvantages. Main ways of overcoming them were: to deny the enemy the use of the eight principal airfields within 110 miles of Salerno and of those just beyond this distance; to create adequate airfield space in northern Sicily, especially in the area Milazzo–Messina; and to capture early the airfield at Montecorvino and to make landing grounds in the bridgehead.

The chief tasks of the air forces, in general terms and having regard both to the operations in Calabria and at Salerno, were as follows. To neutralize the enemy's air forces by attacking them on their airfields and in the air. To give air protection to the assault convoys, the assaults, and the operations to follow. To give direct support to the land forces. To prevent or delay the movement of enemy forces into the areas of assault by attacking the communications leading to them.

These general tasks before and during the landings in Calabria can be further broken down into the table presented below. Some explanations must be added to this table. The attacks by the strategic bombers of N.A.S.A.F. and U.S. Ninth Air Force including the R.A.F. Liberators and Halifaxes, upon the enemy's airfields were the first task of these air forces throughout. On D-Day of the landing in Calabria the entire weight of the tactical bombers and fighter-bombers was thrown into direct support. Thereafter the effort given to direct support was scaled down, and the effort thus saved could be applied to other tasks, principally to help the landings at Salerno.

¹ Airfields within 110 miles of Salerno: Capodichino, Pomigliano (both Naples), Capua Aquino, Grazzanise, Montecorvino, Foggia, Scalea. Airfields just over 110 miles from Salerno: Frosinone, Bari, Gioia del Colle. See Maps 14 and 16.

² These generalizations are founded on the practical effects of many factors. Among these fuel consumption was a principal. Consumption had to be calculated for:

- i Take-off
- ii Climb and rendezvous
- iii Journey out
- iv Patrol, including ten minutes of combat
- v Journey home
- vi Safety reserve.

Under every sort of cautionary qualification in our statements the maximum duration of a patrol to cover beaches in the Salerno area was likely to be:

- a. Spitfire VB fitted with auxiliary tank containing 80 gallons: 25 minutes.
- b. P.38 fitted with auxiliary tank containing 150 gallons: 60 minutes.

The shortness of the possible time on patrol partly explains the drain on aircraft, and the bare sufficiency of fuel was one of the causes of the strain on the pilot.

The fighters are not mentioned in the table. These were the fighters of the Desert Air Force. They were to defend the vital north-eastern prong of Sicily (the operation's launching platform) and to cover the landings. Later these fighters would cover the near by waters through which the convoys bound for Salerno would pass. Northwest African Coastal Air Force was responsible for covering the remainder of Sicily. Later, as 8th Army and Desert Air Force advanced into Italy, Coastal Air Force was to extend its cover eastwards to within 50 miles of the front line. To control air support during the advance through Calabria No. 2/5 A.A.S.C. was to provide tentacles for 13th Corps formations and establish its headquarters at Lentini until crossing over into Italy. No. 40 Squadron S.A.A.F. was to meet the tactical reconnaissance requirements.

The number of serviceable heavy, medium, and light bombers available in Mediterranean Air Command was calculated at about 1,000 aircraft. For the Salerno period and thereafter a reorganization was made by transferring from M.E.A.C. most of the aircraft of U.S. Ninth Air Force to N.A.A.F., which had been made responsible through N.A.S.A.F. for directing strategic bomber operations throughout Mediterranean Air Command.¹ M.E.A.C. retained the few Halifaxes and R.A.F. Liberators in the Middle East which were nevertheless under the operational control of N.A.S.A.F. From Salerno's D-Day the link between the Mitchells of N.A.T.B.F. and the Mitchells and Marauders of N.A.S.A.F., broken momentarily only on D-Day of Baytown (see the fourth and fifth columns of the table on next page), was now broken for some time to come. This was because N.A.T.B.F.'s operations by day became limited by the fighter escorts which could be available, fighter cover having absolute priority. N.A.T.B.F. was forced to concentrate upon night bombing, and an extra load was thrown upon N.A.S.A.F. For it had to provide the main bombing effort by day to seal off the Salerno battle-area as well as keeping up its attacks upon the enemy's air force and the lines of communication. It is not surprising that Tedder continued to press for reinforcements of Liberators and the retention of borrowed Wellingtons. Apart from the above modification in the bombers' operations the general tasks of the air forces in the Salerno battles were a continuation of those discussed on pages 224-28. The more detailed tasks belong to the next chapter.

The invasion of Italy, like the invasion of Sicily, entailed an immense amount of planning. There were peculiar difficulties to overcome. Until 16th August three, if not four, operations were being

¹ What occurred was that the medium bombers and fighters were formally transferred to the control of N.A.A.F. because these formations in actuality had been attached to the Desert Air Force for some time. When, later, two heavy bombardment groups were transferred to N.A.A.F., 9th U.S. Air Force discontinued operations. It became active again in October 1943 in the United Kingdom, in preparing for Overlord.

Period	Task in Outline	General Responsibility of	Particular Responsibility of	Type of Aircraft	General Geographical Area
Before D-Day of Calabrian landings (Baytown)	Attacks on occupied enemy airfields and rail and road targets in Central and Southern Italy	Northwest African Air Forces Malta Air Command (limited degree)	Northwest African Strategic and Tactical Bomber Forces	Heavy and Medium bombers Fighter-bombers	Targets north of a line Sapri-Trebisacce
	Attacks on occupied enemy airfields and rail and road targets in Southern Italy	Middle East Air Command Northwest African Tactical Air Force	U.S. Ninth Air Force { Northwest African Tactical Bomber Force U.S. XII A.S.C. Desert Air Force	Heavy Bombers Light bombers Fighter-bombers Fighter-bombers	Targets in the 'Heel' of Italy Targets in the 'Instep' and 'Toe' of Italy
D-3 to D-Day (Baytown)	Progressive increase in attacks on targets directly related to landings in Reggio area, at expense of attacks on rail and road targets and airfields	Northwest African Tactical Air Force	{ Northwest African Tactical Bomber Force U.S. XII A.S.C. Desert Air Force	Light bombers Fighter-bombers Fighter-bombers	Targets mainly in the 'Toe' of Italy
D-Day (Baytown)	Direct support of Assault	Northwest African Tactical Air Force	{ Northwest African Tactical Bomber Force U.S. XII A.S.C. Desert Air Force	Medium and Light bombers Fighter-bombers Fighter-bombers	Targets in the Reggio Area

From D+1 to D+3: Direct support to receive 40% of air effort; remainder to be expended on rail, road and airfield targets.
 From D+4 to D+8: Direct support = 20%; remainder as required elsewhere.
 From D+9: Direct support = 10%; remainder as required elsewhere.

planned simultaneously.¹ Planning involved A.F.H.Q., M.A.C., Naval H.Q., H.Q. 15th Army Group, 5th U.S. and 8th Armies, and several lower naval, military, and air headquarters, to say nothing of five naval and military commanders of Task Forces. Several senior officers were preoccupied with the campaign in Sicily, and in general current duties dispersed senior officers widely. At one point Eisenhower was at Algiers, Cunningham in Malta, Alexander and Tedder in Tunis, Clark in Morocco, and Montgomery in Sicily. The expeditions had to be mounted in every usable port on the North African coast from Oran to Alexandria, in Sicily and in Malta. Time pressed.

(iii)

Planning the invasion of Italy brought at once to the fore the problems created by the scarcity of landing-craft. There were simply not enough craft to meet at the same time all the demands for them. Such were: for the major assault landings; for the minor landings which accompanied or exploited them; for the build-up of men, vehicles, and stores for the army and air forces; and for logistic tasks perhaps not directly connected with particular operations but which were very important in keeping the whole military machine running. The allotment of craft depended upon the reconciliation of so many factors that a statement that a force sailed in so many craft is inadequate. So much preliminary work went to obtaining the result. The problem and the circumstances produced a tangle of bids and counterbids for craft; allotments made, and then perhaps countermanded, altered, or deferred; protest and argument. However good the will, friction and misunderstandings occurred. It is, perhaps fortunately, impossible to recover the detail of all this from the records. But an impression of the state of affairs before Baytown, which was typical, can be given.

There were at least three landings in prospect until 16th August: at Salerno; in the Gulf of Gioia; and across the Straits of Messina. Even when Gioia was dropped, there were not sufficient craft to mount the two which remained as self-contained operations. Some craft from the one had to be used in the other. This number was small but it was crucial because to carry a given force across water to a given time-table depends upon a calculable number of seaworthy craft being available. Improvised craft had not fared well in the raid on Tobruk in September 1942.² The time-factor before Baytown was not very helpful because it was not elastic. The moon was 'right' for a landing at Salerno on 8th/9th September and would not again

¹ Landings at: Crotone (abandoned), Gulf of Gioia (abandoned), Calabria, Salerno.

² See Volume IV, p. 22.

be 'right' until 21st September. But an easement which might have been gained in distributing craft between Salerno and Baytown by postponing Salerno until the 21st could not be obtained, because it was believed that by that date the Germans would have reinforced the area of Naples: a tactical stop-card. The time-factor appeared in yet another shape when craft were being earmarked for operations. 25 days was believed to be the time required to overhaul, refit, and load for a fresh service a craft withdrawn from some other service. In August many craft were employed on other services, mainly logistic, and to withdraw them entailed much discussion and juggling. Most were in fact withdrawn by 19th August. But by that time the dead-lines for Salerno and Baytown respectively were 13 and 12 days ahead: too close a margin to be acceptable. The dead-line for Baytown 31st August, had to be postponed. But it could be postponed no longer than 2nd/3rd September, whatever the consequences, if the dead-line for Salerno, assumed to be tactically unalterable, was to be met.

And so the tactical factor comes in again and produces problems. The army commanders framed the tactical plans which they believed to offer the best chances of success. To carry out these plans they required a carefully estimated number of troops in the assault, others arriving at given rates to maintain impetus, and a build-up of supporting arms, vehicles, and stores.¹ The supporting air forces had their claims for build-up. Few commanders could contemplate with equanimity trimming or altering their plans. And so demands for craft became seemingly irreducible, and gave rise to most complicated questions of numbers by types, serviceability, and turn-rounds.

It was a result of the turning of several of these apparently vicious circles that the first allotment of craft for Baytown was sufficient only for a first lift of four battalions and a slow build-up. Montgomery protested vehemently and demanded enough craft to enable him to carry out his full plan for a landing on a two-divisional front with three brigades 'up', for a proportionate build-up, and for some minor landings which he foresaw. The effect of his protest was to redouble the labours which were already going on. They may be summarized as follows. Revision of the period for preparing craft; rigorous examination of extraneous tasks; revision of loading tables to secure increased loading; trimming of rates of build-up; improved organization of turn-rounds.² In addition some craft were loaned from the Salerno operation to 8th Army, although the timing was so close that

¹ For example, from Assault Scale of transport to Light Scale. See Chapter IV, pp. 136-37.

² ' . . . 65 per cent of the craft used for Husky would be available for Avalanche if they could stand off 10 days between the operations . . . ' . . . Owing to the efficiency of the landing-craft repair staffs, more of these craft were available than had been thought possible.'

some had to be returned on Baytown's actual D-Day, and others three days later. In the end 8th Army received 268 against a demand for 344.

Extracts from reports by Admiral Cunningham, and by the Flag Officer, Sicily, Admiral McGrigor, give first-hand impressions of these crowded days:

'It was not until mid-August, when the final decision was taken that operation *Avalanche* was to be carried out and that operation *Baytown* should be undertaken on the scale on which it was finally mounted, that any firm allocation of landing craft could be made between these two operations. The reorganization and reallocation of landing craft was made difficult by the voracious demands of the Army in Sicily for further reinforcements and vehicles, and by the steady deterioration in the serviceability of the craft themselves, resulting from the very arduous service they had been called upon to perform.

As a consequence of this, the time left for the detailed planning of *Baytown* was extremely short. The final allocation of craft was made on 22nd August, and the assault was launched before first light on 3rd September 1943. That the operation was planned in the space of ten days and that it was completely successful reflects the highest credit on Rear-Admiral McGrigor and his staff and upon the Army and Corps commanders with whom he co-operated.'

And Admiral McGrigor himself wrote:

'In order to get the maximum rate of build up it was essential that the turn round of craft should be kept at a minimum, and the ferry embarkation ports had to be selected to give a combination of safety from gunfire, a short journey and good hards, without disclosing the point of attack.

A careful examination of photographs and maps indicated that the *Theresa* beaches were ideal for this purpose, but as these beaches were still in enemy hands on 14th August, they could not be examined, hards prepared, or the assembly areas reconnoitred until about a fortnight before the operation took place.¹

Although operation "*Baytown*" in various forms had been under consideration for some weeks, and considerable thought had been given both to the landing beaches and the points of embarkation, the final allocation of craft on which the operation had to be planned was not received until the 22nd August and this only left a matter of ten days to assemble the craft, to make a plan, produce and distribute the orders, and brief the personnel.'

¹ *S. Teresa* on the north-east coast of Sicily, which was to be a point for loading and embarkation.

Intelligence current during the second fortnight of August, including that which the Italians disclosed during the negotiations for an armistice, suggested that there would be not more than a German brigade group in most southern Calabria, and that the Germans would not try seriously to hold an invading force until it reached the plain of Gioia, about thirty miles from Reggio. The field defences between S. Giovanni and Pellaro did not seem particularly strong, and there appeared to be no more than 36 guns in action. Nevertheless several special reconnaissance patrols to the mainland did not return and their disappearance suggested that the enemy was alert. Montgomery was determined to make a certainty of his task, not only the landings but the advance to follow. He has given us his opinion of the general situation on September 5th: '... The Germans were in great strength in Italy and we were very weak. We must watch our step carefully and do nothing foolish... be certain before we landed anywhere that we could build up good strength in that area...' Nobody looked on 13th Corps' forthcoming operations as a water-picnic.¹ The plan given below in outline shows this.

1st Canadian Division, on the right, was to assault with 3rd Canadian Brigade on one beach in a small bay between the northern suburbs of Reggio, and the torrent-bed named the Torbido. On the Canadian Division's left, in another small bay north of the Torbido, 5th Division would assault on two beaches, 13th Brigade right, and 17th Brigade left. The Canadian 1st Brigade, and the British 15th were to follow up the assault as quickly as craft could be turned round. 231st Brigade and the Royal Marine Commando stood ready to make an assault landing on the west coast, and 3rd Commando

¹ Troops under command of 13th Corps:

5th Division (Major-General G. C. Bucknall):

13th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier L. M. Campbell): 2nd Bn The Cameronians, 2nd Bn The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 2nd Bn The Wiltshire Regiment.

15th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier E. O. Martin): 1st Bn The Green Howards, 1st Bn The King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 1st Bn The York and Lancaster Regiment.

17th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier A. D. Ward): 2nd Bn The Royal Scots Fusiliers, 2nd Bn The Northamptonshire Regiment, 6th Bn The Seaforth Highlanders.

Divisional Troops: 5th Reconnaissance Regiment; 91st, 92nd, 156th Field Regiments, R.A.; 52nd Anti-Tank Regiment, R.A.; 18th Light A.A. Regiment, R.A.; 38th, 245th, 252nd Field Companies, R.E.; 7th Bn The Cheshire Regiment (M.G.).

1st Canadian Division (Major-General G. G. Simonds): for composition see Chapter IV, p. 117.

1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade (Brigadier R. A. Wyman) see p. 117.

231st Infantry Brigade (Brigadier R. E. Urquhart): 2nd Bn The Devonshire Regiment, 1st Bn The Hampshire Regiment, 1st Bn The Dorsetshire Regiment, 165th Field Regiment, R.A., 295th Field Company, R.E.

Others:

6th Army Group R.A.; 2nd A. A. Brigade, R.A.;

1st Special Reconnaissance Squadron; 3rd Commando;

40th Royal Marine Commando.

In Support of 13th Corps: 5th Army Group R.A., and artillery of 30th Corps (Brigadier M. Dennis, Commander Corps Royal Artillery).

BOMBER TARGETS IN ITALY

(Mainly railways & airfields)

September 1943-March 1944

Note: For targets in battle zones see relevant maps

Legend

- Town site
- Airfield
- Railway

0 20 40 60 80 100 Miles



and the Special Reconnaissance Squadron were ready to land north of Reggio if necessary. When the Corps' first objectives had been taken 154th Brigade (51st Highland Division) was to take over the Reggio area to free the 5th and Canadian Divisions for further advances.

The artillery supporting the landings amounted to 630 guns, including the artillery of 30th Corps and 5th Army Group R.A., the whole mass under the central control of Brigadier Dennis, Commander Corps Royal Artillery 30th Corps.¹ The fire of all these guns had been so 'tied in' that an enormous number of shells could be dropped within a minute or so on any target. Naval fire-support was provided by three cruisers, five Fleet destroyers, three monitors, four gunboats, and twenty landing-craft.² The air support for the landing has already been given in outline, and will be described later in actual operation.

8th Army and 13th Corps mounted the operation in Sicily in a race against time. 13th Corps issued its first planning instruction on 14th August, but not until 23rd did it receive a firm allotment of craft. On that day (D-11) brigades were able to begin detailed work, loading-tables had to be complete by the 27th; and the first craft had to begin to load on the 31st. There was a very large number of things to be done. For example, assembly areas for troops and transport had to be found in the cramped spaces between the Sicilian hills and the sea; 'hards' and embarkation points had to be built; damage to roads and bridges from bombing and demolition made good; vehicles had to be waterproofed (an eleven-day job if completely done); new air-fields had to be made. And so on and on. The landing-craft, according to type, were to assemble at Augusta, Catania, Taormina, and S. Teresa di Riva (all on the east coast); and Catania, Teresa, and Mili Marina in the Straits were main places of loading and embarkation. Training was necessary for 3rd Canadian Brigade had never made an assault landing, and in fact was given one day's practice in real craft, so hard were these to come by; while in many units men newly arrived from reinforcement camps had to learn the rudiments, at least 'dryshod'.³ The technical administrative preparations were

¹ 5th Army Group R.A. included four American battalions of 155-mm guns. Five field regiments and one medium were in direct support of 5th Division; 1st Canadian Division, in view of considerations of range, had the direct support of four medium regiments. There was a powerful counter-battery programme.

² H.M. Ships:

Cruisers: *Mauritius, Uganda, Orion.*

Destroyers: *Nubian, Tartar, Laforey, Loyal, Lookout.*

Monitors: *Roberts, Erebus, Abercrombie.*

Gunboats: *Aphis, Scarab.*

Landing-craft: Rocket 3, anti-aircraft 3, smoke 5, gun 4.

Dutch Gunboats: *Flores, Soemba.*

³ 'Dry-shod' training though useful is uninspiring, e.g. embarking in and disembarking from a 'landing-craft' marked out in stones, or performing, in the darkness, a peculiarly unrealistic leap from dry land that is 'sea' to dry land that is 'beach'.

large because of the difficult country known to lie ahead. The toe-point of Calabria is filled by the Aspromonte plateau, a steep-sided 'hump' some twenty-five miles square, which rises to the 6,400 foot peak of Montalto (Pt. 1956). The roads, coastal and interior, twist and turn, and abound in bridges, viaducts, culverts, and tunnels—a land of pure delight for the ingenious military engineer with demolitions flowering in his brain. Administration is reviewed in a final section because of its difficulties and its importance at this stage and in later developments of the campaign.

All that could be done to achieve a certainty was done. On 2nd September 8th Army's Chief of Staff, de Guingand, who held in his co-ordinating fingers the threads of every activity, found himself at last at a loose end and somehow puzzled. He has written '... It was a lovely day, and I felt that there must be something "phoney" about this operation. Below me on the beaches and dry river beds there was intense activity . . . On the enemy's side of the Straits all seemed to be quiet. Sailing in those peaceful waters were some of His Majesty's ships . . . In the air our aircraft were flying to and fro . . . We had assembled and prepared a formidable force. Were we using a sledgehammer to crack a nut?'¹

(iv)

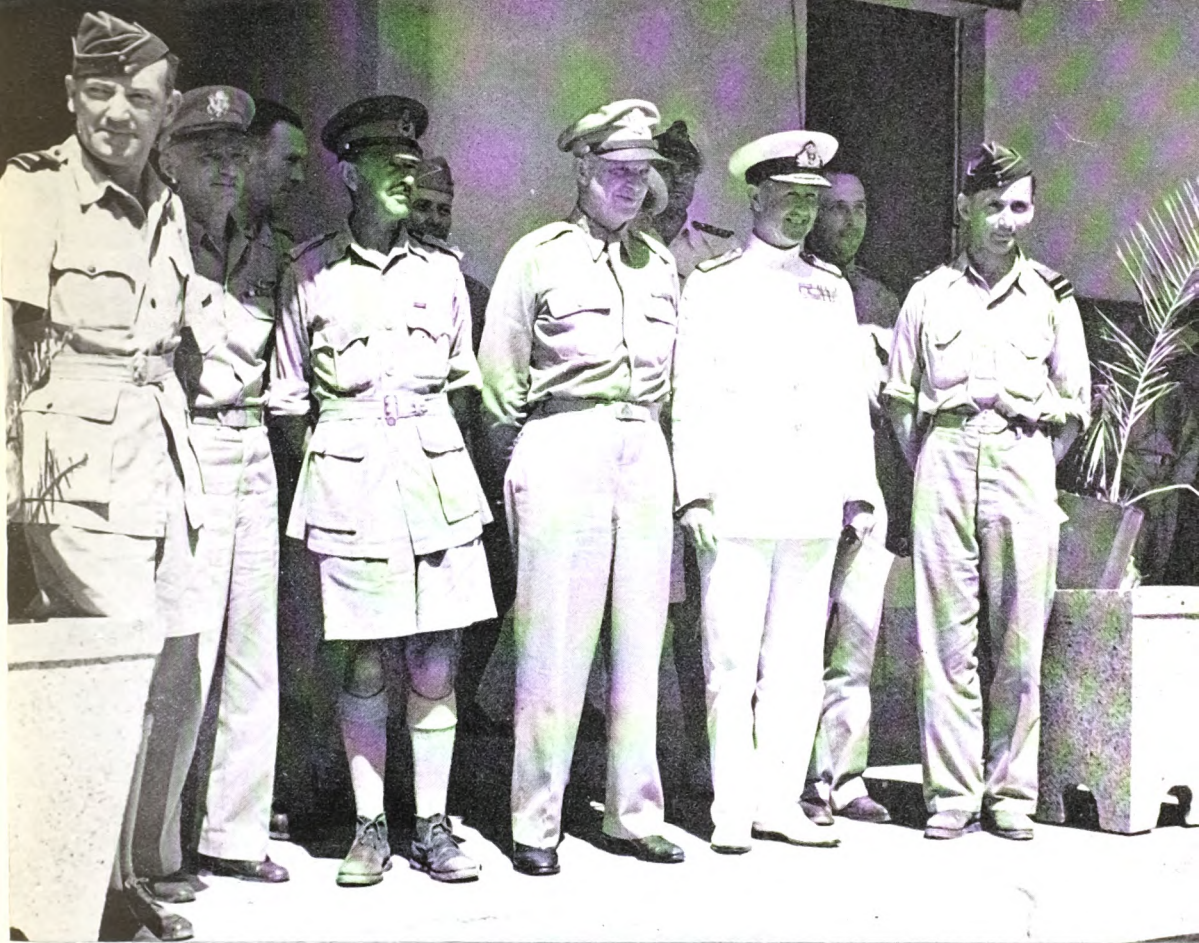
See Map 16

Before the sledgehammer struck, the enemy received some preliminary blows from other formidable instruments. The cruisers *Aurora* and *Dido* sank seven of his landing-craft northward-bound off Scalea on the night 19th/20th August. The battleships *Nelson* and *Rodney* of Force H, and later their sisters *Warspite* and *Valiant* bombarded coast-defence guns between Cape Pellaro and Melito at Calabria's southernmost point.² The targets received a drubbing. Other warships made sweeps off Calabria's west coast and bombarded little harbours, bridges, power stations and similar targets from Pellaro as far north as Scalea.

The preparatory air offensive against the enemy's airfields had by 18th August almost neutralized those in southern Italy, except at Foggia. And so, until 3rd September, most of the bomber action was directed against railways in order to disrupt traffic into Calabria by the west coast route, and into Apulia by the east coast route. In particular the aim was to knock out Foggia (a victim doubly doomed by its airfields and marshalling-yards), and to wreck the lines between Rome and Naples, Naples and Foggia, Naples and Salerno,

¹ *Operation Victory*, Francis de Guingand, Copyright 1947 by Hodder and Stoughton Ltd. p. 317.

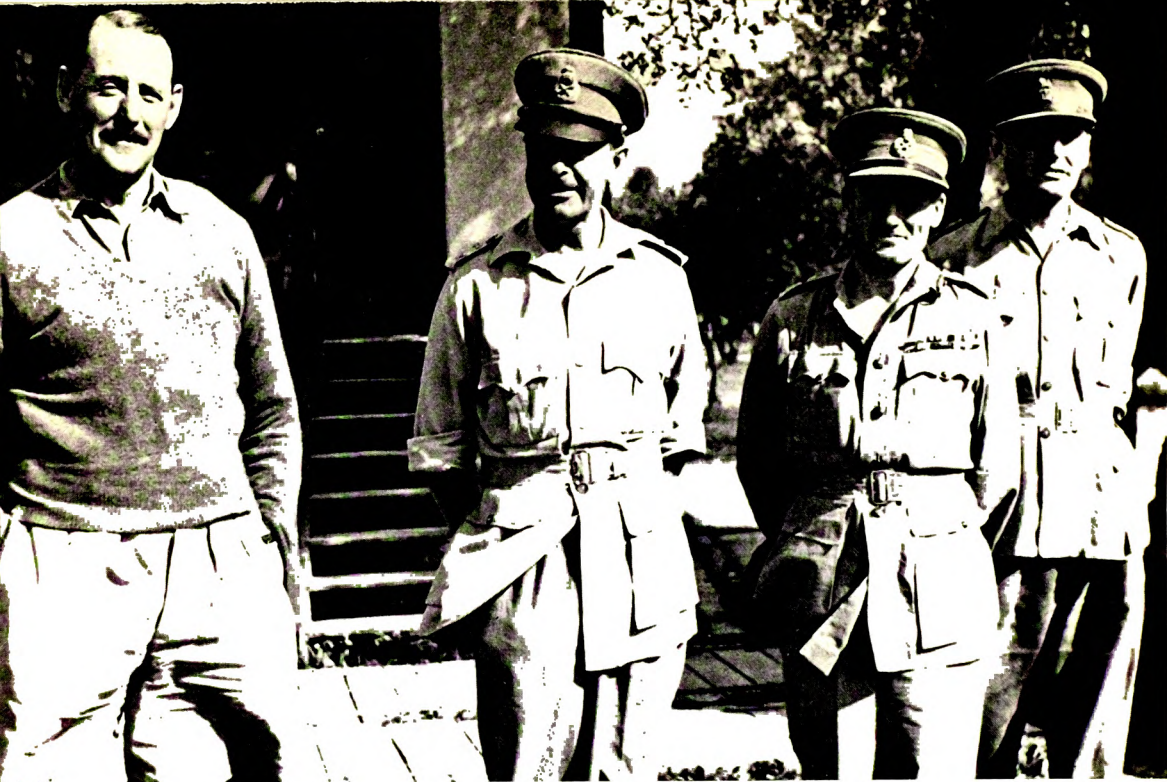
² The code names of the battleships' bombardments were, by coincidence, the word Sledgehammer.



9. Left to Right: Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham, Lieutenant-General Carl Spaatz, U.S.A.A.F., General Sir Harold Alexander, Major-General Bedell Smith, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder.



10. Left to Right: Vice-Admiral Sir Algernon Willis, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham, Captain A. G. Talbot (H.M.S. *Formidable*).



11. Left to Right: Lieutenant-General Sir Oliver Leese, General Sir Harold Alexander, Lieutenant-General A. F. Harding, Brigadier T. S. Airey.



12. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lieutenant-General Mark W. Clark.

and Salerno to the Gulf of Taranto. Key points north of Rome became targets also.

To take first the bombers of Northwest African Strategic Air Force, and the medium bombers of N.A.T.B.F., in a direction north to south.¹ The railway targets included Bologna, Terni, Orte, Canello, Aversa, Salerno, and Battipaglia. Attacks were powerful. On the day 19th August 162 Fortresses with 71 Liberators of U.S. Ninth Air Force, plus 50 R.A.F. Wellingtons on the night 19th/20th, dropped nearly 700 tons of bombs on the marshalling yards at Foggia, for a loss of five Fortresses to fighters and damage to seventeen from flak. 28 Liberators from U.S. Ninth Air Force attacked again on 25th August. 152 Fortresses dropped over 400 tons of bombs on the marshalling-yards at Pisa (in the north) on 31st August. As for air-fields 140 Lightnings strafed and 135 Fortresses dropped 215 tons of bombs on the Foggia group on 25th August, and on the 26th Capua and Grazzanise (Naples area) were attacked. Air reconnaissance showed that many hostile aircraft were destroyed on the ground.

Next, U.S. Ninth Air Force in the 'Heel'. Here its effort was slightly less than that expended jointly with N.A.S.A.F. to the north. Most of the sorties flown in the 'Heel', including those against Bari, were in attacks on ports. Generally speaking the American Liberators operated to the north and the R.A.F. Liberators and Halifaxes in the 'Heel'.

Then, N.A.T.A.F. in the 'Instep' and the 'Toe'. Over 70 light bombers attacked the road and rail junction south-west of Nicastro on 28th and 29th August, and a force of Bostons and Baltimores attacked the radar station at Cape Spartivento. Fighter-bombers strafed for the most part the railways and roads in Calabria. And then, during the week before 2nd/3rd September, the whole strength of attack was brought to bear on the area of Reggio.

The work of the photographic reconnaissance aircraft was vital for the bombers and for planning the assaults. The selection of bomber targets and the interpretation of results depended on it. For the assaults at Reggio and Salerno a vast number of oblique and vertical photographs were taken of beaches and defences. Salerno received particular attention, coverage beginning as early as 27th June. Panoramic views followed and these were distributed down to battalion level. Generally speaking, N.A.P.R.W. covered the Salerno area and No. 285 Wing R.A.F. the Reggio area. Meanwhile Malta's aircraft maintained constant watch on the locations and movements of units of the German Air Force.

Between dusk on 17th August and on 2nd September Mediterranean Air Command flew more than 13,300 sorties, excluding

¹ The light bombers of N.A.T.B.F. stood down from 18th to 25th August, to rest the pilots and aircrews, and to restore the serviceability of aircraft.

sorties against shipping and ports, at a cost of some 180 aircraft.¹ 3,800 of the sorties were directed against the lines of communications. Air reconnaissance showed that rail movement had almost stopped south of a line from Naples to Foggia, and had been interrupted elsewhere. The enemy had in consequence to rely more and more on road transport, and to use up far more fuel than he could afford. The Allies destroyed 85 German aircraft, of which probably five fell to A.A. guns.

At 3.45 a.m. on 3rd September the 8th Army's artillery began to fire its supporting programmes during which it used 29,000 rounds of ammunition or just under 400 tons. There was no reply to this fire, and the assaulting troops landed without difficulties except those which occurred from some landings in the wrong places. The main causes of the mistakes were the strong currents in the straits, and the fact that the deluge of shells had blotted out all landmarks with a fog of dust and smoke. Night-fighters patrolled overhead until daybreak when the Spitfires of Nos. 322 and 324 Wings R.A.F. took over, and during daylight on the 3rd about 100 bomber and fighter-bomber sorties were flown in direct support of the landings. Thus it was that 3rd Canadian Brigade occupied Reggio by 11.45 a.m. meeting its stiffest opposition (the Canadian historian relates) from a puma which had escaped from the zoo, and which fancied Brigadier Penhale. General Simonds speeded up his plan and sent his 1st Brigade straight up the Aspromonte plateau to Straorino which it reached at 2 a.m. on the 4th.² 5th Division likewise took and consolidated its objectives and General Bucknall directed his 15th Brigade to advance to Scilla by the west coast road (Highway 18) on the 4th. Behind the assaulting divisions the landing of stores and equipment went on apace and by dusk on 4th September the build-up was 1½ days ahead of the time-table. The ferry-service of craft worked well, to the point of congestion, and 5th Division had the use of 110 invaluable DUKWs, the Canadians 80, while 122 more were under central control. Nos. 32, 33 and 34 Beach Bricks served the beaches.³ During the afternoon of the 3rd the Allied fighters intercepted and drove off a formation of 18 or more Me. 109 and F.W. 190 fighter-bombers, which represented about half the enemy's total bombing effort. His fighters flew little more than 100 sorties, mostly as escorts and in defence of airfields. Thus during the whole day the Desert Air Force, and those attached to it, swept over

¹ Table III at the end of the chapter gives the total sorties by types of bomber.

² It is typical of Calabria that Straorino, five miles from Reggio as a crow flies, was ten miles as a man marches.

³ The functions of Beach Bricks and DUKWs have been described in Chapter IV.

southern Calabria at will. The Allied airmen quickly silenced a few long range guns which were firing at intervals from positions inland. Air reconnaissance had shown that German fighters had arrived on two airfields near Cosenza, and 69 Mitchells attacked these. A force of 35 Baltimores and 12 American medium bombers put the airfields at Crotone out of action. During the night 3rd/4th the Beaufighters resumed their appointed watch and ward.

The reason why the landings had not been disputed was that the German High Command had already decided that Calabria was expendable strategically and tactically. It had been intended at one time that the 'Toe' of Italy should be defended after the evacuation of Sicily. 29th Panzer Grenadier Division had been placed, after its return from Sicily, in Herr's 76th Panzer Corps for this purpose. But on 29th August *OKW* approved Kesselring's proposal that 76th Panzer Corps should withdraw gradually from the 'Toe' to a line running from Scalea on the west coast to Taranto and Brindisi. von Vietinghoff accordingly directed that only a battalion need remain south of Catanzaro where Calabria is narrow. Central and north Calabria were held at this time by 26th Panzer Division minus a strong battle-group which had been held north of Rome since the imbroglio of 25th July. It was intended that Herr's third division, the 1st Parachute, should cover his left flank and guard the air bases at Foggia. This division was only partly assembled in Apulia by the beginning of September because its 3rd Regiment and much of its 4th had been attached to 26th Panzer Division on their return from Sicily, while its engineer and machine-gun battalions formed the corps reserve near Cosenza.

By the morning of 3rd September a handful of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division's 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was still in the Reggio area, and during the afternoon this regiment withdrew to prepared positions at Bagnara, 25 miles away. By Corps' orders the regiment was to hold this area until 6th September, and then move straight back to Castrovillari. A strong battle-group of 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment (also of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division), under Lieutenant-Colonel Krüger, would pass under command of 26th Panzer Division, and would stand on the line Nicotera-Laureana until further orders.¹ It thus happened that neither 5th Division nor the Canadians at first found much to oppose them except demolitions and blocks of every sort, sown with mines. The country usually made it impossible to by-pass obstacles, and so the speed of the advance in Calabria depended very much on the speed at which the engineers could clear the way by means which included bringing forward cumbersome bridging equipment along the difficult roads. The

¹ Krüger's Battle-Group was composed of two battalions of his 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 129th Reconnaissance Battalion, and detachments of artillery and engineers.

difficulties had been foreseen and accounted for the fact that the Canadian Division had been directed across the Aspromonte plateau. The idea was to devote all the augmented, and yet scarcely sufficient, bridging-train to the west coast Highway 18 and to send patrols only along the east coast Highway 106. The hope was that the Canadians would find the roads across the plateau unobstructed, and would also gain high, commanding ground which would be an advantage if general heavy fighting occurred.

On 4th September 15th Brigade advanced along Highway 18 and at Bagnara linked up with 1st Special Reconnaissance Squadron, which had swooped upon that place from the sea in the early hours of the morning, and had driven out of it 3/15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment in a sharp skirmish.¹ 5th Division continued to push on, leapfrogging its brigades, and ferrying troops forward in landing-craft at times. There was a brisk action with Krüger's rearguard at the Mesima river (north of Rosarno) on the 7th, and on the evening of the 8th the leading troops made contact near Pizzo with 231st Brigade who had landed there, in another sea-borne 'hook', and had fought a stiff engagement with a mobile force from 26th Panzer Division, coming from the north, and Krüger's Battle Group. Krüger was approaching from the south because he had been ordered to abandon the Nicotera-Laureana line, and to rejoin 29th Panzer Grenadier Division at Castrovillari. It happened thus.

On the 6th Dempsey decided that 231st Brigade Group should land near Pizzo on the 8th, hold a bridgehead at Porto S. Venere, and try to cut off the enemy troops withdrawing in front of 5th Division by cutting Highway 18.² H.M.S. *Erebus* (monitor), *Aphis*, and *Scarab* (gunboats) would give naval support. Air Vice-Marshal Broadhurst arranged heavy air support: 90 British Kittyhawk fighter-bombers to attack positions, 70 American Kittyhawks to strafe and sweep, and 250 Spitfires available to provide continuous patrols over the beachhead for as long as required. Tactical reconnaissance would be provided by No. 225 Squadron R.A.F. which had taken over from No. 40 Squadron S.A.A.F.

Time for preparations, including briefing of troops and crews of landing-craft, was very short since the assault convoy sailed from Messina at 6.30 p.m. on the 7th. Because time had been wanting it had not been practicable to arrange aids for finding the beaches. It was hoped that the 'fixes' which would be obtained while sailing along the coast north of Cape Vaticano would enable the breakwater at Porto S. Venere, close to Pizzo, to be recognized. But at night it

¹ A flight of No. 651 A.O.P. Squadron landed at Reggio on the 4th to serve 8th Army.

² For this operation 231st Brigade's main units were as given on p. 234 with 3rd Commando, 40th R.M. Commando and 20th Beach Group in addition. ² L.S.T., 18 L.C.T., 14 L.C.I.(L), and 10 L.C.A., and two gun- and two anti-aircraft landing-craft were provided.

proved impossible to see this breakwater against the black-shrouded land. The result was that on the 8th the leading troops landed in the wrong places and not in their tactical order. There was fortunately no one to oppose them except some coast-watchers. The troops were sorted out and the battalions were just gaining their final positions when at 8.15 a.m. the mobile force from 26th Panzer Division began to arrive, led by the Third Battalion 4th Parachute Regiment.¹ At 9.40 a.m. eight German dive-bombers attacked the craft off shore, and forty minutes later the whole German Battle Group had engaged. At about 11.30 Krüger's 3rd/71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment joined in, made no impression on the Dorsets, and then sheered off by a side-road and was no more seen. von Usedom, however, made a determined attack during the afternoon on the Hampshires who held the northern part of the position, and a hard fight followed, often at close quarters. But the parachute troops could make no permanent impression, and towards dusk the whole German force drew off northwards. The Desert Air Force intervened on several occasions, and had the greater share in destroying eleven enemy guns and nine vehicles. The casualties of 231st Brigade amounted to about 200, and three landing-craft and one motor torpedo boat were sunk or damaged. There is no doubt that this operation had the very valuable effect of hastening the German withdrawal, yet it is an example of how difficult in practice it is to make an interception from the sea.

20th Beach Group took over and developed the little harbour of S. Venere as a forward supply area, and 5th Division led now by 231st Brigade, pressed on towards Nicastro on 9th and 10th September, meeting no enemy. On the 9th the Anglo-American force landed at Salerno and began a stern battle.

Returning now to the Aspromonte plateau we find the leading troops of the Canadian Division on the line of the lateral Highway 112, near Oppido, on the 6th and 7th. Almost the only sign of the enemy was the increasing number of road and bridge demolitions 'going off practically in our faces' as the Canadians report. If 5th Division was sweating at torrid sea-level, the Canadians were in '... the bracing, rain-drenched air of the Calabrian mountains ... bringing to many nostalgic memories of eastern Canada in late autumn'. They were soon to leave the hills. Speed was important and could not be made on the winding, congested, and obstructed mountain roads. Moreover, a patrol of the Calgary Regiment had found that Highway 106 was fairly clear and that there was no enemy as far as Bruzzano. On the 6th therefore Dempsey directed

¹ The mobile force was a battle-group of mixed parentage commanded by Colonel von Usedom, of 26th Panzer Division's 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. It consisted of Third Battalion, 4th Parachute Regiment; one company of 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment; a troop each of 7.5-cm anti-tank guns and light A.A. guns; and a detachment of 8.8-cm guns.

the Canadian Division to swing down from the mountains to Locri and to make Highway 106 its axis. A mobile force reached Locri on the 7th, and on 8th September 2nd Brigade reached Cittanova, whence a lateral road ran to Locri. On the 10th the mobile force reached Catanzaro Marina and the remainder of the division closed up to it.

In a week therefore, by 10th September, 13th Corps had reached the Catanzaro 'neck', the first big 'bound', after an advance of about 100 miles. It was now imperative to bring forward some part of the administrative machine because without it to advance further would be scarcely possible. And to advance was what Alexander, on the 10th, was asking Montgomery to do. Before continuing with this story we must turn to the landing by the Royal Navy of 1st Airborne Division at Taranto on the 9th and also to air action.

To capture ports in south Italy had always been believed to be essential, and the capture of the important port of Taranto had been proposed, but discarded because of the very strong opposition to be expected there. The secret signature of the armistice by the Italians on 3rd September changed the situation. Eisenhower, Alexander, and Cunningham then arranged a coup: to carry 1st Airborne Division from Bizerta to Taranto in H.M. ships, seize the port, and later to feed in H.Q. 5th Corps, two divisions, and four squadrons of fighters as well. The operation was by no means without risk for Intelligence reported that the Germans had been laying mines in the anchorages and it was possible that they had taken over the coast-defence guns. 1st Airborne Division (Major-General G. F. Hopkinson), training in two areas four hundred miles apart, was ordered on 4th September to embark on the 8th. Since the staffs did not quite know how many men and how much equipment could be fitted into warships, and the number of ships kept altering, the expedition, code-named 'Slapstick', was soon nicknamed 'Bedlam'.¹

Four ships of the British 12th Cruiser Squadron, the fast minelayer *Abdiel*, and the American cruiser *Boise* transported the first echelon of troops.² The escort was composed of the battleships *Howe*, flying the flag of Vice-Admiral A. J. Power (Vice Admiral, Malta, and

¹ '... Operations ... ought not to be described by code-words which imply a boastful and over-confident sentiment ... which are calculated to invest the plan with an air of despondency ... They ought not to be names of a frivolous character ... They should not be ordinary words ... Names of living people should be avoided ...' Prime Minister to General Ismay, 8th August 1943.

² Main formations and units embarked:

1st Echelon
Advanced Div. H.Q.
1st and 4th Parachute Brigade Groups
9th Field Company R.E.

2nd Echelon
1st Parachute Brigade Group
1st Airlanding Brigade Group
Glider Pilot Regiment

naval commander of the whole expedition), *King George V* and a number of destroyers. The first echelon sailed on the 8th and arrived at Taranto on the 9th, seeing there the Italian battleships *Doria* and *Duilio*, with two cruisers, departing to Malta to surrender. The 12th Cruiser Squadron arrived from Bizerta with reinforcements on the 12th. There were no Germans in Taranto and the Italians were helpful. It was therefore all the sadder that early on the 10th the *Abdiel*, swinging to her anchor, struck a mine and sank within minutes. With her died 48 naval officers and men and 120 of 6th Parachute Battalion; 120 soldiers and 6 ratings were wounded.

1st Airborne Division quickly took over Taranto and the airfield at Grottaglie, and sent out patrols east and north. Monopoli, on the Adriatic coast, was found clear on the 10th, but at Castellanata, on the 11th, 10th Parachute Battalion had a sharp encounter. Here General Hopkinson was mortally wounded; Major-General E. E. Down succeeded him. On the 11th Bari and Brindisi were entered. On the 12th it became clear that the German 1st Parachute Division, based on Altamura, had spread rearguards, fan wise, to the south-east at Castellanata, Gioia del Colle, and Ginosa. But it became clear also that a whole parachute division was not present, and that what was present was falling back towards Foggia.¹

Direct air support to 13th Corps during its advance northwards was on the whole small because the Germans scarcely resisted on the ground or in the air. On the other hand attacks on the enemy's airfields and lines of communication continued vigorously, in preparation for the Salerno landings as well as indirectly to help the operations in Calabria and at Taranto. The airfields which received most attacks were those in the area of Naples and the group at Foggia.² The attacks were heavy: at Capua and Capodichino 76 Wellingtons (136 tons of bombs) on the night of the 3rd/4th September, and 18 Fortresses and 113 Mitchells on the 6th; at Grazzanise 80 Wellingtons (139 tons) on the night of the 4th/5th, 142 Mitchells and Marauders on the 5th and 102 Marauders (134 tons) on the 6th. At Viterbo Fortresses dropped 152 tons of bombs on the 5th and 48 Wellingtons 82 tons on the night of the 7th/8th. Foggia, which had been so heavily attacked a fortnight previously, was bombed again by 124 Fortresses (160 tons) on the 7th, despite fierce fighter

¹ In fact, on 9th September Headquarters 1st German Parachute Division, 1st Parachute Regiment less a battalion, and a battalion of 4th Parachute Regiment, were in Apulia. 3rd and 4th Parachute Regiments (less detachment) were in Calabria under command of 26th Panzer Division. 3rd Battalion of 1st Parachute Regiment was with the Hermann Göring Division near Naples.

² Airfields in the area of Naples which were attacked were: Capua, Grazzanise Pomigliano, Capodichino.

opposition, and next day American Liberators from M.E.A.C. began a three-day series of attacks on the group. By the 9th Foggia was almost out of action. In short only Grazzanise and Capodichino remained of much use at the time of the Salerno landings. As for road and rail: Wellingtons dropped 86 tons of bombs on the marshalling-yards at Villa Literno on the night 5th/6th, and 48 of these bombers dropped 92 tons on Battipaglia during the next night. Light bombers raided communications as far north as Benevento, and east to Altamura, and on the 7th 107 Marauders dropped 140 tons on rail and road bridges at Sapri. The areas of Sapri, Lauria, and Trebisacce (on a line from the head of the Gulf of Policastro south-east to the shore of the Gulf of Taranto) were frequently attacked to prevent German forces moving towards Salerno from Calabria. A special attack was directed against a centre of command at a carefully chosen moment when, on 8th September, 130 Fortresses dropped 347 tons of bombs on Kesselring's Headquarters at Frascati, near Rome. Some dislocation of control resulted.

In sum, between dusk on 2nd September and the 8th September Mediterranean Air Command flew 7,145 sorties (excluding operations against ships and ports) in direct connection with the invasion of Italy. Northwest African Air Forces flew 95% of these sorties. Some 25 Allied aircraft and perhaps 16 German were lost during this period. After the 8th the story of air operations is best told in relation to the battle of Salerno.

On 9th September Montgomery sent this message to Alexander:

'My divisions are now very strung out and the infantry . . . must be rested. Am halting main bodies of divisions [on 10th] on the line Catanzaro to Nicastro . . . Divisions will then wind up their tails and have two days' rest . . . intensive reconnaissance will be carried out to the line Crotone-Rossano-Spezzano-Belvedere. Main bodies will begin the advance to the Spezzano-Belvedere neck on 13th or 14th September. My build up across the Straits from Sicily is very slow and my divisions are not yet even up to Light scale [of transport].'

On the 10th Alexander replied:

'It is of the utmost importance that you maintain pressure upon the Germans so that they cannot remove forces from your front and concentrate them against Avalanche. I have sent 1st British Airborne Division into Taranto . . . It will be followed by port units and 5 Corps HQs so as to be ready to receive 8 Indian Division about 25 September. This will be followed by New Zealand Division according to circumstances. When 5 Corps build up and you arrive within supporting distance of them, I

shall place 5 Corps under your command. I am doing all I can to magnify the size of our landings in German eyes. I feel certain that, if the Italians play even a small part in assisting us the Germans will have to withdraw to a line north of Naples. The next few days are critical as they were in operation "Husky".

But now it was administrative difficulties rather than the enemy that Montgomery had to overcome in order to carry out Alexander's wishes.

At midnight on 8th/9th September (the day of 231st Brigade's landing at Pizzo) Herr (76th Panzer Corps) was of course aware of the Italian Armistice. He ordered 26th Panzer Division to pull back to Castrovillari (70 miles north of Catanzaro). 29th Panzer Grenadier Division (less Battle Group Krüger moving rapidly to rejoin it) was already in the area of Castrovillari, and had sent a detachment northwards to Lagonegro to counter a rumoured Allied landing near Sapri. The remainder should have been en route to Salerno, but the whole division was virtually halted by the nerves of a naval officer at Sapri who, on an alarm that the enemy was landing, blew up an oil-tanker in the harbour and destroyed a fuel dump on shore. 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, with 26th Panzer Division's reconnaissance battalion and the 3rd Parachute Regiment under command, reached positions on the line of the highway from Sala Consilina to Eboli by 11th September. By this time command of the southern half of the Salerno battlefield had been entrusted to 76th Panzer Corps and 26th Panzer Division had been ordered to move north from Castrovillari, although it was not until the 14th that this division took up its battle positions between Eboli and Battipaglia. Battle Group von Usedom alone flitted about as a rearguard in Calabria.¹

Montgomery, after Alexander's message, had no choice but to advance. He decided to continue concentrating 13th Corps in the neighbourhood of Nicastro and Catanzaro, to push light forces as far northward as he could, and to recommend that an air force should be based at Crotona where he would open the port. On the 11th then 5th Division sent light forces towards Castrovillari and Belvedere, which they reached on the 12th and Canadian patrols entered Crotona.

It was now almost touch-and-go at Salerno and Alexander sent his Chief of Staff, Richardson, to explain the crisis there to Montgomery and to direct him to press on at his best speed regardless of administrative consequences. Alexander helped by allotting a large number of landing-craft (18 L.S.T., 12 L.C.T., 7 L.C.I.(L)) to arrive in Sicily probably between 15th and 18th September, and to

¹ 1/67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and detachments of artillery and engineers.

remain perhaps until October. On the 13th Montgomery reported to Alexander:

‘My forward move begins tomorrow. The increased shipping puts me in a much better position and I hope by 17 September to be able to begin a definite threat against the South flank of the Germans facing the 5th Army. As my administrative situation improves so the threat will become an offensive. I am prepared to take over command and control of the Taranto–Brindisi front at once. I have General Allfrey (5th Corps Commander) with me now and I propose to put under him 8th Indian Division, 78th Division, 4th Armoured Brigade, New Zealand and 1st Divisions.’

On the 14th therefore a more general advance began, and on the 16th 5th Division was at Sapri and the 1st Canadian Division near Spezzano. Their patrols met at Castrovillari, while another Canadian patrol met one from 1st Airborne Division forty miles south-west of Taranto. On this day too patrols of 36th U.S. Division met 5th Division’s Reconnaissance Regiment at Vallo. It was on the 14th and 15th that the balance at Salerno tipped in favour of the Allies, and on the 16th von Vietinghoff called this battle off. The 8th Army’s approach to the German southern flank undoubtedly contributed to this outcome, for the threat forced the Germans at Salerno to use up their resources in hurried and unco-ordinated attempts to force a decision quickly. And so on the 16th it could be said that the Allied armies were at least in touch across the land of Italy from the Tyrrhenian coast to the Adriatic.

(v)

The administrative problems of 8th Army during its advance through Calabria were much affected by two sets of circumstances. The first was a fault in organization at higher headquarters. This will be mentioned here, and discussed in Chapter XII in its proper context of the control of administration as the campaign of Italy expanded. The second set of circumstances were the brute difficulties attendant on setting up and working a long Line of Communications in the villainous country of Calabria to serve 13th Corps and the associated air forces.

It will be recalled from Chapter IV (p. 143) that during the campaign in Sicily the administrative branch of H.Q. 15th Army Group did not undertake executive responsibility for the administration of 8th Army and 7th U.S. Army. General Alexander decided for sufficient reason to have a very small administrative staff to advise on administrative matters and to co-ordinate them. He delegated the normal executive responsibility of his administrative branch to

'Fortbase'. This was an admirable 8th Army Peculiar, directly controlled by Montgomery, and commanded by Major-General Sir Brian Robertson.¹ In effect it was the Advanced Base and L. of C. organization of 8th Army. This unorthodox system was accepted by A.F.H.Q. for the limited campaign in Sicily and worked well there. But when it became evident that large operations were to be undertaken against Italy or elsewhere, it became evident also that there were large administrative problems which would be the proper concern of Army Group H.Q., and with which, in fact, A.F.H.Q. and the War Office were concerned as well. Besides these, the extension of 13th Corps' operations resulted in the extension of the L. of C. to three times the length that had been planned, the operation at Taranto and its development was added, and finally there came a switch of the 8th Army's ports of maintenance to Taranto, Bari, and Brindisi. H.Q. 15th Army Group had possessed (and dispersed) an adequate administrative staff including Directors of Services, but it persisted in maintaining that its administrative functions were advisory. In consequence 'Fortbase' was forced to undertake the excessive burden of doing 15th Army Group's administrative work as well as its own in the first and difficult phases of an expanding campaign.

The late development of the operational plans to invade Italy had the natural result that there could be no early, comprehensive, administrative plan. 8th Army's part in what amounted to a deliberate improvisation was that 'Fortbase', dealing directly with A.F.H.Q., would maintain 13th Corps, and the associated air forces, in a limited operation in Calabria.² The fighting strength of 13th Corps was about 58,000.

'Fortbase' had serious problems to contend with. In the early stages of the invasion 8th Army was maintained from several sources and by various means: coasters bringing 'standard' loads from North Africa and Sicily; other ships carrying stores and petrol from ports in Africa and the United Kingdom; and even landing-craft which ferried stores from Sicily. Moreover, from about 26th August most of the supplies and stores were to come direct from the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. This would mean that the details of the loading of maintenance convoys by sea would have to be settled by 'Fortbase' ten weeks ahead of sailing dates. This was a hopeless task when the staffs did not know (as they did not until 16th August) the exact

¹ In ecclesiastical law a Peculiar, is, for example, a church which is exempt from the control of a diocesan bishop and subject to a jurisdiction peculiar to itself. A soldier may borrow the vocabulary of the ecclesiastic, although only a bold ecclesiastic would borrow the vocabulary of a soldier.

Before the invasion of Sicily the name Tripbase was changed to Fortbase.

² The Army's responsibilities for R.A.F. maintenance were mainly for 'common use' commodities and services. See Chapter IV, pp. 131, 135. Chapter IV explains also certain administrative terms which are used often.

forces to be provided for, where the forces would be, what they would be doing, and what ports would be available. Moreover, it had been decided in June, wisely so far as the campaign in Sicily only was in view, that full Base installations should not be built up in Sicily. The consequence was that many installations essential for an extended campaign (for example Heavy Repair Shops for vehicles) were in North Africa or Egypt and could not be brought forward by a wave of a wand.¹ Other kinds of installations and units were sufficient only for an Advanced Base in Sicily, for example Supply Depots, Petrol Depots, Field Bakeries and Butcheries, Bulk Petrol Transport Companies and Third Line General Transport Companies. Enough of all these were in reserve in North Africa, but to bring them quickly across the water to Sicily or South Italy was impracticable. The ports of North Africa were thickly congested by ocean convoys and the forces which were being mounted for Italy. The MT/Store Ships, cased petrol carriers, L.S.T. and L.C.T. were simply not enough to meet demand. It is against this background that the administrative story is set. There were also problems of a more particular kind, for example the 'worn and torn' state of equipment in formations, and the fact that many replacement-vehicles were well-worn and of unsuitable types such as two-wheel drive.

It was obvious that the L. of C. in Calabria would have to rely on sea transport and motor transport, because the Germans, no doubt mindful of Italian military shortcomings in Sicily, would certainly have demolished the railway tracks and have removed locomotives and rolling-stock. The lay-out for maintenance of the force was of orthodox pattern. There was to be a short phase of maintenance across the beaches controlled as far as possible by 13th Corps Headquarters, for the advantages of control by Corps had been suggested by the landings in Sicily. An Area Headquarters would be established in Reggio, and then a sequence of Army Roadheads, Field Maintenance Centres, and Divisional Maintenance Areas. In fact two Army Roadheads and six F.M.C.s were formed, up to 16th September. The Divisional Maintenance Area was a new thing in the operational maintenance of 8th Army and is believed (for its origins and earliest uses are not certainly known) to have been adopted from the vanished 1st Army of Tunisian fame. It never received an official form or establishment and was variously shaped. One purpose of the D.M.A. was to use and exploit the flexibility of the Divisional R.A.S.C. to the greatest possible extent, and to use the Divisional 2nd Line Transport in the most economical manner. In principle one Area was worked by one of the Divisional R.A.S.C. companies,

¹ Heavy Repair Shops were very cumbersome units, and many of their artificers were local civilians. Any programme of movement had to be most carefully phased in order to avoid a complete shutdown of essential work.

while another Area was about to open, for which a second company was standing by. One of the brigade Supply Companies, in turn, performed the functions of breaking bulk and issuing in detail in the D.M.A. There were several ways of applying the principles but the main effect of the rationalization was that Divisional R.A.S.C. transport was usually available for such tasks as troop-carrying or dumping, and that off-loading and reloading were cut down.

Sea transport was to be used, obviously, for trans-Mediterranean supply, and in coastal waters, at first in the form of a Ferry Service for a build-up across the Straits of Messina. The Ferry Service would clearly go on for some time, and as 13th Corps advanced, there would probably be occasion to land stores on beaches, and small ports would certainly have to be opened. In fact Porto S. Venere and Belvedere on the west coast, and Catanzaro Marina and Crotone on the east coast were thus used.

Ships and craft were the essentials in the sea line of supply and they were a variable factor. North Africa was the 8th Army's Main Base, and the ships allotted for the service were eight coasters, to sail in pairs probably at intervals of five days, and one storeship from Middle East every ten days. The 'standard load' of a coaster was 150 tons of supplies and 400 tons of ammunition, and of a storeship 2,000 tons of supplies and 3,000 tons of ammunition. The backbone of the Ferry Service for stores across the straits was formed by 12 L.C.T. and 122 DUKWs.¹ L.S.T. were for the most part reserved for transporting vehicles. 13th Corps was to control the Ferry Service until D + 14 when Army Headquarters would take over.

13th Corps began and continued in scarceness as regards administrative land transport. The main reasons were a shortage of load-carriers on the spot, and the very large numbers of vehicles which modern units must have to carry their elaborate fighting outfits. Besides normal Divisional transport there were 3½ General Transport Companies as Army Troops and 2 as Corps Troops. There seemed to be no possibility of increasing transport beyond the 'Light Scale' for at least a fortnight. As a rule of thumb it may be taken that 'Light Scale' in an infantry division meant 2,848 vehicles instead of 3,189, and a cut of 51 3-tonners. In an infantry division on 'Light Scale' some 2,000 of the vehicles represented units' administrative vehicles and 'fighting' vehicles such as artillery tractors, 'portees' for anti-tank guns, carriers, and vehicles for signal and engineer equipment, and for the recovery of breakdowns. Moreover, the full Light Scale could not accrue until about 18th September.

Transport is the bugbear of armies and, like original sin, is the everlasting occasion of accusation, railing, disturbed consciences, and

¹ A general indication of the uses of 8th Army's 36 available L.C.T. is: Stores Ferry Service 12, 231st Brigade and subsidiary landings 18, other purposes 6.

ensorious, vain preachings. In modern armies there is at once too much transport and not enough. The chief causes of this condition are elaborate weapons greedy for huge quantities of heavy ammunition, high military social standards which require for the urban man in uniform much food and medical care, and in the urban man himself a capacity to endure hardship far lower than that of the harshly-nurtured man of Minden, of Sebastopol, or of First Ypres. Yet it is idle to look for a Golden Age of hard-bitten sparseness in an imaginary past. In 1914 the kind eyes of 5,592 horses, the transport of an infantry division of that day, rested on a marching crocodile of men only 18,000 strong but 15 miles long, and staff officers 'swore terribly in Flanders'. Their successors have done the same there and elsewhere for kindred reasons.

Be that as it may, the analysis of the 'Light Scale' gives a clue to interpreting the numbers of vehicles landed. This, on the 7th stood at 4,800 and on the 15th at 12,421.¹ As planned, the main administrative transport was to consist, by 9th September, of 300 2nd Line vehicles for each division, 120 for other purposes, and 240 3rd Line in all. This was not achieved and by the 8th September only 375 2nd Line vehicles were at work, and for port-clearance at Reggio 120. The ascertainable cause was withdrawal of transporting craft to sustain operations at Salerno and for other purposes. However, on the 11th the Royal Navy began an intense effort, to continue for a week, to transport the back-log of vehicles, and on that day Army Headquarters took over the running of the Ferry Service, and rationalization proved possible.

86 Area Headquarters was, as it had been in Sicily, the administrative assault force and by 5th September was complete in Reggio. The development of the L. of C. followed the orthodox pattern and some main landmarks are recorded in the footnote.² The nature of the administrative situation is, however, more interesting than its

¹ A breakdown of these figures cannot be made. But it should be remembered that guns, limbers, trailers, compressors, etc. counted as vehicles.

	Reconnaissance Party	<i>F.M.Cs</i>
3rd September.	86 Area H.Q. at Reggio	6th September, No. 101
5th "	86 Area H.Q. complete at Reggio	opens, Reggio
6th "	First four ships arrive in Reggio	10th September, No. 102
	Army Roadhead Reggio	opens, Gioia Tauro
9th "	Porto S. Venere as seahead. Vibo Valentia	14th September, No. 103
	Army Roadhead	opens, Vibo Valentia
14th "	86 Area moves to Crotona	15th September, No. 104
	Main H.Q. 8th Army to Vibo Valentia.	opens, Nicastro
15th "	First ships arrive Crotona	17th September, No. 105
		opens, Sapri
		16th September, No. 106
		opens, Cariati
		18th September, No. 106
		opens, Rotondella

[continued on facing page

landmarks. The 8th Army's Chief of Staff, de Guingand, has written '... This advance up Italy was a veritable Calvary ...' and gives the extent of the German demolitions as the ground of his description. Indeed the records of that time are full of references to demolitions of every sort and size and in thirteen days 32 major demolitions were encountered, whether at bridges or culverts, or by cratering or blow-down on roads. It was usually impossible to bypass these demolitions, and to repair them took hours, and used quantities of Bailey bridging.¹

The effect of this in interruptions to transport-working, and the consequent loss of running-time, longer turn-round, and less delivery can be imagined. The advance, tactical and administrative, has been colourfully described as being at times on a two-man front.

Moreover, from the first the 5th and the Canadian divisions were advancing on separate axes, and this fact entailed a dispersion of administrative effort although both divisions were served by common F.M.C.s. The administrative strain was great, and on 9th September both divisions had supplies for but one day, while 5th Division had fuel for 225 miles and the Canadian Division for 150. It was on the next day that Alexander asked Montgomery to extend his operations. The remedies for a bleak state of affairs were more maintenance transport or more F.M.C.s fed by sea, or new ports further forward, or a combination of all three. Something of the sort was done. On the 14th one extra 3rd Line transport company was provided, and the development of Crotone as a port began. But the fact that Reggio, Porto S. Venere, and Crotone were now in use as ports demanding transport to serve them made it very unlikely that any more 3rd Line transport could be provided for the road. Alexander's allotment of extra landing-craft to 8th Army, however, helped greatly, and from about the 16th it became possible for the 13th Corps to have under its control five L.C.T. on the west coast, four on the east coast, and a G.T. company on each route.

This brief sketch has passed over the details of the development of

The main points of discharge for ships and craft, whether in small harbours or on beaches were:

<i>West Coast</i>	<i>East Coast</i>
Reggio	Catanzaro Marina
Scilla	Crotone
Porto S. Venere	Cariati
Belvedere	Scanzano
Scalea	

¹ A very untechnical description of Bailey bridging is that its main component was steel, welded, lattice panels. These were very strong, yet of a size and lightness which enabled them to be carried on 3-ton or larger lorries and to be handled quite easily. The panels could be assembled in various ingenious ways, end to end, side by side, on top of each other, to span varying gaps and to carry varying loads.

Some 16 Class 40 Bailey bridges were provided for 13th Corps over and above the normal scale.

the L. of C., its working, and near-crises in favour of a glance at the administrative background. The fighting was inconsiderable and up to 16th September total casualties were 635. But there can be no doubt that the administrative side of the operations gave just cause for constant anxiety, even though by 16th September 63,663 men, 24,512 tons of stores, 15,273 vehicles of all kinds, and 75 mules had passed safely across to Italy.

TABLE I

*Order of Battle for N.A.T.A.F.—D-Day ‘Avalanche’
(Operational control. In some instances not under command)*

N.A.T.A.F.	U.S.XII A.S.C.	U.S. 31st Fighter Group—3 Squadrons (Spitfires)	Milazzo area
		U.S. 111th Tac. R Squadron (Mustangs)	Milazzo area
		U.S. 33rd Fighter Group—3 Squadrons (Kittyhawks)	Termini
		U.S. 99th Fighter Squadron (Kittyhawks)	Termini
		U.S. 27th Fighter Group—3 Squadrons (Mustangs)	Milazzo area
		U.S. 86th Fighter Group—4 Squadrons (Mustangs)	Milazzo area
		No. 322 Wing R.A.F.—5 Squadrons (Spitfires)	Milazzo area
		No. 324 Wing R.A.F.—5 Squadrons (Spitfires)	Milazzo area
		No. 219 Squadron R.A.F. (Beaufighter night-fighters) (Detachment from 15th September)	Borizzo
		No. 255 Squadron R.A.F. (Beaufighter night-fighters)	Borizzo
No. 600 Squadron R.A.F. (Beaufighter night-fighters)	Cassibile		
No. 23 Squadron R.A.F. (Mosquito intruders)	Catania Plain		
Three U.S. Fighter Groups—9 Squadrons (Lightnings) available D—1 to D+3 approximately	Catania Plain		
<i>Note</i> No. 242 Group R.A.F. (N.A.C.A.F.) was to provide additional Beaufighter night-fighters, equipped with A.I., and as required, to reinforce U.S. XII A.S.C.			
N.A.T.A.F.	Desert Air Force	U.S. 57th Fighter Group—3 Squadrons (Kittyhawks)	Catania Plain
		U.S. 79th Fighter Group—3 Squadrons (Kittyhawks)	Catania Plain
		No. 225 Tac. R Squadron R.A.F. (Spitfires)	Catania Plain
		No. 7 Wing S.A.A.F.—2 Squadrons (Spitfires)	Catania Plain
		No. 239 Wing R.A.F.—6 Squadrons (Kittyhawks)	Catania Plain
		No. 244 Wing R.A.F.—5 Squadrons (Spitfires)	Catania Plain
<i>To operate with U.S. XII A.S.C.</i>			
N.A.T.B.F.		U.S. 12th Bombardment Group—4 Squadrons (Mitchells)	Catania Plain
		U.S. 340th Bombardment Group—4 Squadrons (Mitchells)	Catania Plain
		No. 3 Wing S.A.A.F.—2 Squadrons (Bostons) —1 Squadron (Baltimores)	Catania Plain
	No. 326 Wing R.A.F.—2 Squadrons (Bostons)	Catania Plain	
<i>To operate with Desert Air Force</i>			
		U.S. 47th Bombardment Group—4 Squadrons (Bostons)	Catania Plain
		No. 232 Wing R.A.F.—2 Squadrons (Baltimores)	Catania Plain
<i>North Africa and Sicily</i>			
Reserve Units		U.S. 324th Fighter Group (Kittyhawks)	
		No. 40 Tac. R Squadron S.A.A.F (Spitfires)	
		No. 241 Squadron R.A.F. (Hurricane fighter-bombers)	
<i>Middle East</i>			
		No. 6 Squadron R.A.F. (Hurricane tank-destroyers)	

In the event of bad flying weather arrangements were made for squadrons to operate from alternative airfields.

TABLE II
 Axis Air Forces—Orders of Battle
 Italian Air Force as at 3rd September, and German Air Force as at 31st August, 1943
 Serviceability shown in ()
 (Excluding Air Transports and Coastal Aircraft)

Location	Fighter and Fighter-Bomber		Bomber		Reconnaissance		Army Co-operation/ Ground attack		Totals
	G.A.F.	I.A.F.	G.A.F.	I.A.F.	G.A.F.	I.A.F.	G.A.F.	I.A.F.	
Southern France			100 (36)		20 (6)*				
Northern Italy		86 (53)	64 (12)					85 (51)	Central Mediterranean 1,304 (624)
Central Italy		156 (77)	37 (15)					78 (48)	
Southern Italy	223 (117)	72 (32)	72 (37)		29 (18)	9 (5)		Includes Corsica	Eastern Mediterranean 758 (483)
Sardinia	26 (15)	75 (34)	16 (9)		10 (4)					78 (43)
Slovenia-Dalmatia			14 (12)					48 (26)	
Albania		27 (18)	49 (33)		52 (38)			21 (13)	
Greece/Crete	42 (33)	24 (8)							
Aegean		44 (26)	75 (68)						
Rumania	71 (51)		175 (101)	20 (10)	18 (3)				
Croatia									
Totals	362 (216)	484 (248)	526 (279)	214 (99)	129 (69)	9 (5)	28 (10)	310 (181)	2,062 (1,107)

*Belonging to *Lufflotte 3*. Based in southern France for operations in the Mediterranean but not under command of *Lufflotte 2*.

Note Excluding air transports and coastal aircraft, the German air strength in Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia had fallen from about 960 on 10th July to some 490 aircraft by the end of August. Apart from the heavy losses suffered in the Sicilian campaign, the need to conserve fighters to bolster the defence of the Third Reich against the mounting intensity of the Combined Bomber Offensive made further inroads on the already seriously depleted G.A.F. in the Mediterranean area.

TABLE III

Sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command dusk 17th August—dusk 2nd September 1943
(excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports)

Command	Land Recce	Fighters Includes shipping protection shown in ()	Bomber and Fighter-Bomber				Bomber Totals		
			Sardinia L. of C. and other Targets	Italy L. of C. and other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	Greece L. of C. and other Targets	Aegean L. of C. and other Targets	Day	Night
N.A.A.F.	279*	6,602 (2,140)	—	576	249	—	—	825	—
			—	1,241	141	—	—	1,382	—
			—	479	663	—	—	479	663
			202	606	47	—	—	808	47
Malta	44*	438 (177)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			—	—	3	—	—	—	3
			—	166	13	—	—	182	13
M.E.A.C.	84*	1,456 (1,113)	—	—	1	4	—	—	5
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			—	—	—	4	—	1	1
			—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Totals	407	8,496 (3,430)	202	3,068	727	4	2	3,682	733

* Estimated.

Total Sorties Flown = 13,318 or 832 every 24 hours.

Note During the period 21st August to 3rd September close on 4,000 tons of bombs were dropped on main Italian marshalling-yards and airfields.

M.A.C.'S SORTIES

CHAPTER VIII
THE INVASION OF ITALY:
PREPARATIONS FOR LANDINGS
AT SALERNO; THE LANDINGS
9TH SEPTEMBER 1943

(i)

See Map 15

ON the 20th August 1940 when addressing the House of Commons, Mr. Churchill said 'The British Empire and the United States will have to be somewhat mixed up together in some of their affairs for the mutual and general advantage . . . I do not view the process with any misgivings . . .' In the Mediterranean theatre, the landings at Salerno exhibited the affairs of the Allies mixed up together as never before in this theatre. During the campaign in North Africa ten weeks had passed before American land forces were formally placed under British command, and in the final offensive 2nd U.S. Corps had been formally under the command of Alexander, the Army Group Commander, instead of Anderson of whose 1st Army it was in effect a part. In the Sicilian campaign the 8th British and 7th U.S. Armies had been separate entities. In the Salerno operation the process of combining British and American land forces in a single congruous whole was carried much further, for in outline they were:

5th U.S. Army (Lieut.-General Mark W. Clark)

6th U.S. Corps (Major-General Ernest J. Dawley):

3rd U.S. Division (Major-General Lucian K. Truscott)

34th U.S. Division (Major-General Charles W. Ryder)

36th U.S. Division (Major-General Fred L. Walker)

45th U.S. Division (Major-General Troy H. Middleton)¹

10th Corps (Lieut.-General R. L. McCreery):

46th Division (Major-General J. L. I. Hawkesworth)

56th Division (Major-General D. A. H. Graham)

7th Armoured Division (Major-General G. W. E. J. Erskine)²

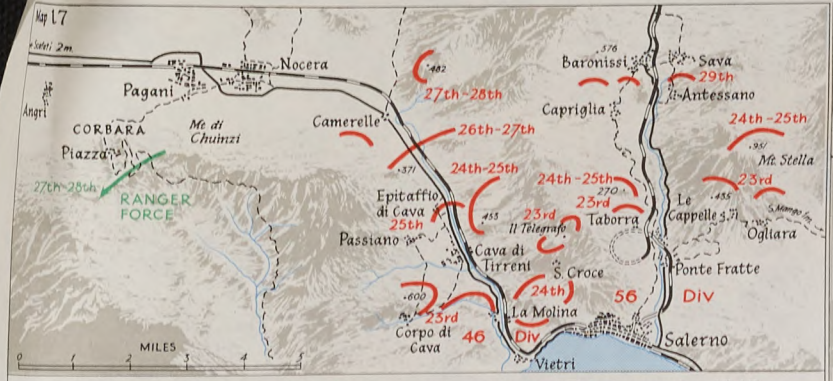
¹ Clark was able to call also on 1st U.S. Armoured Division and 82nd U.S. Airborne Division.

² Like General Clark, Generals Dawley, Walker, and McCreery were making their debut as high commanders in the field of battle.

Even in the approach to battle the same process occurred, for some British units were transported in American craft and vice versa. At sea the mingling of British and American naval units had for a long time been a matter of course the world over, and in this operation the principal naval commander under Admiral Cunningham was Vice-Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, U.S.N. British and American air forces had become closely associated since the creation of Mediterranean Air Command in February, and in the invasion of Italy they moved easily between higher commanders of either nationality, in the manner exemplified by the tactical air forces under Air Vice-Marshal Broadhurst and Major-General House, U.S.A.A.F.

Although the major landings at Salerno had been in process of planning since the middle of July, the detailed preparation of the force went forward under noticeable handicaps. There was, in the broad field, the bewildering political-military scene in Italy which prevented early, firm, decisions in Allied plans. Headquarters 5th Army was not assigned to its task until 27th July, nor was 6th U.S. Corps, while the role of 10th Corps was not decided as Salerno (instead of the Gulf of Gioia) until mid-August. To be hard pressed for time was becoming a familiar and unwelcome condition for Allied commanders and staffs. As regards the land battle at Salerno there was no knowing how strongly the Germans would oppose a landing. Strategic surprise seemed most improbable, and much tactical surprise unlikely because the German commanders were as able as the Allies to spot a good area for a landing, particularly because of the tell-tale factor of air cover. On the assumption that the Germans would oppose the landing an estimate was that some 39,000 of their troops, including one armoured division, would be near Salerno on D-Day and 100,000 three days later. There seemed to be in Salerno bay at least 150 prepared machine-gun posts and 17 pill-boxes. As time went on, the Italian air force and navy faded from the picture. German air opposition however was expected to be strong. At sea battleships were included in the Allied naval covering forces as a precautionary measure but only German U-boats (some fifteen in number) and S-boats were seriously reckoned with.

As with the 8th Army in Baytown, shortage of shipping and craft was a persistent, stubborn difficulty. The American historian has written '... Throughout the Avalanche planning period, no one knew exactly how much assault shipping was available ...', and again '... Clark had wanted to have at least two American divisions in the initial assault under VI Corps ... yet the result of scraping and scrimping and of rigorous controls exercised by senior commanders was merely enough craft for a single reinforced American division ...' The plague of scarcity, besides this important effect, had confusing and frustrating effects similar to those which afflicted



Progress of fighting in the Salerno Corridors 22nd - 27th September 1943

ADVANCE TO FOGGIA AND NAPLES

17th September - 1st October 1943



the British. One, drily described by General Walker, may suggest all '... Men of calm dispositions after having re-written their [loading] tables several times became quite irritable. Men of sensitive natures became unapproachable... I myself gave way to expressions of disgust.'¹

See Map 17

On 26th August General Clark issued his outline plan, approved by Eisenhower. He described his Army's task as 'to seize the port of Naples and to secure the airfields in the Naples area with a view to preparing a firm base for further offensive operations'. The main reasons for choosing the Gulf of Salerno for the landings have been given in Chapter VII, but some topographical features should be described. The approach from the sea was open, for between Punta Campanella at the tip of the Sorrento peninsula on the northern flank and Punta Licosa on the south the distance was thirty-three miles. The beaches were good. Beyond the beaches the projected battlefield presented Nature's usual level mixture of advantages and difficulties. In general shape and nature it was a triangular, alluvial plain.² The base, fifteen to twenty miles long, was formed by the beaches and the apex lay about twelve miles inland, eastwards. The sides were the mountainous promontories of the Sorrento peninsula on the north and Punta Licosa on the south. These mountainous sides soon turned into mountains proper, and in fact the plain was enclosed by the heights of the southern Apennines running up to five thousand feet. The foothills swelled strongly up from a line marked by the road (Highway 18) which crosses the plain. In consequence the whole plain and the beaches were in view from higher ground.

The beaches themselves were backed by sand dunes, and the plain beyond was heavily cultivated and dotted with farm buildings although the villages lay in the foothills and on the mountain slopes, placed there in olden days to avoid pirates and malarial mosquitoes. Of these pests the pirates only had disappeared. There were rivers and streams in the plain: those which chiefly concern us were the Sele River at the plain's middle point; and north of it, the Tusciano and the Asa. The Sele River was not easy to cross for it was well fed by lesser streams, flowed at an even depth, and in places was five-hundred yards wide. Numerous little streams, dykes, ditches, pools, and marshy patches made further obstacles. In September, the corn had been cut, but vines and tobacco stood higher than a man. Olive trees and fruit trees grew here and there. The Salerno plain, as a

¹ *Salerno to Cassino* by Martin Blumenson, pp. 37, 41.

² The area here generally termed the Salerno plain is more correctly known as the Lower Sele basin, comprising the plains of Salerno, Paestum, and Eboli.

battlefield, was 'blind', obstructed, and overlooked. For enemy low-level fighter-bomber and strafing opposition the corridor from the north opening out at Vietri offered excellent cover for surprise attack, and that afforded by the wider Irno and Eboli valleys and the gap in the hills running north-west to Agropoli was good.

The systems of road and rail were important in so far as they offered exits to the Allied forces and routes for reinforcement or withdrawal to the Germans. Highway 18 traced a curve across the plain from north to south, six miles or so from the sea at the most inland points. At Salerno and Vietri sul Mare in the northern corner of the Gulf there were three routes to the north. Highway 88 was the right-hand route, passing through the Irno Valley to S. Severino and Avellino where a branch took off to Naples. Highway 18, in the middle, passed through a steep-sided narrow corridor to the plain of Naples and Naples itself. The third route ran round the rugged Sorrento peninsula to Castellammare on Naples Bay, and onwards to join the Naples highway. At the southern end of the Gulf of Salerno Highway 18 entered the plain through a corridor in the coastal hills. Immediately east of the range of the Southern Apennines which enclosed the Salerno plain there was a road Eboli-Auletta-Atena-Sala Consilina-Lagonegro. A number of east-west trans-peninsular roads joined this road at various intervals. There were important junctions at Atena and Auletta (routes from Potenza) and Eboli. A whole complex of roads ran into the plain of Naples and to Naples itself from the east, north-east, and north. Militarily it amounted to a good road through the length of the Salerno plain, and several in and out of it. The best were up to twenty feet wide, tarmac and shorn of acute bends and sharp gradients by clever engineers, but all could be easily defended or blocked. The lesser roads were inclined to break up under heavy traffic in wet weather.

The main railway line in the area was part of the west coast route Rome-Naples-south Italy, standard gauge, double-track, and electrified. At Battipaglia one single-track line diverged eastward to Potenza, to link with the systems serving the Heel, while another single-track line continued southwards across the Salerno plain into Calabria. A steam link connected Salerno with Benevento to the north, and connected there with other lines running north and south, and eastward to Foggia. The railway system in short had useful potential for the Germans if they were able to use it in the face of Allied air power, and possible Italian interference.

(ii)

5th U.S. Army was organized for the landings as a Northern Attack Force (10th Corps) and a Southern Attack Force (6th U.S.

Corps). All the British divisions had experience in battle: 46th from February 1943 until the end in Africa in May; 56th during the last three weeks in Africa; and 7th Armoured throughout the Desert War. Neither infantry division had taken part in a landing.¹ Among the American divisions, the 36th had no experience in battle; the 3rd and the 45th had fought in Sicily including the landings; and the 34th had been in the landings in French North Africa and through the Tunisian campaign. The shortage of landing-craft and their overhauls prevented any large rehearsals, British or American, but some training in craft was provided for the assaulting troops though much less than was desirable.

10th Corps' intention was to land south-east of Salerno and to capture Naples; 6th U.S. Corps' was to secure its share of the bridgehead, to protect the right flank of 10th Corps, and gradually to free it for the blow at Naples by taking over its functions in the bridgehead. But first of all the Attack Forces had to establish their beachhead. The task included setting up installations to provide maintenance over the beaches for an estimated twelve days. A fruit of Sicilian experience was that maintenance over beaches, which had once been thought hazardous for longer than a day, was now taken as an axiom until a port could be captured. Since to make extra airfields in the beachhead was deemed vital, a large number of airfield engineers and much bulky mechanical equipment was to land very early—a heavy charge against craft.²

56th Division, on the right of 10th Corps was to land on a two-brigade front on four beaches, of which two lay on the right of the mouth of the River Tusciano, and two on its left. On the left of the Corps, and at an interval of about a mile and a half from 56th Division, 46th Division was to land a single brigade on two beaches. Since the ultimate aim of 10th Corps, and indeed 5th U.S. Army's main purpose, was to capture Naples, it was necessary to seize quickly the corridors through the Sorrento peninsula. With this in view, the Special Service Brigade (2nd, and 41st Royal Marine Commandos under Brigadier R. Laycock) was to land at Vietri sul Mare; and a U.S. Ranger Force (1st, 3rd, and 4th Ranger Battalions, under

¹ 10th Corps, with 56th Division (Major-General D. A. H. Graham), moved to the Tripoli area in late May. Training was carried on here and at Corps Mountain Warfare School, Tarhouna; troops to be engaged in the assault landing (167th and 169th Brigades) practised at Zuara. The Division's third brigade, 201st Guards, carried out the bulk of its training at Sousse, moving to Tripoli early August. 46th Division, after a spell of salvage and guard duties in Tunisia, moved in mid-June to its training areas; the assault brigade (128th) to the Combined Operations Training Centre, Djidjelli, the remainder near Algiers. In the middle of August the Division concentrated about Bizerta, where Major-General J. L. I. Hawkesworth assumed command from General Freeman-Attwood. Visiting them a few days later, the Corps Commander, General Horrocks, was wounded in an air raid. His place was taken by Lieut.-General R. L. McCreery, who reached Corps H.Q. from the United Kingdom on 26th August, the day before embarkation began.

² It was hoped to land some 3,500 of these troops by the sixteenth day.

Lieut.-Colonel William O. Darby) at Maiori. 46th Division was to join hands with the Commandos and, together with 56th Division push inland to Montecorvino airfield ($5\frac{1}{2}$ miles), the road and rail junction at Battipaglia ($5\frac{1}{2}$ miles) and Ponte Sele (12 miles).¹ This general task was to be accomplished in a series of from three to five intermediate tactical tasks. 56th Division was also to join hands with 6th U.S. Corps whose left-hand boundary was the right bank of the Sele River.

36th U.S. Division was to land on four beaches opposite the village of Paestum on a two-brigade front. Its first task was to gain the line of the railway about one mile inland, and then advance to a general line of high ground between Ponte Sele and Magliano (13 miles).

The general pattern of the assault landings was like that described for the landings in Sicily (Chapter II, pp. 55-59) and need not detain us. But the question of tactical build-up was crucial. All divisions planned to land their reserve brigades within the first twenty-four hours, and apart from these the only reserve immediately available to General Clark was the single R.C.T. (179th) of 45th U.S. Division for which landing-craft could be found. In fact this landed on 10th September. Plans for the next big phase after the landings were scarcely more than projects. 7th Armoured Division was expected to begin to land from the first follow-up convoy on the fifth day, and to be almost completed by the second follow-up convoy between the twelfth and nineteenth days. 46th Division would be complete by the same dates, 56th Division during the following week.² Expectations of a quick build-up were, in short, small and on 2nd September Whiteley, Deputy Chief of Staff at A.F.H.Q., made the point in a letter to the War Office '... The follow-up problem is perhaps more complicated than anything we have met hitherto. Apart from using the North African ports and Tripoli, ferry services must be run from two ports in Sicily . . .'

¹ The figures in the brackets are the distance of these places from the coast as the crow flies.

² The planned progression was:

<i>Convoy</i>	<i>From Bizerta</i>	<i>From Tripoli</i>	<i>46 Div</i>	<i>56 Div</i>	<i>Armd Div</i>
Assault	D to D+3	D to D+3	$\frac{2}{3}$ Assault Scale	Assault Scale	—
1st Follow-up	D+5 to D+10	D+7 to D+12	$\frac{1}{3}$ Light Scale	Light Scale	Part at Light Scale
2nd Follow-up	D+12 to D+16	D+14 to D+19	War Est.	—	Almost at War Establishment
3rd Follow-up	D+17 to D+21	D+21 to D+26	—	War Establishment	War Establishment

The use of airborne troops in the operation was considered. There was a plan to land airborne troops on the Sorrento peninsula to seize the road-corridors. The excessive difficulties and hazards caused by the air-currents, anti-aircraft defences, and the rugged, unwelcoming terrain disposed of this plan. Then there was a plan to drop a parachute brigade in the Volturno river valley, north of Naples, to disrupt the enemy's communications. General Bedell Smith wrote of this ' . . . My personal opinion is . . . that it will accomplish little in proportion to the cost . . . I believe that the entire area north of Naples will be peppered with individual parachutists, that it will be impossible for them to re-assemble by battalions, and that the job of supplying them after the operation will prove so costly that it will be difficult to continue . . .' This plan was dropped.¹ To fly in airborne troops to the beachhead was not considered.

The shortage of major landing-craft lay like a shadow over the Salerno operations. These craft were the L.S.T. and L.C.T., maids of all work because of their qualities of seaworthiness, large capacity for stowage, ability to beach and, in some cases, special equipment such as powerful derricks and between-decks lifts. 118 L.S.T. and 90 L.C.T. were available for the force of four divisions, and it seems a fair number. Yet the multifarious tasks of the Ferry Service off the beaches and to and from North Africa and Sicily taxed these craft to the limit.

(iii)

See Map 12

The main task of the Allied navies in this operation was, in the customary phrase, to ensure the safe and timely arrival of the invading force on the beaches. Cover for the array of warships, merchant vessels and landing-craft, which were some 627 in number and are shown in Table I, was provided by Force H commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir Algernon Willis, directly subordinate to Admiral Cunningham. Attack by the Italian Fleet was a possible if receding risk. Vice-Admiral H. Kent Hewitt U.S.N., under the style of Commander, Western Task Force, commanded all other warships, ships, and craft engaged in the operation. A part of Hewitt's Force was Force V under Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian. This included the Light Fleet Carrier H.M.S. *Unicorn* and four Escort Carriers, which the Admiralty had sent specially to the Mediterranean to help to solve the problem of providing fighter cover for the landings.² In the

¹ In the event, 82nd U.S. Airborne Division stood by to land near Rome on 8th September, and 1st British Airborne Division sailed to Taranto.

² The Escort Carriers were H.M.S. *Battler*, *Attacker*, *Stalker*, *Hunter*. F.A.A. Squadrons embarked in Forces H and V will be found in Table II. The Fleet Carriers in Force H provided fighter cover for both Force H and Force V, leaving Force V's fighters to operate over the beaches.

TABLE I

Operation 'Avalanche'—Ships and Craft Engaged

Type of Ship or Craft	Control Force (Vice-Admiral Hewitt) and Diversion Force	Southern Attack Force (Rear-Admiral Hall)	Northern Attack Force (Commodore Oliver)	Covering Force 'H' (Vice-Admiral Willis) and Air Support Force 'V' (Rear-Admiral Vian)
H.Q. Ship	<i>Ancon</i>	—	<i>Hilary</i> (Cdre Oliver) <i>Biscayne</i> (R.A. Conolly)*	<i>FORCE 'H'</i> <i>Battleships</i> <i>Nelson</i> (Flag)
LSI or Combat Loader	—	12 including <i>Samuel Chase</i>	12	<i>Rodney</i> <i>Warspite</i> (R.A. Bissett) <i>Valiant</i> <i>Fleet Carriers</i> <i>Illustrious</i> (R.A. Moody) <i>Formidable</i> <i>Destroyers—18</i>
MT Ship	—	4	—	
LS Gantry	—	1	—	
LSG	—	1	—	
LST	—	28 (3 <i>Boxer</i> Class)	90	
LCT	—	6	84	Detached to Taranto
LCI(L)	—	32	96	<i>Battleships</i>
LCG	—	—	9	<i>Howe & King George V</i> (V.A. Power)
LCF	—	—	7	<i>Cruisers</i>
LCR	—	—	3	<i>Aurora</i> (Cdre Agnew)
Tugs	—	2	2	<i>Penelope</i> <i>Sirius</i> <i>Dido</i>
Repair Ship	10	—	—	<i>Destroyers—4†</i>
Cruiser	—	3 (R.A. Davidson)	3 (R.A. Harcourt)	<i>FORCE 'V'</i>
AA Cruiser	—	1	1	<i>Cruisers</i>
AA Ship	—	—	1	<i>Euryalus</i> (Flag)
Fighter Direction Ship	1	—	—	<i>Scylla</i>
Destroyer	5	16	18	<i>Charybdis</i>
Submarine	—	1	—	<i>Light Fleet Carrier</i>
Monitor	—	1	1	<i>Unicorn</i>
Gunboat	2 (Dutch)	—	—	<i>Escort Carriers</i>
Fleet Minesweeper Motor or 'Y' Sweeper	—	9	15	<i>Battler</i> <i>Attacker</i>
Trawler	—	15	22	<i>Stalker</i>
Minelayer	3	—	13	<i>Hunter</i>
MTB or MGB	4	—	—	<i>Destroyers—10</i>
ML or HDML	6	—	24	<i>M.T.B.s—4</i>
PT, PC or SC	21	8	31	

* Rear-Admiral Conolly U.S.N. had volunteered to command a part of the Northern Attack Force, although senior to Commodore Oliver.

event Force H maintained covering positions in the Tyrrhenian Sea until September 12th when it withdrew to Malta. Force V was at sea south of the Salerno beaches until it sailed to Palermo on the 12th and to Bizerta on the 13th. Additional warships soon returned to Salerno in view of the growing crisis of the battle on shore: the cruisers *Aurora* and *Penelope* on the 14th, the *Valiant* and *Warspite* on the 15th, and on the 16th the cruisers *Euryalus*, *Scylla*, and *Charybdis* from Tripoli with army reinforcements embarked. These naval activities are noticed in their place in the battle.

TABLE II

Fleet Air Arm Aircraft Embarked

<i>FORCE H</i>	<i>Squadron</i>	<i>Aircraft</i>
<i>Illustrious:</i>	No. 878	(14) Martlet IV*
	No. 810	(10) Barracuda
	No. 890	(14) Martlet IV*
	No. 894	(10) Seafire IIC
<i>Formidable:</i>	No. 820	(12) Albacore†
	No. 885	(5) Seafire IIC†
	No. 888	(16) Martlet IV*†
	No. 893	(16) Martlet IV*†
 <i>FORCE V</i>		
<i>Unicorn:</i>	No. 809	(10) Seafire IIC†
	No. 887	(10) Seafire IIC
	No. 897	(10) Seafire IIC
<i>Stalker:</i>	No. 833	(6) Seafire L IIC†
	No. 880	(14) Seafire L IIC†
<i>Attacker:</i>	No. 879	(10) Seafire L IIC
	No. 886	(10) Seafire L IIC
<i>Hunter:</i>	No. 834	(6) Seafire L IIC
	No. 899	(14) Seafire L IIC
<i>Battler:</i>	No. 807	(9) Seafire L IIC†
	No. 808	(9) Seafire L IIC

* The British designation 'Martlet' for this type of aircraft was later changed to 'Wildcat', but for our purposes, to avoid confusion, the original designation 'Martlet' will continue to be used.

† Took part in operation 'Torch'—Nos. 809 and 833 Squadrons since re-equipped with Seafires.

The Assault Convoys, their escorts, and supporting ships were organized as a Northern Attack Force (Commodore G. N. Oliver R.N.) and a Southern Attack Force (Rear-Admiral John L. Hall U.S.N.). To provide fire support for the Northern Attack Force there was Rear-Admiral C. H. J. Harcourt's Force K, consisting of three cruisers, the anti-aircraft cruiser *Delhi*, the monitor *Roberts* and five destroyers, while for the same task in the Southern Attack Force Rear-Admiral Lyal A. Davidson U.S.N. maintained three American cruisers and the monitor H.M.S. *Abercrombie*. General McCreery, discounting surprise because detection from the air was virtually

certain, decided to provide for preliminary 'softening up' by destroyers, and gun and rocket landing-craft during the fifteen minutes immediately before H hour. General Walker decided at the last minute to do without a naval bombardment in the hope of keeping his assault unheralded, and because he thought that the crash and flame of heavy shelling close at hand might confuse his troops rather than help them.

Mounting the expedition was complicated owing to several circumstances. A.F.H.Q. was responsible for the arrangements for troops west of the frontier of Tripolitania, G.H.Q. M.E.F. for troops east of it, H.Q. 15th Army Group for troops in Sicily. The location of the troops and the capacity of ports and their degrees of congestion had to be considered. Broadly speaking most of the Southern Attack Force was mounted at Oran; and of the Northern Attack Force, 46th Division at Bizerta and 56th Division at Tripoli. The Commando Brigade and the Ranger Battalions were mounted at Palermo.

Most of the Southern Attack Force was loaded in ship-to-shore convoys, and part of the Northern Attack Force in ship-to-shore and part in shore-to-shore convoys. All landing-craft and some smaller escorts which sailed from North Africa were obliged to refuel at Sicilian ports. Besides the Assault Convoys proper, arrangements had to be made for return-convoys, follow-up convoys, and a shuttle-service of L.C.I. and L.S.T. between the beaches, Sicily, and North Africa as part of the build-up. The movements of convoys therefore were very intricate, and a much simplified table below presents the assault convoys by types and loading and by dates of sailing from North Africa. There was too the inevitable circumstance of chop and change, and Admiral Hall remarked on its effects when he wrote that on the evening of 8th September he did not know exactly the number of landing-craft under his orders, ' . . . the designation of the individual craft assigned, or the designation of all the units embarked . . . '

There were no pronounced natural hazards to navigation in Salerno Bay, but Intelligence had suspected that mines had been laid inside the hundred fathom line. The submarine *Shakespeare* confirmed this by reconnaissances between 30th August and 1st September when she plotted much of the minefield by sonic contacts and also, at very great risk, reconnoitred from folbots.¹ The *Shakespeare's* very valuable reports caused the Release Positions for Assault Convoys to be shifted further to seaward: nine miles for the southern force and twelve miles for the northern. But this shift compelled an unwelcome last minute change in the time-table for the waves of

¹ 'Folbot' was the trade name for a type of collapsible canoe used in clandestine landings.

ASSAULT CONVOYS

Convoy Destination	Date of Sailing	Sailing from	Staging at	Composition (Does not include escorts or ancillary ships)	Load	Ship to Shore Mixed	Forces Designation
*TSS-1 FSS-1	3 Sept 4 Sept	Tripoli Bizerta	Termini Castellammare (Sicily)	29 LCT & 10 LCS 37 LCT & 9 LCS	Personnel & Vehicles 56 Div. Personnel & Vehicles 46 Div., Armour, 36 (US) Div., Ranger & Commando Equipment	Shore to Shore Shore to Shore	Northern Attack Northern Attack
*TSS-2 *TSM-1 FSM-1	6 Sept 6 Sept 6 Sept	Tripoli Tripoli Bizerta	Termini Castellammare	20 LST, 3 M.T. Ships 36 LCI 44 LCI	56 Div. & 10 Corps Troops 56 Div. & 10 Corps Troops 46 Div., 10 Corps & R.A.F. personnel	Shore to Shore Shore to Shore Shore to Shore	Northern Attack Northern Attack Northern Attack
TSF-1	6 Sept	Tripoli		9 LSI, HQ Ship <i>Hilary</i>	HQ 10 Corps & 56 Div., 10 Corps & 56 Div. Troops	Ship to Shore	Northern Attack
FSS-2	7 Sept	Bizerta		<i>Biscayne</i> , 1 Monitor, 2 M.T. and 20 LST	HQ 46 Div. & 10 Corps Troops	Mixed	Northern Attack
TSS-3	7 Sept	Tripoli		17 LST	Personnel & Vehicles 56 Div. & Corps Troops	Shore to Shore	Northern Attack
FSS-3 TSF-1 (X)	7 Sept 8 Sept	Bizerta Palermo		18 LST 3 LSI & 8 LCI	Personnel & Vehicles 46 Div. Rangers & Commandos	Shore to Shore Mixed	Northern Attack Northern Attack
NSF-1	5 Sept	Oran		9 Combat Loaders, 3 LSI, 3 LST & 4 M.T. ships	6 U.S. Corps	Ship to Shore	Southern Attack
FSS-2 (X)	7 Sept	Bizerta		1 Monitor, 2 LSC, 18 LST, 20 LCI	5th Army Armour & Reserve N.A.A.F. equipment	Shore to Shore	Southern Attack
FSS-2 (Y)	8 Sept	Termini		16 LST, 23 LCI	RCT 45 (US) Div., Army Reserve	Shore to Shore	Southern Attack
NSF-1 (X) FSM-1 (X)	6 Sept 6 Sept	Algiers Bizerta	Palermo	HQ Ship <i>Ancon</i> 1 Destroyer, 1 Gunboat, 21 MTBs, 10 ML or PC	H.Q. 5th Army —	— —	Control Control

* 24 LCI from TSM-1 joined TSS-1 at Termini and then became TSS-1 (X). Remainder of TSM-1 and TSS-2 combined on 8th Sept. For various reasons numbers of ships and craft differ slightly from those given in Table I.

landing-craft. It became necessary too for minesweepers to sweep-in the leading craft. In September light easterly winds, clear skies, good visibility, and a slight sea with inshore breakers of two feet or less could be expected, and the expectation was fulfilled.¹ As has been mentioned there was small hope of surprise although a naval diversion to create it was arranged. Captain Charles L. Andrews U.S.N. in the destroyer *Knight*, with two Dutch gunboats, fifteen flotilla craft, and a detachment from 82nd U.S. Airborne Division was appointed to demonstrate against beaches near the Volturno River, and to capture Ventotene Island (west of Naples) and its radar station during the night 8th/9th September.

(iv)

We must now move over to the German side, and it is interesting to reflect how often since August 1942 it had been the lot of enemy commanders in the Mediterranean theatre to puzzle over Allied intentions and moves, to dance instead of calling the tune. They had lost the initiative.

On 19th August Kesselring placed Sardinia and Corsica first as likely objectives of Allied attack, and the coasts of the Gulfs of Gaeta and Salerno second. He considered that Calabria was no longer a probable objective because of the lateness of the season.² By 29th August, intelligence of concentrations of Allied landing-craft at Bizerta, Malta (in fact a centre for overhaul) and Sicily, of aircraft in the western Mediterranean, and of sparse shipping movement in the eastern Mediterranean caused *OKW* to think that the Allies were ready for an assault on southern Italy. But the question 'Where?' could not be answered, and the list read Calabria, Apulia, the Gulf of Salerno, the Gulf of Gaeta, Civitavecchia, with Sardinia and Corsica added outside Italy, and southern France and the Balkans thrown in as more distant possibilities. But the Balkans were held to be the Allies' ultimate, large objective.

The German dispositions in southern Italy were determined by a Directive of Hitler's on 18th August, reaffirmed by von Vietinghoff in his first Army Order as C.-in-C. of *AOK 10* on 22nd August. We have seen that von Vietinghoff's orders prescribed delay and withdrawal by 76th Panzer Corps in Calabria. In contrast a strong force of at least three mobile divisions was to hold the area Gaeta-Salerno

¹ On 8th September sunset was at 7.23 p.m. and nautical twilight ended at 8.23 p.m. Moonset was two minutes before 1 a.m. on 9th September, the beginning of nautical twilight 5.35 a.m., sunrise 6.35 a.m. H hour was 3.30 a.m., 9th September. These times were two hours in advance of G.M.T.

² On 16th August Eisenhower decided to invade Calabria across the Messina Straits as early as possible. Salerno was 'firm' for 9th September if nothing untoward occurred. On 19th August Eisenhower cancelled the proposed landing by 10th Corps in the Gulf of Gioia (western Calabria).

against enemy attack at least until the manifold uncertainties of the situation in Italy began to be resolved by events. von Vietinghoff gave to 14th Panzer Corps the task of destroying the enemy if he landed anywhere in the Gulfs of Gaeta or Salerno, although General Hube was to hold ready one division to dash into Apulia, and another to Rome, should the Allies attempt to land in these areas.¹ It is interesting that all German commanders took it for granted that the enemy would succeed in landing, and that their task was to counter-attack and throw him into the sea. They held, before the Italian surrender, that the Italian forces were responsible for defence of the actual beaches, and after the Italian surrender they did not contemplate themselves strongly defending the beaches. In accordance with von Vietinghoff's intentions 14th Panzer Corps' formations were thus disposed on the eve of the battle: 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, Gulf of Gaeta; Hermann Göring Division, environs of Naples; 16th Panzer Division, Gulf of Salerno. In the Rome area there were, under command of *Fliegerkorps XI*, 3rd Panzer Grenadier and 2nd Parachute Divisions.

Although intelligence may read the signs of invasion correctly, where and within what period it will occur, the points of landings, the dates, and the time remain guess-work unless there have been such windfalls as a gross breach of security or a series of early, accurate, and tell-tale sightings. On 5th September Balck judged that an early assault in his sector seemed likely. On the 7th he expected landings in the Corps area, and enjoined 'maximum watchfulness' for coastal detachments. On the 8th landings were regarded as certainly imminent, but the Allies' choice of place seemed open between the Gulf of Salerno, Naples, and further north. On the morning of the 8th all German divisions were placed at 'maximum alert'. All the above followed deductions from aerial reports of the movements of convoys, which will be referred to again.² Actually an observation post of 16th Panzer Division reported six ships off shore at 1.58 a.m. on the 9th and that landing-craft were approaching at 3.7 a.m. At 7.35 a.m. 14th Panzer Corps sent to *AOK 10* a report which was matter-of-fact enough to have pleased Wellington himself: 'Major landing operations in plain of Salerno. Battles in progress. Otherwise quiet.'

¹ 14th Panzer Corps (Lieut.-General Hans-Valentin Hube).

Main formations, with approximate strength on 31st August in the brackets:

16th Panzer Division (Major-General Rudolph Sieckenius) (15,000)

15th Panzer Grenadier Division (Major-General Eberhard Rodt) (12,300)

Hermann Göring Division (Major-General Conrath) (15,700)

Lieut.-General Hermann Balck took over the Corps, as acting Commander, from 2nd September until the end of October.

On 8th September 16th Panzer Division's tanks, fit for battle, were: 7 Pzkw III (long); 12 Pzkw IV 38, 87 Pzkw IV (long).

² 16th Panzer Division was at maximum alert by 1.40 p.m. on 8th September, Hermann Göring Division by 2 a.m. on the 9th.

16th Panzer Division was deployed in four Battle Groups, with, very roughly, six miles between Groups, and the Groups placed from three to six miles back from the coast. From right to left (looking seaward) they were:

<i>Dörnemann</i>	Between Salerno and Baronissi.
<i>Stempel</i>	Pontecagnano–Montecorvino–Battipaglia.
<i>von Holtey</i>	(Reserve) Persano.
<i>von Doering</i>	Albanella–Rutino, four miles south-east of Ogliastro. ¹

16th Panzer Division held 7 units of fuel for its tanks and vehicles (although it is not certain what a unit of fuel represented in terms of miles), and one complete issue of ammunition.²

Although 16th Panzer Division's tactics were to be mobile, it had built, wired, and mined eight strong points: one at Salerno, five in the area of 10th Corps' beaches, one at Paestum, and one at Agropoli. Mines were few, perhaps not more than 2,400 anti-tank mines and 1,500 anti-personnel actually laid. There were no underwater obstacles on the beaches. 14th Panzer Corps troops seem to have disarmed the Italian forces in its area without trouble. If a diarist from Hermann Göring Division can be taken as typical, the German soldiers looked on the Italians as traitors, and on themselves as rather far from home, and they took what they fancied of Italian weapons, equipment, and supplies.

(v)

'Never ending, still beginning' often seems to apply to a description of the launching of an enterprise, and, before the convoys sail

¹ Outline composition of Groups:

- a. Major Dörnemann, commander 16th Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion.
16th Panzer Recce Bn, Assault gun company 3/2nd Panzer Regt, det. S.P. artillery, engineer company.
- b. Colonel Stempel, commander 64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment.
64th Panzer Grenadier Regt (two bns), 3/2nd Panzer Regt (Assault guns; less a company), artillery battery, engineer company.
- c. Colonel von Holtey, commander 2nd Panzer Regiment.
2/2nd Panzer Regt (less two companies), artillery battery, engineer platoon.
von Holtey was wounded on the 10th and Captain Ackermann took his place.
2nd Panzer Regiment had an establishment of three bns (one of them assault-guns) but it was not up to strength as one bn was in Germany, for re-equipment with Panther tanks, and did not reach Italy.
- d. Colonel von Doering, commander 79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment.
79th Panzer Grenadier Regt (two bns), two companies 2/2nd Panzer Regt, artillery battery, engineer and recce detachments.
The heavy weapons of the division were of this order:
16th Artillery Regiment: 18 S.P. and 20 towed light field howitzers,
4 10-cm guns.
16th Flak Battalion: 8 8-8-cm guns, 4 2-cm guns.
2nd Panzer Regiment: Tanks noted on p. 267, 37 assault guns, 24 7-5-cm Pak.

² In the Desert and in Sicily the rule of thumb had been that one unit represented 60 miles' running for all the vehicles held. This figure was upset by the fuel consumption of well-worn vehicles on the hill roads of southern Italy in summer, and 14th Panzer Corps re-defined the unit but we do not know in what terms. In 16th Panzer Division, with 4,074 vehicles of which 455 were armoured, one unit was 155 cubic metres of petrol, 23 cubic metres of Diesel fuel.

to Salerno, there remains something to be said about the air forces' measures, complementary to the Naval measures, to ensure that they would arrive safely. The problem was to protect the convoys from air and submarine attack during the passage across the 'open' sea and within the assault area. The assault area can be defined as the waters within a line drawn parallel to the shore of the Gulf of Salerno at about forty miles' distance from it, plus the beaches and their neighbouring hinterland. The problem became most complicated when the assault area was reached. As we have seen, the beaches lay at a mean distance of about 190 miles from the Allied air bases in Sicily, the extreme limit of effective action for the fighters. Therefore fighter patrols could only be very short and rapid in succession, and to direct, control, and time them would be troublesome. Cover had to be provided by day and night. Further, aggressive Allied naval forces—Force H, Force V, and the escorts of convoys—would be at sea near and in the assault area. It was vital that ships should identify aircraft and aircraft ships, and that anti-aircraft fire from ships, and later from batteries coming into action after landing, should be controlled. Unhappy events during the landings in Sicily were freshly remembered.

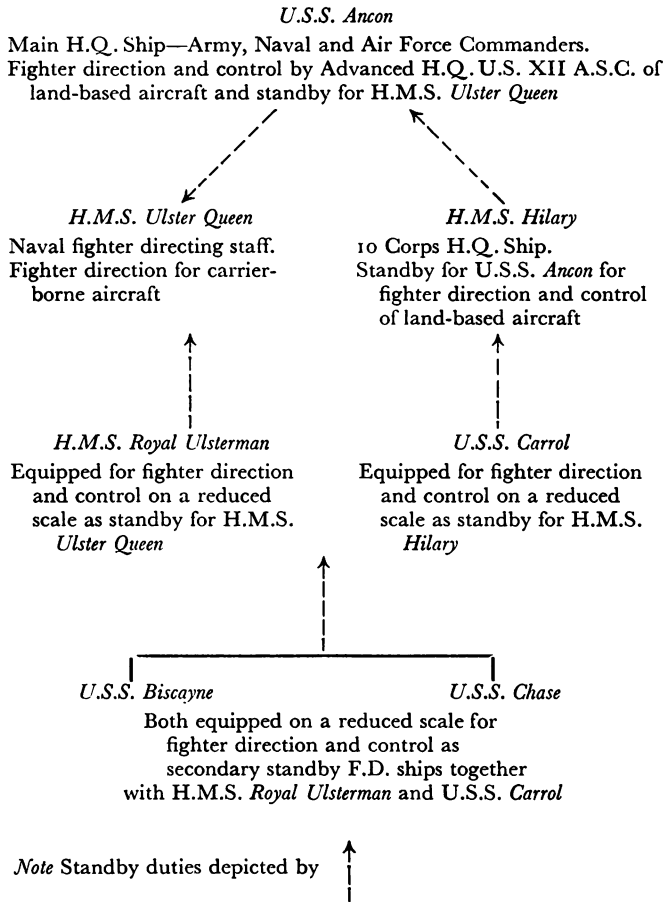
It is convenient first of all to define two areas of the 'open' sea by drawing a line from about Bu Kemmask, almost where Tripolitania's frontier runs into the sea, to a point midway between Cape Bon in Tunisia and Licata in Sicily and then due east to Licata itself, then across Sicily to Cape d'Orlando, and onwards and northwards to the city of Salerno.¹ Call this the Centre Line. The assault area, next, may stand defined as in the first paragraph. Next, to name the air forces concerned: Malta Air Command, Northwest African Coastal Air Force and two components of Northwest African Tactical Air Force namely the Desert Air Force and U.S. XII Air Support Command.

Now to consider arrangements by day until dusk on the 8th. Northwest African Coastal Air Force was responsible for the protection of convoys west of the Centre Line. To the east of the line, Malta Air Command was responsible for convoys south of Sicily and off the east coast of Sicily as far north as Syracuse. The area north of Syracuse and the Tyrrhenian Sea east of the Centre Line was the responsibility of Northwest African Tactical Air Force, whose A.O.C. delegated protection of shipping off the east coast of Sicily from Syracuse to Cape Peloro, including the Straits of Messina, to Desert Air Force; and off the north coast from Cape Peloro to the Centre Line to U.S. XII A.S.C. By night until and including D-1/D-Day, N.A.C.A.F.'s area of responsibility north of Sicily was temporarily

¹ These areas are shown in the diagrams of day and night fighter and A.A. gun-fire control in rear pocket.

extended slightly eastwards of a line running due south of Licosa Point but specifically excluding the Gulf of Salerno which remained within N.A.T.A.F.'s area.

Fighter Direction and Control during the Initial Phase of 'Avalanche'



On D-Day and later there were two readjustments of the arrangements by day. On D-Day the Commanding General U.S. XII A.S.C. became responsible for the day fighter protection of the shipping and craft off shore, the beaches and the immediate hinterland at Salerno, and had been relieved of the duty of protecting shipping off the north coast of Sicily by the Desert Air Force. The second change came about when fighters began to operate from the Salerno bridge-head. The Centre Line was 'bent' due west at longitude 40°N for about 40 miles and then due north again, thus allowing U.S. XII

A.S.C. to assume responsibility for the whole of the assault area to 40 miles seaward of the beaches. By night, from D-Day/D+1 onwards, the Centre Line replaced the line due south of Licosa Point but it was adjusted in the same way as explained above yet in advance of when day fighters began to operate from the bridgehead.

These sufficiently complicated yet exceedingly generalized paragraphs may give an impression of the protective measures. Arrangements for the control of anti-aircraft gun-fire were still more complicated, and they are therefore summarized in the footnote below.¹ The principle was to appoint certain zones prohibited to Allied aircraft, and others in which Allied aircraft were to fly above certain heights. It followed that in prohibited zones any aircraft might be fired upon, and in the others any aircraft that flew below the height appointed for that zone. One set of orders ruled the day and another the night.

It is an open question whether anyone could have remembered all these arrangements in the face of the enemy, or have leafed through pages of typescript and diagrams. To say this is not to deride a thorough attempt to solve a problem which was in fact insoluble except by the discipline, common sense, and 'know how' in combat of the men in the air, and on the sea and land below them.

Because the assault area was the point of greatest danger, the forces which General House (U.S. XII A.S.C.) would have under his operational control to provide protection are important. They amounted to nine U.S. squadrons of Lightnings, seven U.S. squadrons of Mustangs, three U.S. and ten R.A.F. squadrons of Spitfires, and 110 Fleet Air Arm Seafires from the aircraft carriers—say 660 fighters in all. The Lightnings could stay over the beaches one hour (allowing for 10 minutes' combat), the Mustangs 30 minutes and the Spitfires 25 minutes according to the estimates, though it was possible

¹ In general the arrangements for the control of A.A. gun-fire were as follows. The area in which the aircraft carriers would operate was to be a prohibited zone. In this zone by day A.A. guns would engage aircraft flying at any height, except carrier-borne aircraft operating under control of Force V or Force H. As an additional precaution the area 39° 42' N 14° 07' E—40° 09' N 13° 53' E—40° 21' N 14° 50' E—39° 54' N 14° 44' E was in any case declared a prohibited zone. Other than over the prohibited zone, A.A. guns were not to open fire on aircraft above 3,000 feet unless recognized as hostile. Over the assault area by day aircraft were not to fly below 6,000 feet unless in combat with hostile aircraft. Generally, for this purpose, the assault area was defined as that between a line 12,000 yards to landward and one 12,000 yards to seaward of the Salerno-Agropoli coastline. By night, on D-1/D-Day, all aircraft other than night-fighters were totally barred from an area within 40° 20' N 13° 00' E—isle of Capri—to and along coastline to Licosa Point—38° 40' N 14° 20' E—38° 40' N 13° 00' E. Night-fighters were to avoid the area if possible but in any case were not to fly below 8,000 feet unless in pursuit of enemy aircraft. From D-Day/D+1 onwards and until the main naval force withdrew, the area would be reduced to the north-west and extended to the south-east to cover the Messina convoy route to Salerno. Thereafter there would be further modifications, principally that other aircraft as well as night-fighters could by then fly over the area, but not below 8,000 feet, and Force H would have its own prohibited zone.

later to extend the Spitfires to 30 minutes. The organization to control all these variously-based aircraft could not be simple, and this too is summarized in a footnote.¹

Yet when all is said and done, one of the best measures of air protection that an air force can take is a sustained attack upon the hostile air force on its own airfields. The Allied air forces carried out this measure so well that by the time of the landings at Salerno only Grazzanise and Capodichino of neighbouring airfields in Italy remained of much use to the enemy. Nevertheless air forces are flexible and the threat from airfields in Corsica and Sardinia and in southern France had to be kept constantly in mind. However, there is no doubt that the Allied air forces were performing well their primary roles in the 'Avalanche' operation, and were well organized to continue them. These roles (to recapitulate) were to provide maximum security for the shipping off shore and for the beaches; give direct air support to the troops ashore; prevent or delay enemy land reinforcement of the Salerno area; and continue to interfere with the enemy's supply and movement while at the same time holding the German Air Force at arm's length.

The provision of tactical reconnaissance, and air support where and when it was most needed, was vital to the two corps. Tactical reconnaissance was to be provided by a British and an American squadron which would radio their reports to *Ancon* on turning back to base. Calls for air support from British 10th Corps were to be passed through tentacles of No. 2/5 A.A.S.C. (on loan) to No. 7

¹ House and the staff of his Advanced H.Q. would control the fighters from U.S.S. *Ancon*, the main H.Q. Ship. Fighter direction of all land-based aircraft was to be carried out by *Ancon*, stand-by ships being the *Hilary* (Commodore Oliver's flagship) and the U.S.S. *Carrol*. The carrier-borne fighters were to be directed by H.M. Ships *Palomares* and *Ulster Queen*, stand-by ships being *Ancon* and *Royal Ulsterman*. From dawn to dusk House was to keep 24 Lightnings in the air over the assault area, and from as early as possible to as late as possible 12 Mustangs. From 0800 to 1800 hours 12 Spitfires would provide the high cover, the Seafires standing in before and after these times and in between hours covering the northern flank of the assault area as strongly as possible.

The night-fighters were to be under the general control of House's Rear H.Q. in Sicily. Beaufighters (A.I.-equipped) of No. 242 Group R.A.F. were to reinforce those under the control of House as required. When over the assault area control of the night-fighters would be assumed by the H.Q. Ship and handed over to two G.C.I.s mounted on L.S.T.s, one for the control of the night-fighters of N.A.T.A.F. and one for those of N.A.C.A.F. When the Forward Fighter Control of U.S. 64th Fighter Wing (under U.S. XII A.S.C.) began to operate ashore it would take over the responsibilities of the H.Q. Ship. Some radar units were in fact planned to land on D-Day, including one G.C.I. and C.O.L. unit and six L.W.S.s augmented by W.U.s to provide initial cover. This lay-out was to be quickly duplicated and a Mobile Radio Unit (M.R.U.) added, and eventually a fully equipped Sector Operations Room (S.O.R.) was to be established ashore.

By day and night the fighters would have to face the hazards of operating at long range over open sea, and those of the weather. Special navigational facilities including radar, V.H.F. homing, flashing beacons and searchlights were therefore to be sited on the Ustica and Lipari groups of islands and in north-eastern Sicily. And the rescue vessels would include high speed launches and an air/sea rescue depot ship, with the addition of Walrus aircraft in the Palermo area and on Salina and Ustica islands. It needs little imagination to understand the great effect on the morale of pilots and aircrew the existence of an efficient air/sea rescue organization can exercise.

A.A.S.C. staff in *Ancon*.¹ Calls from American 6th Corps would pass through U.S. Air Support Parties direct to Advanced H.Q. U.S. XII A.S.C. (in *Ancon*), which was to pass all approved British and American requests for air support to its Rear H.Q. in Sicily for immediate action.

But if the maximum effort was to be sustained a quick build-up was essential. On the assumption that the airfield at Montecorvino would be captured on D-Day or D+1 it was planned to fly in not later than D+6 a total of 12 squadrons of American Mustangs, Spitfires and Kittyhawks, eight squadrons of R.A.F. Spitfires, half a squadron of R.A.F. Beaufighter night-fighters and elements of one American Mustang and one R.A.F. Spitfire Tac. R squadron. When established ashore this force would come under the control of U.S. 64th Fighter Wing (U.S. XII A.S.C.).² By D+28 it was planned to have on the Italian mainland 56 squadrons, including medium, light and fighter-bombers, and by mid-December 1943 virtually the whole of the combat aircraft in N.A.A.F.

If one takes the Salerno expedition as a whole the first loading of ships began on 19th August and by 1st September preparations were complete. The first convoy (T.S.S.1), which contained part of 56th Division, sailed from Tripoli on 3rd September, and the remaining fourteen in the order given in the table on page 265. On the night 6th/7th September a strong force of German bombers attacked a 46th Division convoy (F.S.S.2) as it lay at anchor in Bizerta Bay, but thanks in part to a quickly laid smoke screen no injury was received. On 7th September a L.S.T. was torpedoed off Termini, and the same evening torpedo-bombers attacked the 'Commando' convoy (T.S.F.1) without doing damage. These were the only hostile interferences so far. Otherwise the voyages were fair, although the troops in the early types of L.C.I. suffered because these craft had been designed for passages of about twenty-four hours, and had no sleeping-space except the hard, cramped benches. At the staging-points in Sicily, Castellammare and Termini, a heavy swell prevented landing to stretch legs although some craft were able to allow men to bathe. Craft and some escorts refuelled, the main reason for staging.

On 8th September the convoys made rendezvous north of Sicily and some air attacks befell. For German reconnaissance aircraft had been making scattered and not very revealing sightings since the 5th.

¹ The tentacles of No. 2/5 A.A.S.C. were lent to 10th Corps until D+20 because there was insufficient time for those of No. 7 A.A.S.C. to have been deployed.

² The carrier force could not be expected to stay in the vicinity of the assault area for more than three or four days because of the risk of enemy sea and air attacks, a condition which made it even more urgent to establish fighter squadrons ashore.

There had been two near Bizerta on the 6th, three off Sicily on the 7th, and two at least on the 8th. But the reports seemed unable to identify distinct Allied forces and the deductions were speculative.¹ On the afternoon of the 8th five task forces were suspected, and landings were expected on the evening of the 8th or early on the 9th either in the Gulf of Gaeta or the Gulf of Salerno. Just before 2 p.m. on the 8th five F.W. 190s attacked a 46th Division convoy (F.S.S.1) and damaged a L.C.I. and just before 5 p.m. about ten aircraft attacked the same convoy which was about 15 miles from Capri. A L.C.T. was sunk. Two further small attacks on the Northern Attack Force followed, and then, at 8.15 p.m. flares illuminated its convoys and small attacks occurred during the next two hours. One L.S.T. was damaged. The A.A. gunners in the ships of Force H put up fierce opposition, and it is possible that some of the German aircraft which failed to return to base fell to the naval A.A. guns. On the other hand the Beaufighters of Nos. 255 and 600 squadrons R.A.F. had been busy and they may fairly claim nine of the German aircraft recorded as destroyed or missing that night. The Southern Attack Force was not attacked.

However, at 6.30 p.m. there occurred a special cause for excitement in the ships of the invasion for at this time General Eisenhower announced to the world by wireless the surrender of Italy.² The first general effect in both the British and American forces was jubilation, but later every kind of mood existed from expectation of a walk-over to something like consternation. A nagging unsettlement perhaps was predominant. Every man forms his own picture of imminent battle and makes up his mind to it in his own way between the extremes of near-apathy and severe inner conflict. But no man, when he has made up his mind, likes to have it upset by a fresh uncertainty, in particular that of not knowing whether he must walk into fire or stroll peacefully along. The manner of General Eisenhower's announcement could not be helped. It was designed and timed to secure the greatest general military advantage for the Allies, and with some thought of delaying the flood of wrath which the Germans could be expected to pour upon the Italian forces and people. An obligation to make a similar announcement at the same time had been imposed on Badoglio. The matter was a secret which

¹ The sightings seem to have been:

6th September H.M.S. *Unicorn* and two escort carriers on their way to Malta.

Convoys T.S.M.1 and F.S.M.1.

7th September Convoys T.S.M.1 and F.S.M.1.

A possible sight of Force H.

8th September possible slow convoys.

² This timing is an inference. The B.B.C. announced the news prematurely at 5.20 p.m. and some ships picked this up and others picked up the later announcement. The 'buzz' spread at various times and by various means, e.g. 6th Grenadier Guards heard it from a passing motor-launch, the Royal Scots Greys read a naval signal.

General Eisenhower could not for any reason imaginable share with a host of his men.

The assault forces at sea deployed before dark on 8th September and began their approach through calm waters in moonlight. Capri was clearly seen by the Northern Attack Force. The timing and the visibility brought a risk but this was just one of a hundred in a great landing which must be calculated and accepted much as a centipede must decide upon which foot to hop over a chasm. Some of the laymen (in the sea sense) were puzzled. A Grenadier wrote later 'We saw quite plainly the Italian coast on one side, and on the other, just visible on the horizon, the outlines of hundreds of ships, and this public parade in daylight (for this was early), before the announcement of the Italian surrender, seemed very odd. Rumours ran round about changed plans'.

But the naval plans were being realized with precision. A series of mark boats, called 'reference vessels' by the Americans, had been stationed on the approach route, and their light-signals were sighted in the correct order. In the Northern Attack Force Commodore Oliver's Headquarters Ship H.M.S. *Hilary*, and the convoy which carried 56th Division's assault brigades, arrived at the lowering position at 1.15 a.m. 46th Division's convoy, included in the command of Rear-Admiral Conolly U.S.N. who was serving under Commodore Oliver in U.S.S. *Biscayne*, was in part a shore-to-shore formation, and proceeded further inshore. The Commandos and Rangers, in their convoy reached their lowering position at 1.47 a.m. In the Southern Attack Force the transports reached their lowering positions at 1 a.m. As each convoy reached its station the elaborate drill of a landing began: transfer of troops from transports to landing-craft, marshalling of craft in their appointed waves, recognition of guiding-craft, taking position by supporting warships and rocket, gun, and smoke-laying craft, and by minesweepers which were to sweep ahead. In 56th Division's two sectors, each containing two beaches, a Local Naval Commander was responsible for the assault in each sector, and had his H.Q. alongside the commander of the assault brigade, in a specially fitted L.C.I. The whole complicated business was carried through very smoothly.

Soldiers like to find fault with their naval brethren on such occasions sometimes with reason, often through ignorance, and often for fun. But on this occasion two comments at least from a regimental point of view were: 'It was all splendidly carried out . . .' and ' . . . the overture to Salerno was indeed impressive.'

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Although on 9th September the 5th U.S. Army did not gain all the objectives for which it hoped, its assault was successful and promising. By the end of the day in 10th Corps 56th Division had penetrated well inland and had occupied Battipaglia. 46th Division overcame the defence in the Asa River estuary and took Pontecagnano and the high ground north-west of it. The Ranger Force advanced six miles across the Sorrento peninsula and looked down on Nocera in the plain of Naples. In 6th U.S. Corps 36th U.S. Division gained control of the plain south of the Sele River, and the higher ground at an average distance of five miles from the beaches. On the German side 16th Panzer Division conducted its defence very much as it had intended, and the Battle Groups came into action as the Allied advances revealed their shape and direction. By 10 a.m. General Balck was planning to bring against the invaders the Hermann Göring Division from the north. When one recollects the heavy air attack which had been made on Kesselring's H.Q. on the 8th, it is interesting to learn that 14th Panzer Corps and *O.B.Süd* and *AOK 10* were badly out of touch by signals. Balck received no general reconnaissance reports and believed that he must reckon with further landings, and for a time thought that he could not commit 15th Panzer Grenadier Division at Salerno. He was able to revise his intentions towards evening, while during the day 29th Panzer Grenadier Division (76th Panzer Corps) was directed to Salerno from the south. On the evening of the 9th *AOK 10*'s intention (as expressed by Kesselring to *OKW*) was 'to achieve a complete defensive success in the Naples-Salerno area, employing 29th Panzer Grenadier Division' [as a reinforcement]. With this general sketch in mind we move to the battlefield, first to 10th Corps on the beaches at the mouth of the Tusciano river and northwards to the Picentino river.

In 56th Division 167th Brigade (Brigadier C. E. A. Firth) on the right assaulted with the 8th (right) and 9th Royal Fusiliers (left) on beaches on either side of the Tusciano river, the 7th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry coming in close behind. 'A' Squadron, Royal Scots Greys followed at about 6 a.m.¹ The mine-sweepers ahead of the landing-craft cut twelve mines, and as the craft neared the shore a rocket craft and three gun landing-craft opened fire. The assault craft began to touch down at 3.35 a.m.

¹ The Royal Scots Greys were affiliated to 56th Division from 10th Corps Troops, and squadrons were allotted thus: 'A' to 167th Brigade, 'B' to 201st Guards Brigade, and 'C' to 169th Brigade. The regiment was equipped with Diesel-engined Shermans.

(H hour was at 3.30 a.m.) and, as a Royal Fusilier described it '... out we rushed into four feet of water luckily not too cold... Officers and troops were milling up and down, trying to find the landmarks they had memorized so well from maps and photographs...'. There was little or no fire and the troops pushed inland. Indeed so far as the beaches were concerned it was not until nearly 6 a.m. that the destroyer *Laforey* found a target in some guns a little distance inland. The *Laforey*, in a duel, was hit five times and retired for a time, H.M.S. *Lookout* replacing her. The *Lookout* continued the duel and with her support 8th Royal Fusiliers captured the gun positions. The landing continued unchecked, and at 5 a.m. the Brigade's Tactical Headquarters came ashore, thus ending a period which is always uneasy from the point of view of the commander who has one foot in sea and one on shore.¹ Another eagerly awaited event, the landing of the artillery, can here be summarized for the whole division. The first guns came ashore on 167th Brigade's beaches at 5.35 a.m., and were 'F' Troop of 506th Battery (SP) of 142nd Army Field Regiment, for 'E' Troop's guns had been lost when its L.C.T. struck a mine. 64th Field Regiment R.A. began to land at 6 a.m. and was in action as a whole by 5.15 p.m., 113th Field Regiment R.A.'s corresponding times were 5.40 a.m. and 4.15 p.m., while 65th Field Regiment was all in action by 6 p.m. During the day H.M.S. *Lookout* remained in a supporting position.²

In 169th Brigade (Brigadier L. O. Lyne) the 2nd/5th Queen's were to land on the right, and 2nd/7th Queen's on the left between the Tusciano and Asa rivers, and 2nd/6th Queen's was to follow. 'C' Squadron Royal Scots Greys was to come in at about 6 a.m. As had been done for 167th Brigade, minesweepers cleared the way and supporting craft gave covering fire. The landings were some ten minutes behind time-table, and somewhat out of position owing to one of those tactical chances which put grit into a closely adjusted

¹ Composition (main units) 56th Division (Major-General D. A. H. Graham):
 167th Brigade (Brigadier C. E. A. Firth):
 8th R. Fusiliers, 9th R. Fusiliers, 7th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire L.I.
 169th Brigade (Brigadier L. O. Lyne):
 2/5, 2/6, 2/7 Queen's
 201st Guards Brigade (Brigadier J. A. Gascoigne):
 6th Grenadier, 3rd Coldstream, 2nd Scots Guards
 Divisional troops:
 44th Reconnaissance Regiment
 64th, 65th, 113th Field Regiments R.A.
 67th A/Tank Regiment R.A., 69th Medium Regiment R.A.
 57th Heavy A.A. Regiment R.A., 100th Light A/A Regiment R.A.
 220th, 221st, 42nd Field Companies R.E. and
 563rd Field Park Company R.E.
 6th Cheshire (M.G. Battalion)

Attached from Corps troops:

The Royal Scots Greys

(Earmarked for 23rd Armd. Brigade on Corps Order).

² By rule of thumb a destroyer's fire was reckoned as the equivalent of two field batteries, and the maximum range as 16,000-20,000 yards. See Chapter II, p. 58.

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machine. The right-hand assault wave of 169th Brigade's left-hand neighbours, a brigade of 46th Division, altered course to the right, to take advantage of rocket covering fire which in fact was straying from the correct point of landing. The left-hand wave of 169th Brigade's craft which was keeping station on these neighbours had therefore to turn towards the right, and the displacements spread right-handed to distances of up to 1,500 yards. In fact since the enemy was not contesting most of the landings, the consequent sorting out and orienting of the Queen's battalions mattered little. The main troubles arose from the terrain and darkness. A company of the 2nd/5th, for example, waded patiently through seemingly endless water until banks, looming upon either hand, showed that it was wading up the Tusciano river. Elsewhere waist-deep ditches and marshy areas tried severely the very heavily laden men. But the landing as a whole went smoothly, and the Brigade's Tactical H.Q. came ashore at 5.15 a.m. 201st Guards Brigade, in reserve, began to land at 7.15 a.m., stepping straight from the craft on to a soft strip of shelving sand.¹

Little more need be said of 56th Division. General Graham and a small staff came ashore at 9.30 a.m., and Nos. 3 (Pioneer) and 21 (2/4th Hampshire) Beach Groups, who had landed early, effectively organized their beach areas by nightfall.

46th Division was to land its 128th Brigade (Brigadier M. A. James) on two beaches between the rivers Asa and Picentino.² 2nd Hampshire was to assault on the right, 1/4th Hampshire on the left, and 5th Hampshire, as reserve, was to follow 2nd Hampshire. A squadron of 40th R.T.R. (Shermans) was to land at about 7 a.m.

In this sector German guns opened fire as the craft of the convoy were moving in, and a direct hit on a L.S.T. may have caused an exaggerated estimate of their nature, number, and effect since there

¹ This little point illustrates an inherent defect in descriptions. In any scene of action all may be right for Jack, and all wrong for Joe a few paces away. Verisimilitude in the account is all that can be hoped for, and to 'those who were there' the account must always appear as other than the reality.

² Composition (main units) 46th Division (Major-General J. L. I. Hawkesworth):

128th Brigade (Brigadier M. A. James):
1/4th Hampshire, 2nd Hampshire, 5th Hampshire
138th Brigade (Brigadier G. P. Harding):
6th Lincolns, 2/4th K.O.Y.L.I., 6th York and Lancaster
139th Brigade (Brigadier R. E. H. Stott):
2/5th Leicester, 5th Foresters, 16th Durham L.I.

Divisional Troops

46th Reconnaissance Regiment; 70th, 71st, 172nd Field Regiments R.A.; 58th A/Tank Regiment R.A., 5th Medium Regiment R.A., 115th Light A/A Regiment R.A., 270th, 271st and 272nd Field Companies R.E.; 273rd Field Park Company R.E.; 2nd Northumberland Fusiliers (M.G. Battalion).

Attached from Corps troops:

40th Royal Tank Regiment.

were no fixed coast batteries in the area. The destroyers *Mendip*, *Brecon*, and *Blankney* replied vigorously, and continued to do so at intervals. But the enemy guns countered by changing their positions, and were a nuisance until about noon. At this point we should note that in 46th Division's sector the enemy's opposition stiffened more quickly than it did in the 56th Division's. For Colonel Stempel's units were not far from the beaches, and as early as 4 a.m. 1/64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was moving into Torricella, about two miles from the beaches, to be ready to counter-attack. Off these beaches, as off 56th Division's, minesweepers went ahead, and support landing-craft opened fire as the assault craft approached the shore. There was some shelling from the enemy, and air-bursts, an unpleasant accomplishment of German gunners, were not relished by men in open craft. However, all craft touched down on time but not all in the correct places.

2nd Hampshire had as their landing place points just north of the mouth of the Asa river. A rocket landing-craft had been told off to help by firing on a strong-point, perhaps that one named '*Lilienthal*' by the Germans, at Magazzea on this beach. Unfortunately the rocket-craft fired her salvo on a point just south of the Asa river-mouth and, after a moment's doubt, the Hampshires' leading flight altered course to the right to follow the fire. These troops therefore landed on the wrong side of the river, and the enemy strong-point remained untouched. The following waves of 2nd Hampshires, and later the follow-up battalion 5th Hampshires, seem to have landed partly in the right places and partly in the wrong. The outcome of this mix-up was that 'Y' Company of 2nd Hampshire managed most resolutely to dash across the beaches, and continued inland towards Pontecagnano. The remainder of the two battalions engaged in a sharp fight on and near the beaches between Magazzea and the south side of the river mouth. On 128th Brigade's left flank 1/4th Hampshire landed in the correct places.

It will nevertheless be clearest at this point to complete an outline of the landings, not only for 46th Division but in general, before taking up the story of the advances inland.

Brigadier James (128th Brigade) and his tactical headquarters landed at 6.45 a.m., followed by the squadron of tanks. As regards the artillery the remaining batteries (one was with 56th Division) of 142nd Army Field Regiment (SP) R.A. were in action by 7.30 a.m. on the 9th. All 71st Field Regiment R.A. was in action by evening, while two batteries of 172nd Field Regiment R.A. came into action during the morning and afternoon of the 9th, the third landing on the 10th. 138th Brigade began to land at 7 a.m. on the 9th and was nearly complete by 2 p.m., and 139th Brigade followed during the night 9th/10th.

So far so good, but 35th Beach Group had great difficulty in organizing its beach area. Although the shingle and sand beach was good, and the exits satisfactory, the routes inland were narrow and flanked by ditches. Moreover enclosures, patches of wood, swampy ground, and irrigation channels abounded. The build-up on the beaches went briskly, but to clear them was another matter, and the congestion became acute.

Further north the Special Service Brigade (Brigadier R. E. Laycock) with 2nd and 41st R.M. Commandos landed unopposed at Vietri sul Mare supported by the destroyer H.M.S. *Blackmore* and a L.C.G. The *Blackmore* engaged an enemy battery in action at Vietri and silenced it.

2nd Commando, leading the assault, cleared Vietri and occupied the high ground on both sides of the Vietri-Cava di Tirreni road at the La Molina pass, where it was relieved by 41st R.M. Commando and then passed into brigade reserve at the Vietri beach-head. At dawn two troops from 2nd Commando moved towards Salerno and met a group of three tanks and three armoured cars from the 16th Panzer Reconnaissance battalion coming from Salerno. The enemy withdrew after a brief fight.

On the extreme left flank Colonel Darby's Ranger Force, comprising three Ranger battalions, touched down at Maiori at 3.20 a.m. and, meeting no opposition, moved inland covered by fire from the British destroyer *Ledbury* and a L.C.G. All supporting arms and stores had been landed by 6.15 a.m. and all landing-craft returned to their parent ships.

1st and 3rd Ranger battalions, with continued support from H.M.S. *Ledbury*, advanced northwards and by 9 a.m. were established on hill positions in the Mt. di Chiunzi area overlooking the Pagani-Nocera district in the Naples plain. 4th Ranger Battalion consolidated at Maiori and patrolled west towards Amalfi, meeting no enemy. Patrols met the S.S. Brigade in Vietri during the afternoon.

The fortunes of the 36th U.S. Division are fully described by the American official historian, and can receive only the briefest mention here.¹ Two battalions each of 141st and 142nd Regimental Combat Teams assaulted at Paestum. They were hotly received by some two companies of von Doering's Group. The American historian has written '... News of the Italian surrender had relaxed tensions

¹ *Salerno to Cassino*, M. Blumenson, Chapters VI, VII.

among the troops on the convoys and despite warnings from commanders, the general belief had persisted among the soldiers that the landings would be purely routine. Thus any opposition was disconcerting . . .' In fact the assault waves lost cohesion; control disappeared and, so far as the 1/141st R.C.T. on the right was concerned, the advance petered out within a few hundred yards of the beach and no depth was gained during the daylight hours of 9th September. Counter-attacks by small German armoured groups came in during the morning and were successfully held but they added to the confusion, and unloading of supporting arms and stores over two beaches became practically impossible. 141st R.C.T. was deprived of its artillery and anti-tank support.

142nd R.C.T. on the left was more successful. The hostile fire was not so heavy on their beaches and the leading infantry were able to advance through Paestum to the line of the railway embankment about 1,500 yards inland. Here were found cover and good assembly positions and unit and sub-unit commanders were able to regain control.

Having reorganized on the general line of the railway embankment 142nd R.C.T. advanced slowly inland, repelling four separate thrusts by small groups of German A.F.V.s. The 143rd R.C.T., in reserve, landed between 6.40 a.m. and 8 a.m. and moved up on the right flank of 142nd R.C.T. towards Capaccio and Mt. Soltane. The confusion caused by the temporary closing down of two beaches was partially overcome by opening a new beach a mile or two north of Paestum, but it was not until after midday that artillery and tanks began to land in co-ordinated units and were able to play their proper role in support of the assault infantry. By noon, however, the development of the beachhead, apart from two beaches where confusion still reigned, was in full swing. Men and material were coming ashore and control and discipline were quickly transforming the earlier confused scene.

During the day 142nd and 143rd R.C.T.s continued their advance. By midnight 143rd R.C.T. was holding Mt. Soltane, Capaccio and the northern extremity of the Mt. Soprano ridge. 142nd R.C.T. extended the line northwards through Tempore di S. Paolo to the Sele river plain south of Ponte alla Scafa. 141st R.C.T. was still stalled near its beaches.

The troops had landed everywhere with surprisingly little difficulty and almost no loss, and now they had to make good the beachhead. The fighting on 9th September was very scrappy, marked by small violent clashes, and without any attempt on either side to make big set-piece attacks or counter-attacks. This was natural since four

small German battle-groups were manœuvring on a front of about thirty-five miles, and their tactics were based on the actions of still smaller groups: say as a type a couple of assault guns or tanks, several machine-guns, and a number of infantry.¹ But these little groups, well handled and very often co-operating, could bring on intense local combats. On the Allied side the fighting understandably was largely by battalions with some co-ordination at brigade level. Both British divisions' tactical Headquarters came ashore on the 9th, but 10th Corps tactical headquarters remained in H.M.S. *Hilary* until the 12th as she was the best focus of sea-land-air communications.

The Allied air forces flew rather more than 2,000 sorties in support of the landings from dusk on the 8th to dusk on the 9th.²

While the convoys were nearing the beaches Wellingtons dropped 77 tons of bombs on the marshalling-yards at Battipaglia and the same tonnage on the railway at Eboli. Mitchells, Bostons and a few Baltimores attacked the road-centre at Avellino, east of Naples, and the trans-peninsular roads at Battipaglia and Auletta. Rail and roads received 185 sorties in all. From dawn onwards U.S. XII Air Support Command, reinforced by Fleet Air Arm Seafires, provided

¹ A standard German assault gun was the Sturmgeschütz III, which was a 7.5-cm 'short' gun (L/24) mounted on the chassis of a Pzkw III tank, from which the turret had been removed. Between the middle of 1942 and the middle of 1943 there were two more models, a 'long' 7.5-cm gun (L/43 or L/48) on the Pzkw III chassis. At the end of 1943 the 7.5-cm L/48 was appearing also on a Pzkw IV chassis. We do not know exactly which models were in service at Salerno. It is evident that these self-propelled guns were often and understandably taken to be tanks.

² Sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command from dusk on the 8th to dusk on the 9th September in support of 'Avalanche' (Excludes anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports, and sorties not associated with 'Avalanche'):

NIGHT

Command	Bombers		Fighters		Total
	M.B.	L.B.	Intruder Patrols		
N.A.A.F.	147	38	9	17	211

DAY

Command	Bombers				Fighters	Land Recce	Total
	H.B.	M.B.	L.B.	F.B.			
N.A.A.F.	121	180	24	191	1002(47)*	40†	1,558
M.E.A.C.	41						41‡
F.A.A.					265		265

1,864

Grand Total (for the 24 hrs) 2,075

* Shipping protection in '()'.

† Estimated sorties.

‡ Other sorties by M.E.A.C. excluding anti-shipping and attacks on ports amounted to about 114.

continuous fighter cover for the beaches and the shipping off shore. The method was that British (and, from the 10th American) Spitfires flew high cover at from sixteen to twenty-thousand feet, while the Lightnings and, at the start, the F.A.A. Seafires were at medium height. The Mustangs flew low down and, supported later by some of the Seafires brought in over the beaches because of lack of enemy activity in the Capri area, they bore the brunt of the enemy's air attacks.¹ The fighter-bombers continued the attacks on the enemy's reinforcement routes, again at Battipaglia and in the area of Potenza, while Fortresses and Mitchells of the Strategic Air Force bombed two main crossings of the Volturno at Canello and Capua, and targets at Potenza as well. These aircraft flew 234 sorties, dropped 466 tons of bombs, destroyed road bridges at Capua and Canello, and badly damaged the rail bridge at Capua. American Liberators of Middle East Air Command bombed the airfields at Foggia, and 67 Marauders from N.A.S.A.F. attacked a newly discovered airfield at Scanzano in the 'instep' on the Gulf of Taranto.

The result of all this activity appears in the small figure of 162 sorties flown by the German air force, and the demands passed up from 14th Panzer Corps through *AOK 10* to Kesselring for more reconnaissance and stronger action against Allied warships, but no more than one L.C.T. and a tug were sunk, and the destroyer *Mendip* damaged in the mass of ships.² On the other hand German traffic across the Volturno river was seriously obstructed by the Allied bombing.

To return to the land and the British sector. There is a sort of pattern here in that the main events occur between Montecorvino and Pontecagnano. Sieckenius, commander of 16th Panzer Division, judged as the morning of the 9th wore on, that his Division was holding satisfactorily for the time being and that the greater threat existed in von Doering's area at Paestum, and that von Holtey's tanks should move there to help. However, by early afternoon he revised this opinion, and believed Pontecagnano and Eboli to be the most threatened points. Accordingly he began to try to draw von Doering, Stempel, and von Holtey closer together to meet the threats. He was not worried by events in the Salerno quarter although a battle-group of the Hermann Göring Division, which was under orders to move to that area, was being delayed for want of fuel. If this pattern is borne in mind, the simplest account probably can be given by following events, in the British sector from right to left, facing inland, and beginning with 167th Brigade of 56th Division.

¹ Land-based fighters flew 796 sorties and the Seafires 265. Two Lightnings were lost in combat.

² Apart from these losses, on the 8th and 9th there were sunk by gun-fire or mines two landing-craft, while nine landing-craft and two destroyers (*Loyal, Laforey*) were damaged by the same weapons.

8th Royal Fusiliers, when they had disposed of the German guns which had fired on them while at sea and while landing, found themselves faced by some tanks near Porte di Ferro on the road leading to Battipaglia. 'A' Squadron of the Greys would have been welcome, but eight of its tanks were bogged in soft ground. They were extricated, and then drove off the enemy, enabling 8th Royal Fusiliers to make good positions some way from S. Lucia, where the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, passing through, were checked as night fell. The 9th Royal Fusiliers, on the other hand, had an almost clear run to Battipaglia 'using commandeered transport, including tractors, horses, farm carts, barrows, and bicycles'. The battalion ended its advance in a rather isolated position. Next comes 169th Brigade. 2/5th Queen's objective lay about two miles directly inland and the battalion reached it early, and enjoyed a lull for some hours. Then small groups of Stempel's and von Holtey's attacked and there flared up one of the small, fierce fights typical of the day. The Germans broke off this one with a loss of possibly three armoured vehicles. 2/6th Queen's and a troop of the Greys, directed on Montecorvino airfield, made as clear a run as had the 9th Royal Fusiliers, and when they arrived at the airfield surprised German pilots rushed from the buildings to fly off their aircraft. But it was too late and the tanks and self-propelled guns of the Royal Devon Yeomanry (142nd Army Field Regiment R.A.) destroyed thirty-five aircraft on the ground, almost certainly.¹ Very shortly, however, the Germans counter-attacked, and the day ended with the British at the west edge of the airfield and the enemy at its north-east corner. Meanwhile 6th Grenadier Guards and 3rd Coldstream Guards of 201st Guards Brigade came up to fill the gap between 167th Brigade's left and 169th's right. 2/7th Queen's on the 169th Brigade's left hand had to fight steadily all day as they advanced north-west towards the Asa river. There was at least a battalion of 64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (Stempel) in this area, and German machine-guns and snipers scattered among the vines and tobacco caused the Queen's much trouble to expel. But the battalion reached its objectives by nightfall nevertheless.

In 46th Division 128th Brigade also found Stempel's troops a considerable trouble on its right flank while on its left the advance went on quite easily. The centre of trouble on the right was the strong-point at Magazzea. 2nd Hampshire, however, managed at length to by-pass this position and reached its objectives a couple of miles inland and 'Y' Company, as we have seen, pressed on actually to Pontecagnano. Here troops from the reserve brigade came up during the day. 5th Hampshire, following 2nd Hampshire, split. Two companies pressed on, one towards Antiferro and one east of the

¹ 39 German aircraft were destroyed on the ground on 9th September.

Asa. The remainder tackled Magazzea which 2nd Hampshire had by-passed and had the ill luck to be caught, while cramped in a bad piece of ground, by a quick and vicious counter-attack from assault-guns and infantry. This party of enemy withdrew after a fierce fight, and 6th Lincolns (138th Brigade) at length worked round from a flank, and completed the expulsion of the remaining enemy near Magazzea and its immediate hinterland. But this day's work cost 5th Hampshire forty officers and men killed and some three hundred wounded or captured. 1/4th Hampshire, on 128th Brigade's left flank, moved steadily inland and left-handed until it gained its objectives along high ground north-west of the Forni stream. Further out on the left flank, B Squadron 46th Reconnaissance Regiment reached Salerno during the afternoon and patrolled beyond it, north and west. 6th York and Lancaster (138th Brigade) followed the squadron to the neighbourhood of Pastena.

By evening therefore 10th Corps had secured the first slices of its beachhead and 6th U.S. Corps had done the same. Sieckenius, as we have noticed, was drawing in von Holtey's Group to guard against a possible break-through to Eboli. He ordered the bridges over the Sele to be blown as far up as Eboli. He had also ordered 79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment to regroup for defence between the Sele and Tusciano, but it was probably because he did not know for certain who held what in the plain, and because of the hazard of moving across it, that he ordered most of von Doering's group to make a long detour. von Vietinghoff directed that the plain of Eboli must be held at all costs. Towards 7 p.m. von Bonin (Chief of Staff, 14th Panzer Corps) arrived at Sieckenius's headquarters. He said that the Hermann Göring Division had orders to regain Salerno, and then to advance south-eastwards. 16th Panzer Division was to consolidate the Sele valley before making a thrust south-eastwards, in which it would be helped by 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and perhaps by part of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division.

A summary of what was passing at sea will complement the account of affairs on shore. The naval support forces played an important part. Off 10th Corps' sector Rear-Admiral Harcourt in the cruiser *Mauritius*, with the cruiser *Orion*, the destroyers *Tartar* and *Nubian*, and the monitor *Roberts* were ready to bombard, but not much heavy support was called for, and the *Mauritius* fired 46 rounds, the *Orion* 22, and the *Roberts* 10. On the other hand the destroyers *Mendip*, *Brecon* and *Blankney* fired 60% of their ammunition outfit. Off 6th U.S. Corps' sector Admiral Davidson's ships were constantly in action after the early stages. In sum, over the whole front, it is recorded that warships' guns engaged about 130 targets,

more than half of them by indirect fire. Forty-six reports of satisfactory results were received. The troops' appreciation of the support depended more on immediate circumstances than later statistics, and was cordial.¹

The build-up had its difficulties. In the British sector the L.C.I. were unloaded quickly, but though the first L.S.T. was unloaded in less than two hours, the pace became slower owing to congestion on the beaches, shelling, and protective smoke-screens laid ashore which proved to be a hindrance rather than a help. A figure which survives for 56th Division's beaches conveys an idea: 38 L.S.T. beached and unloaded in eleven hours. L.C.T. began unloading storeships as soon as they had landed troops and vehicles, but the effects of the shortage of L.C.T. became clear. The plan had been to send 60% of the L.C.T. working for 10th Corps south to the American beaches as soon as they could be spared, but in fact only 16 could be sent on 9th September instead of a hoped-for 54. This fact contributed to a slow rate of unloading in 6th U.S. Corps sector, which had several other causes. Congestion on the beaches and shelling were among them, but one, censured by Admiral Hewitt, was of another kind. This was simply bad stowage of some storeships in which essential equipment and stores lay under random deposits of inessentials. The constant remaking of landing-tables in the preparatory stages, remarked by General Walker, was very probably among the causes of this fault.

On 10th Corps beaches close on 23,000 men disembarked during the day (the final average strength of the Corps was 74,000), and 80 tanks, 325 guns, and 2,155 vehicles were landed. The amounts landed on 6th U.S. Corps beaches were substantial also. Among the personnel and vehicles landed were those of two R.A.F. G.C.I./C.O.L. units for the control of the fighters; of five tentacles (from No. 2/5 A.A.S.C.) accompanying 10th Corps and of U.S. Air Support Parties with 6th U.S. Corps to provide early air support channels; of British airfield construction companies and American aviation engineers, and their equipment, to rehabilitate captured enemy airfields and construct new ones; and of advanced parties from No. 324 Wing R.A.F., U.S. XII A.S.C. and U.S. XII Air Force Service Command, and of the R.A.F. servicing commandos, to prepare for the reception of Allied squadrons in the bridgehead and to maintain them. 46th Division suffered 350 casualties, 56th Division 195, and 36th U.S. Division about 500.² In the air four Allied air-

¹ No. 654 Air O.P. Squadron which landed on D-Day to serve 10th Corps became the spotters for U.S.S. *Philadelphia* in support of the Ranger Force and for naval guns engaging enemy tanks.

² The British casualties are as reported at the time. A later calculation gave 449 battle casualties treated in 10th Corps medical units on D-Day.

craft were destroyed and five failed to return against a German loss of forty-five nearly all destroyed on the ground.

These neat figures at the end of an account of the day's operations disguise the tension, want of accurate information, and uncertainty which prevailed during the landings, especially at the higher headquarters afloat. For the first few hours matters ashore seemed to General Clark to be progressing doubtfully. But as the afternoon passed the impressions of the landings improved to match a day of splendid weather. There could be no doubt then that the second great Mediterranean landing (for the passage of the Straits of Messina was more like the crossing of a huge river) was a success.

Historians search for comparisons and parallels as pigs hunt truffles and it is tempting to look for them in the landings in Sicily and at Salerno. The preparations of the assault forces for Salerno and the landings give an impression of being more expert than had been the case in Sicily in spite of the pressure of time and the many difficulties. Experience gained in Sicily undoubtedly helped Salerno in practical ways. Then the weather at Salerno was very good, and the approaches to the beaches and the beaches themselves were unobstructed by Nature or artifice, conditions which had not prevailed everywhere in Sicily. At Salerno certainly no

‘Waves on waves, and gulfs in gulfs
O’ercame the pilot’s art’

and so loss and damage to the valuable craft were insignificant, and the troops landed easily everywhere. The enemy had decided not to make the beaches a battlefield, but, in contrast with Sicily, he set out to contest the beachhead. The Allies therefore, instead of exploiting their landings, had to fight, after the first day, a full-size battle against homogeneous German forces under a single command, instead of against troops of two nations under a divided command as in Sicily. At Salerno appeared for the first time ‘on the ground’, as distinct from staff-studies, a baffling problem in major landings: how to build up quickly enough forces big enough, and correctly constituted, to break out from the beachhead against skilful opposition, without so clogging the whole beachhead in building up that everything comes almost to a standstill.

CHAPTER IX
THE BATTLE IN THE
SALERNO BEACHHEAD
(9th to 16th September 1943)

(i)

See Map 15

BY the morning of the 10th September neither the Allies nor the Germans had markedly gained the initiative. The battle in the beachhead developed from the landings almost without a pause. The widely separated Allied landings; the piecemeal arrival of the German forces to oppose them; the small and violent local actions; the blind and obstructed terrain; the difficulties of commanders in getting timely and reasonably accurate reports: all these things combined to produce a very complicated battle which lasted for eight days, 9th to 16th September. It may be a useful aid to following a necessarily much broken narrative to carve up the battle into four main phases as follows.

First, as described in Chapter VIII. The 9th September, during which the Allies won their footing and their first objectives, partly because the German forces in the Bay of Salerno were weak at first.

Second, during 10th, 11th, and 12th September. The Allies tried to expand the beachhead. The fighting was for ground which was equally important to either side; to the Allies as the springboards for further advances, to the Germans as positions in which they could cover the build-up of their forces for a counter-offensive. The important ground included the heights at Altavilla, dominating the valleys of the Sele and Calore rivers; the road junction at Battipaglia and the airfield at Montecorvino; the heights north of Salerno and Vietri which dominated the routes leading to Naples. At the end of this phase, after a sequence of attacks and counter-attacks, the Germans held Altavilla and Battipaglia. The Allies were firmly established at Salerno and Vietri but had not pushed the Germans far enough away to enable them to turn the harbours at either place into working ports. During this phase the Allies experienced mounting pressure as the German build-up increased.

Third, during 13th, 14th, and 15th September. The German build-up had outpaced that of the Allies, and the Germans began a

determined counter-offensive on the 13th. During this phase a crisis arose in the beachhead because virtually every man was in the line and there were no reserves; a crisis arose outside the beachhead as the higher Allied commanders strove to send in reinforcements. Hard fighting on land, backed up by naval guns, and a mighty intervention by the Allied air forces turned the scales. The enemy's attacks flagged and petered out.

Fourth. On the evening of the 16th September the Germans began to withdraw, partly because they had been out-fought and partly because of a change in their strategy. They now fell back through Naples to the Volturno river, but offered strong delaying action to the Allies who were hard on their heels.

On 10th September in 6th U.S. Corps the 36th U.S. Division set about completing the capture of its first objectives on the arc of high ground from Ogliastro to Albanella. 10th Corps' task was to complete the occupation of its beachhead as planned. 56th Division was to capture Battipaglia (in fact entered by 9th Royal Fusiliers after midnight 9th/10th September) and the high ground north-east of it, and to complete the capture of Montecorvino airfield. 46th Division was to clear Salerno and to hold the defile north-west of it in the Sorrento peninsula to enable the port to be opened for use.

On the enemy's side Sieckenius, commanding 16th Panzer Division, as early as 2 a.m. ordered von Holtey's group to drive the British out of Battipaglia, and more generally that a line of defence was to be taken up from west of Bellizzi through S. Lucia to Persano.¹ At this point a topographical detail, not previously mentioned, becomes relevant. Persano stands three miles north of the point at which the Sele is joined by a large tributary, the Calore. The Calore then runs almost parallel to the Sele from the confluence to Persano where it turns in a shallow, right-handed curve across the plain of Paestum. The ground between these two rivers was to become tactically important. Two miles south of Persano the La Cosa stream leaves the Calore and wanders generally southward. It ran across the American front and was a landmark and an obstacle.

Although Sieckenius' orders give the key to many of the events of the 10th, they must be supplemented by some of the orders given by higher commanders during the day. von Vietinghoff at about 10 a.m. told Sieckenius to hold the high ground north of Salerno at all costs, and to hold on everywhere else until enough reinforcements

¹ The following incident shows that 'fronts' had scarcely formed yet. Sieckenius was moving his headquarters to Olevano. Near Battipaglia he and his immediate staff drove into a British post. Two staff-officers were killed; Colonel von Holtey was wounded and handed over his group to Captain Ackermann.

arrived to make it possible to stage co-ordinated counter-attacks. He summoned Herr, commander of 76th Panzer Corps, and explained that from noon on the 11th his Corps would take control south of a line from Mt. Giovi, three miles south-east of Salerno, to Giffoni, and that 14th Panzer Corps would retain control north of this line. Troops of the 14th Panzer Corps, including 16th Panzer Division, who were south of the boundary would pass to Herr's command. Herr in turn told Sieckenius that he intended him to strike southwards, and that the Allies must be prevented from reaching Eboli and passing into the Sele valley. In a directive issued to both Corps von Vietinghoff announced that it was the aim of *AOK 10* 'to throw the enemy out of the Salerno bridgehead'. To achieve this 14th Panzer Corps was to attack Salerno from the north. 76th Panzer Corps was to hold fast, and to concentrate its formations for an assault designed to split the Allied beachhead in two.

It seems clear that if these plans were to succeed, the Germans would have to collect their reinforcements quickly. In fact the process occurred piecemeal but it will be summarized later in one place. The orders given on both sides ensured that Battipaglia and Salerno were the places in 10th Corps' area where action would be most lively at the start. Since the main purpose of 10th Corps was to gain ground towards Naples and therefore to move in that direction, an awkward gap was likely to open between 10th Corps and 6th U.S. Corps between Battipaglia and the valley of the Sele.

However, we return now to the main events of the 10th September in 10th Corps' beachhead. 56th Division was on the right of the Corps and 167th Brigade was on the right of 56th Division. At Battipaglia the enemy began at first light to infiltrate the 9th Royal Fusiliers' positions and later began a determined attack with infantry and self-propelled guns, presumably Ackermann's. Two companies of Royal Fusiliers, on the Castellucia heights north-east of Battipaglia, were reduced by casualties to the strength of one, and were forced back to the town. The enemy then spread all round the town and continued to infiltrate until by about 1 p.m. the Fusiliers were hard pressed and their anti-tank guns had been silenced. German reinforcements arrived in the form of 1st Battalion 3rd Parachute Regiment, and the action became sharper.¹ The Fusiliers' carriers and mortars were knocked out, and the battalion at last withdrew a short distance westward to link with 6th Grenadier Guards (201st Guards Brigade) who had reached Highway 18. The Germans remained in control of Battipaglia. 8th Royal Fusiliers and the

¹ 3rd Parachute Regiment of 1st Parachute Division was having a wandering life, since from attachment to 26th Panzer Division it had been detached to 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. The 1st Battalion was one of the first units of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division to reach the battlefield.

Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry kept contact with the enemy in the neighbourhood of S. Lucia throughout the 10th. 201st Guards Brigade meanwhile had reached Highway 18 but had not been able to clear the area of the 'Tobacco Factory', one and a half miles west of Battipaglia, although further westward 3rd Coldstream Guards, and 2/6th Queen's of 169th Brigade completed the capture of Montecorvino airfield. The story of 2/5th Queen's of 169th Brigade, however, shows how varying were tactical fortunes in the beachhead at this early stage. During the night of 9th/10th the battalion had followed up enemy detachments towards the airfield from the south-west, and had collided with a detachment of German S.P. guns in leaguer. A furious little *mêlée* broke out, died down, and broke out again at dawn when in-fighting and the timely arrival of two 17-pounders of 16th A/Tk Battery R.A. sent the enemy packing. But 'D' Company of the Queen's had suffered many casualties, and, almost as the enemy scattered, 'A' Company was mauled in open ground by three tanks. Thus within 24 hours of landing 2/5th Queen's had lost five company commanders and 170 men. In sharp contrast, 169th Brigade's left-hand battalion reached Faiano unopposed. 56th Division therefore had performed its tasks on the left but had not been as successful on the right.

On 10th Corps' left, 46th Division's 139th Brigade completed its landings during the night 9th/10th September, and during the 9th the 6th Lincolnshires and 2/4th K.O.Y.L.I. of 138th Brigade had gone into action under the command of 128th Brigade. The beaches were very congested, there was much sorting out to be done, and 138th Brigade had a hotchpotch of units for its task at Salerno.¹ On the German side in the Salerno-Sorrento peninsula area were Dörnemann's Group and two small reinforcements from the Hermann Göring Division. These were 2nd Battalion 1st Panzer Grenadier Regiment Hermann Göring, at Cava di Tirreni on the Vietri sul Mare-Nocera road, and the Hermann Göring Reconnaissance Battalion at the Chiunzi Pass on the Maiori road. The action resulted in a deadlock between small forces. Part of Dörnemann's group held up 6th York and Lancaster north of Ponte Fratte on the Avellino road, which the Germans believed to be their most vulnerable approach. At Cava di Tirreni the Hermann Göring Panzer Grenadier Battalion vigorously engaged the 2nd and the Royal Marine Commandos, which were supported by the destroyer *Nubian*. Towards evening 6th Lincolnshires arrived and this action died down. It was much the same story with the Ranger Force at the Chiunzi Pass. Elsewhere patrols of 128th Brigade went as far as S. Mango and

¹ The brigade had its own 6th York and Lancaster Regiment and besides, 1/4th Hampshire (128th Brigade), B Squadron 46th Reconnaissance Regiment, and later the Special Service Brigade.

Giffoni without meeting anyone. Unloading went briskly on over 10th Corps' beaches, and a naval port party entered Salerno harbour which was little damaged or obstructed.

At the other end of the Gulf, twenty-two miles away, 141st R.C.T. moved towards Ogliastro and Agropoli, the 143rd R.C.T. sent patrols across the Calore, and 142nd R.C.T. occupied Albanella. 179th R.C.T. of 45th U.S. Division and the Division's commander, General Middleton, came ashore. Because von Doering's group had moved towards the centre on the 9th there were few enemy to be seen.

General Clark visited the shore from U.S.S. *Ancon* during the day and was favourably impressed, although he judged that 10th Corps was unlikely to press quickly through Battipaglia and beyond. Apart from the enemy's resistance in this area, 10th Corps' main thrust was to be towards Naples in the opposite direction. The gap between 10th and 6th U.S. Corps in the low ground between Battipaglia and the Sele, and the Rangers' area at the Chiunzi Pass seemed to him to be weak spots. Clark therefore moved 6th U.S. Corps' left boundary to the north side of the Sele, and ordered Dawley to bridge the river, and to put the 179th and 157th Infantry (both of 45th Division) into the gap. He ordered a battalion with detachments of supporting arms to be sent across to Chiunzi in small craft on the 11th. The build-up seemed to be satisfactory, and Clark informed Alexander that he would soon be ready to attack towards Naples.

von Vietinghoff's conception of the battlefield was a good deal neater and clearer than the way in which he built up his reinforcements between 10th and 13th September. He had four divisions from which these could immediately be drawn, namely 15th Panzer Grenadier Division and the Hermann Göring Division on the north flank in the areas of the Gulf of Gaeta and Naples, and on the south flank 29th Panzer Grenadier Division (Major-General Walter Fries) and 26th Panzer Division (Major-General Smilo von Lüttwitz) which were withdrawing from Calabria.¹ On 10th September, and again on the 12th, Kesselring moreover gave permission for units of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division to move to the battle from north of Rome, but these troops were held up by transitory but threatening brushes with hostile Italians in Naples. Similar skirmishes near Baronissi delayed parts of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, and every formation was beset by shortage of transport, and shortage of

¹ The last two had swapped Reconnaissance Battalions and other units to suit the Calabrian operations. 26th Panzer Division had attached to it 1st and 3rd Battalions of 4th Parachute Regiment (Colonel Walter), but until 16th September was without tanks, as one tank battalion was not in Italy, and the other was with 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division near Rome.

fuel.¹ For these reasons the reinforcements arrived piecemeal, were formed into Battle-Groups and hurried into action even if—as was the case with the Hermann Göring Division on 10th September—the Battle-Group itself was incompletely assembled. The Germans were well-used to this technique, and took full advantage of its flexibility, but it made an untidy and confusing picture in terms of tactical control by parent formations. To take an example. One of the first units of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division to reach the battle-field was the 1st battalion of 3rd Parachute Regiment, which had

Parent Formation	Battle-Group Commander Main Units (Initial)	Sector	1st Arrival/ approx. completion	Facing Allied Formations
Hermann Göring Panzer Division	<i>Haas.</i> (Col. Haas, 1st Pz. Gren. Regt H.G.) 2/1st Pz. Gren. Regt H.G. 2/115th Pz. Gren. Regt 3/115th Pz. Gren. Regt H.G. Reconnaissance Bn Composite (tank) Bn H.G. Panzer Regiment 3 Battalion (assault guns) H.G. Panzer Regiment Artillery. Engineers <i>Becker.</i> (Major Becker, 1st Parachute Regt) 3/1st Parachute Regt	Roads: i. Chiunzi-Maiori ii. Nocera-Vietri iii. S. Severino-Baronissi-Salerno	10-13 Sept.	46th Div. Commando Bde Ranger Force
		Road Chiunzi-Maiori	12 Sept.	Ranger Force
15th Panzer Grenadier Division	<i>Stroh.</i> (Col. Stroh, 71st Werfer Regt) 129th Pz. Gren. Regt 215th Pz. Abteilung 71st Werfer Regt Artillery. Engineers This group passed under comd. of H.G. Pz. Division	Road S. Severino-Baronissi-Salerno Area S. Mango	10-12 Sept.	46th Div.
3rd Panzer Grenadier Division	<i>Moldenhauer.</i> (Major Moldenhauer, 29th Pz. Gren. Regt) 1/29th Pz. Gren. Regt 2/67th Pz. Gren. Regt detached from 26th Pz. Division 103 Reconnaissance Bn 103 Pz. Abteilung (assault guns)	Area Salerno	13 Sept.	46th Div.
29th Panzer Grenadier Division	<i>Ulich.</i> (Col. Ulich, 15th Pz. Gren. Regt) 1 and 3/15th Pz. Gren. Regt 26th Reconnaissance Bn Artillery. Engineers <i>Krüger.</i> (Lieut.-Col. Krüger, 71st Pz. Gren. Regt.) 71st Pz. Gren. Regt.	Altavilla-Albanella- Controne	10-11 Sept.	36th U.S. Div.
		Area Eboli	11 Sept.	45th U.S. Div. 56th Div.
26th Panzer Division	2/9th Pz. Gren. Regt 1 and 3/4th Parachute Regt 129th Reconnaissance Bn Artillery. Engineers	Polla-Sala Consilina	12 Sept.	6th U.S. Corps. front

¹ As regards fuel, Italian varieties were unsuitable for much German motor transport. It will be recalled from Chapter VII that at Sapri on 8th September the Tanker *Traute* with 240 cbm of fuel had been blown up on German naval orders, and a fuel dump on shore had been demolished by the army. To help the move of German reinforcements from the south attempts were made to move fuel by air to Sala Consilina. It was said that the move of 29th Panzer Division into battle involved 'the personal participation of von Vietinghoff, his entire staff, and every battalion commander'.

been detached to 29th Panzer Grenadier Division after attachment to 26th Panzer Division in Calabria. As soon as it arrived, this battalion was sent into action at Battipaglia, and thus passed under the tactical control of 16th Panzer Division.

In this improvisatory manner von Vietinghoff succeeded in assembling, by 13th September, the maximum reinforcement that was possible for the time being. We have no complete picture of the process in the German records known to us, but we have presented the salient points in the table opposite in terms of main units, approximate dates, and approaches to sectors of the battlefield. In 10th Corps the Intelligence staff summed up the results on 15th September: 'Thus in this sector there is a complete assortment of units, presumably fitting into some system of battle groups to which we have not yet got the key.' We can, however, summarize the main consequences which would occur.

On the 12th and 13th September von Vietinghoff thought the situation to be highly promising, and agreed that 76th Panzer Corps should attack at once with all its strength. The fighting on the ground went on in its nagging, punishing way and drew virtually all the Allied troops on shore into the front line. General Clark began to feel that his effectives were being relentlessly consumed, that replacements were not keeping pace with the enemy's apparent access of strength, and that his Army was not expanding its narrow beachhead.¹ On the 12th he went so far as to consider, in his own mind, the possibility of evacuation, and by the evening of the 13th 5th Army staff officers were preparing plans to evacuate the beachhead should it become necessary. The plans were short-lived and will be referred to later.

It was on 11th September perhaps that the fighting acquired an atmosphere which it is not easy to convey. The ground, whether the steep and broken foot-hills or the 'blind', obstructed plain, demanded a great many men to cover it, and separated small units. Men heard clearly what they could not see. The clashes were sudden and violent, and units or sub-units were often temporarily scattered or knocked off balance. A small German group would often strike and disappear, and soon some other group would do the same thing from another direction. Sniping was persistent. The days were very hot. All this tried men severely, and kept their nerves on the stretch, even when nothing in particular was happening in their particular patches

¹ As regards 10th Corps, battle casualties treated in the Salerno beachhead between 9th and 18th September inclusive amounted to 2,734—just over 3%.

of ground. It was the same for both sides, and was one type of a soldier's battle.¹

In the British sector 56th Division intended to gain the arc of high ground running from Castellucia, north-north-east of Battipaglia, through Point 210, and round to Faiano. 46th Division's aim was to consolidate and improve the positions gained on the 10th. During the day both Stempel's and von Holtey's groups continued to infiltrate against 56th Division and in the evening they attacked. These tactics produced no very great effect in 167th Brigade's area although 220th Field Company R.E. and two companies of 2/4th Hampshire (21 Beach Group) had to enter the line as infantry. At about 6.15 p.m. 6th Grenadier Guards and two companies of the Coldstream of 201st Guards Brigade were sharply attacked and in Brigadier Gascoigne's words 'for a long time [in fact three hours] things looked rather nasty' until the attack failed. But Gascoigne had earlier been ordered to capture the 'Tobacco Factory' by dawn on the 12th, and at 9.30 p.m. the Scots Guards made the attempt.² The divisional artillery fired a concentration and the Scots Guards reached and entered the 'Tobacco Factory'. This seems to have been held by 2nd/64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, which, in the solid buildings, was not much disturbed by the shelling.³ A confused fight went on from which little information reached the headquarters of the Guards Brigade until midnight. Brigadier Gascoigne had no uncommitted troops to send in, and so called off the attack. Yet the fighting here and in the Battipaglia area led Sieckenius to report that he doubted whether the troops there could sustain a further major battle, and that he had no reserve. Neither side of course knew the effect that it had produced on the other, and life near Battipaglia was far from quiet. 65th Field Regiment R.A. indeed fired 43 'Defensive Fire' tasks during the night 11th/12th September. 56th Division's C.R.A. estimated his ammunition expenditure to be running at the rate of 10,000 rounds a day. On 56th Division's left flank, so uneven were events, 2/6th Queen's established itself in the area Faiano-Point 210 without any trouble. 169th Brigade indeed

¹ An impression recorded from 6th Grenadier Guards of an incident on the night of the 11th is typical: '... it seemed at one moment, before it was realized that the enemy were not after all in very great strength, that the whole Battalion were in danger of being over-run ...'

² The 'Tobacco Factory' was in fact a very large depot for agricultural produce, and a nearby hutted camp. The depot was surrounded by a spiked iron railing, eight feet high and the buildings were solid. The interior was divided by high wire fences 'like one has round a tennis court.'

³ It was from this time, one may say, that the anti-tank gun especially the 17-pdr, acquired 'concrete busting' as a normal role in the Mediterranean theatre. The 17-pdr had already been used as a 'concrete buster' near S. Giovanni (Messina). Demand grew for a weapon to do the job at long range, and in November 1943 a design was approved for a 'common pointed' shell for the 12-inch howitzer, intended for the attack of concrete. In Italy, however, the future of 'concrete busting' lay with the 17-pdr, the 3.7-inch H.A.A. gun, and the 5.5-inch medium gun, sometimes in combination.

held a tactical position which was very inconvenient for the enemy for it was a wedge thrust into his tenuous front between Eboli and Giffoni-Baronissi.

In 46th Division's sector 128th Brigade recovered 1/4th Hampshire from 138th Brigade, and gripped high ground immediately east of Salerno. On the Baronissi road 139th Brigade held positions near Ponte Fratte, and engaged in constant bickering with parts of von Dörnemann's and Stroh's groups. To relate the fortunes of two companies of the 2/5th Leicestershire shows how difficult it was to fight in this wooded, hilly ground. These set out in a local counter-attack at sunset on the 11th, and remained somewhere north of Ponte Fratte, at times waging private war, until they returned through 128th Brigade's front on the night 14th/15th September, without food or ammunition and bringing in 42 wounded. In the defile above Vietri sul Mare 139th Brigade had much the same type of fighting but gradually relieved the Commandos. On the 139th's left the Rangers, who had been reinforced, maintained their positions.

In 6th U.S. Corps' sector a vigorous three-headed thrust was planned. 157th Infantry (45th U.S. Division) on the left was to cross the Sele river south of its meeting with the Calore, and press on to Eboli, eight miles to the north.¹ In the centre 179th Infantry (45th U.S. Division), advancing between the Sele and the Calore, was to cut the Germans' important lateral route, Highway 19, at Ponte Sele: a seven-mile thrust. On the right 142nd Infantry (36th U.S. Division) was to take Point 424, just north-east of Altavilla, which was a valuable observation post for whoever held it. During most of the 11th the Germans had only finger-holds on the areas facing the Americans. They were part of von Doering's 79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment; oddments of 3rd Parachute Regiment; 26th Reconnaissance Battalion, and some of Ulich's group of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. However the various German groups contrived to hold up the Americans' left and centre, although 3rd/179th Infantry came within a mile of Ponte Sele before being pushed back. The 1st/142nd Infantry gained Altavilla without trouble. It was an exposed position in broken terrain which gave many men the impression that they were fighting alone and unaided. The battalion resisted stubbornly, yet its situation soon became critical. Opposite to them 29th Panzer Grenadier Division was filtering into the plain. The American 'front' ran from Altavilla south-west to the confluence of the Calore and the La Cosa stream, and then twisted sharply

¹ The American Infantry Regiment was composed of three infantry battalions and was the equivalent of the British Infantry Brigade; when other supporting arms were added, these terms became Regimental Combat Team and Infantry Brigade Group respectively. In speaking and in writing of an Infantry Regiment, the word 'regiment' was often left out.

north to near Persano, and back again to the west of the Sele: a sort of letter N.

During the 10th and 11th the Allied air forces were carrying out their planned tasks.

See Maps 14 and 17

On the 10th all the fighters under Major-General House's control concentrated on protecting the beaches and off-shore shipping. Some forty enemy raids of a hit and run type by fighter-bombers were driven off, and there were a few dive-bombing and high level attacks. American Liberators from the Middle East bombed the Foggia airfields while a strong force of Fortresses from north-west Africa attacked the road junction at Isernia and roads and bridges in the Ariano area and at Avella, dropping a total of 216 tons of bombs. These attacks were continued into the night by Wellingtons which dropped 54 tons on road junctions at Formia and, with some of the light bombers, on those at Auletta and Corleto. Other light bombers attacked traffic at Avellino, Brienza, Sapri and Cosenza while R.A.F. night-flying Liberators from the Middle East pounded communications in the Potenza area. German bombers were over the Salerno area during the night 10th/11th and two fell to the night-fighters.

The Allied air forces were unable to use Montecorvino airfield, because it lay under enemy artillery and mortar fire. This was disturbing to say the least. Great store had been placed on the early capture of this airfield, for it had been hoped that Force 'V' would be able to withdraw from the assault area on the 10th if the airfield was in use. It had been reconnoitred late on the 9th by the C.O. of No. 3202 Servicing Commando R.A.F. and next day his unit began stocking fuel and ammunition there, in spite of the enemy's artillery and mortar fire. But though on the 11th the airfield was finally secured it remained unusable except in emergency until the 20th. Fortunately work had begun on an airstrip at Paestum in the American sector. However, the lack of an airfield in the early stages told heavily on Force V which had to remain until a fighter force was established ashore. Fuel for the escorting destroyers was running low, but the main anxiety was the shortage of aircraft. On the 10th only 65 Seafires remained serviceable out of a force of 105 which had been available at dawn on the 9th. Nevertheless on the 10th the five small carriers flew 232 sorties which was 40 more than had been planned before the landing.

On the 11th some of the fighters covering the beaches were diverted to fighter-bombing to reinforce the fighter-bombers which were attacking enemy movement towards the beachhead. A strong force of medium bombers struck at roads and bridges in the Ariano and Vallo areas and road junctions at Isernia and Mignano, while



SALERNO BATTLEGROUND

Enemy attempt to split Allied forces 13th-14th September 1943

Furthest point reached by enemy battle groups ----->

Forward positions of 10 Corps and approximate line taken up by American units by noon 14th -----

Army H.Q. [Red Square] Corps H.Q. [Blue Square] Div. H.Q. [Blue Triangle] Bde H.Q. [Red Triangle]

YARDS 1000 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 MILES

Fortresses attacked the bridges at Benevento. The enemy made some determined attacks on Allied warships. The American cruisers *Philadelphia* and *Savannah* were damaged by radio-controlled bombs, the last named seriously. The Dutch gunboat *Flores* was also damaged in an air attack. The attacks on Allied warships took place at a time when the fighter cover had been reduced, partly because of the diversion of some of the fighters to fighter-bombing, and partly to offset mounting fatigue among the fighter pilots owing to lack of airfields in the bridgehead. The earlier, heavy scale of fighter cover was immediately restored after the attacks. For example, the total sorties flown on this task during the 10th and 11th were 1,677. Seven Allied fighters were lost. From German records it is estimated that the *Luftwaffe* flew about 450 sorties of all kinds during those two days, of which 240 were in daylight. Losses among the German aircraft, which appeared to be operating from Viterbo, Frosinone and Foggia, amounted to 15 bombers and fighters.

Paestum landing ground came into partial use on the 11th and four Lightnings had made emergency landings there by nightfall, and on the same day work began on other landing grounds near the Sele and Tusciano.

Allied army/air co-operation was creaking a bit at this stage. Land lines were unreliable and requests for air support took a long time to reach Sicily; bomb-lines were also hard to fix. However, by bombing up some of the fighters earmarked for beach and off-shore shipping cover, and briefing the pilots in flight from U.S.S. *Ancon*, some improvement was achieved. Fighter cover was interfered with very little because the fighters passed on to this task after bombing. By this means air support could be provided within 30 minutes, at best within 10 minutes, of time of request.

See Map 19

At 9 p.m. on 12th September General Alexander sent a report to the C.I.G.S., and three sentences from it illustrate the current stage of the battle. 'I am not satisfied with the situation at Avalanche. The build-up is slow and they are pinned down to a bridgehead which has not enough depth. Everything possible is being done to push follow-up units and material to them. I expect heavy German counter-attack to be imminent . . .' On the German side, on the same date, there were signs of two frames of mind. von Vietinghoff and Kesselring, who visited him at 1 p.m., were very confident. Herr, however, seems to have been a little less than enthusiastic for his coming counter-attack, and on the 13th Sieckenius could not quite see how a pitched battle would square with his High Command's long term policy of delay and withdrawal. The staff of

AOK 10 had on their minds difficulties over supplies, petrol, information, and signal communications, and the alleged feebleness of the German naval and air interventions in the battle. A battle seldom pleases everybody until long afterwards, when everybody has won it, or the acknowledged losers can enjoy vintage recriminations.

On 12th September the main actions occurred in the sector of 6th U.S. Corps, but the interest lies more in the minds of the commanders than in the events of the battlefield. The events can be reviewed quickly. In 10th Corps all formations occupied themselves in improving and strengthening their positions. The battle-groups of the Hermann Göring Division continued to concentrate in the approaches to Salerno through Baronissi, and Pagani-Nocera-Vietri, and in the area of the Chiunzi Pass. In general, in the Salerno area, the Germans continued to probe and infiltrate the British positions, and were met by local counter-attacks and aggressive patrolling. Such was the ferment that Balck, who was visiting the area, received a report of a strong counter-attack by 128th Brigade which certainly was never made. But with justification 16th Reconnaissance Battalion complained of artillery and naval bombardment, although on the 11th 46th Division's artillery had in fact been rationed to forty rounds for each 25-pdr and twenty rounds for each medium gun daily. The reason was a shortage of L.C.T. to unload storeships. The British found the fire from German artillery, nebelwerfers, and mortars to be galling. It had a more important effect in the closing down of work to bring Salerno harbour into use as a port. The effect of the German fire was not due to large numbers of weapons but to the fact that the harbour was within a nice range for observed fire, and that the projectiles were large.¹ In general, as had been noticed in Sicily and Calabria, the German was very clever at concealing his mortars and nebelwerfers, and in constantly changing the positions of his guns. Counter-battery work was very difficult.

The developments of the day (broadly similar in both divisions) are summed up in McCreery's report to Clark in mid-afternoon '... Situation satisfactory . . . 46 Div definitely on defensive at present. Until small Corps reserve is formed it will not be possible to attack . . .' Yet every infantry battalion in the Corps was now committed. Total casualties to the end of the 12th were 1,321 at an

¹ The numbers of weapons can only be estimated. On 1st September the Hermann Göring Division's artillery was 10 light field howitzers (10.5-cm), 15 medium field howitzers (15-cm), 11 guns of 10.5-cm, 12 Nebelwerfer of 15-cm. To this must be added one battery, and two troops of 17-cm guns, of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division's 33rd Artillery Regiment, two A.A. batteries, and two battalions (say 42 projectors) of 71st Werfer Regiment.

Weights of missiles were in pounds:

10.5-cm light field howitzer	32.5	15-cm Nebelwerfer	75
15-cm medium field howitzer	95.7	21-cm Nebelwerfer	248
10.5-cm gun	33.3		
17-cm gun	198		

average of 330 daily. Some 2,000 reinforcements from Bizerta could be expected between the 13th and 15th, and 131st Infantry Brigade (7th Armoured Division) on the 15th. McCreery expected the enemy's infiltration in the Salerno area to increase sharply, and he wished therefore to shorten 46th Division's front. To do this he would have first to draw in troops from his Corps' right flank. He therefore asked Clark if 6th U.S. Corps could take over part of his sector by extending its left flank towards the Tusciano and including Battipaglia. Clark agreed, to have effect on the 13th. McCreery suggested also that a parachute battalion might be dropped between S. Severino and Avellino to interrupt what seemed to be a main route for German reinforcements. But there were other plans for the airborne troops.

The morning report from 76th Panzer Corps on the 12th is interesting in view of the events of the day in the sector of 6th U.S. Corps. The Germans were perturbed by the advance of 157th Infantry, identified simply as a strong force, towards Eboli. They were also concerned for Battipaglia because a powerful attack there might drive a wedge between Stempel (64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment) and von Doering (79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment). They noted that Persano was under attack and Altavilla had been taken by the Americans. Before noon, however, 3rd/15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and 3rd/71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment (29th Panzer Grenadier Division) counter-attacked Altavilla. There they overwhelmed 1/142nd Infantry of which only 260 men contrived to withdraw. General Dawley ordered 36th U.S. Division to retake this ground since its loss jeopardized 45th U.S. Division in the Sele-Calore plain.

There the 179th Infantry had been trying to advance again towards Ponte Sele. The 2nd Battalion, on the right, reached a point west of Altavilla and, when the enemy regained Altavilla and threatened the flank, dug in where it stood. The 1st and 3rd Battalions renewed the attack in the Persano area. The 1/157th Infantry took a tobacco warehouse just west of Persano. The effect of all this on the Germans was to produce the impression that while 16th Panzer Division was holding its front, it did so only 'by throwing in every last unit including baggage trains'. It seemed imperative that the Hermann Göring Division should do its best to create a diversion in the Salerno area strong enough to relieve the pressure on 16th Panzer Division.

General Clark, coming ashore, could not know the German mind and formed the opinion that 45th U.S. Division was 'badly bruised'. He thought that '... the German strength near Persano seemed to be a spear pointing toward the center of the beachhead. If the Germans pushed to the sea, they could turn the inner flank of either

or both of the two corps . . .¹ He was worried that General Dawley seemed not to apprehend the threat. 'Concerned because there had been no contingency planning for the possibility that Fifth Army might be driven into the sea, Clark thought of alerting the troops to the need of destroying equipment and supplies in the event of a German breakthrough to the beach. He did not issue the order for fear of the effect it might have on morale.' Instead, he impressed his views on Dawley who thereupon set on foot a considerable transfer of troops to his left flank, for the whole of the 45th U.S. Division (with five battalions ashore) was ordered to concentrate on the north of the Sele, to gain touch with the right of 10th Corps. This left Walker's 36th U.S. Division a tortuous front of 35 miles from Agropoli to the Sele, and seven battalions (for 1/142nd had been scattered and 1/143rd sent to the Chiunzi Pass) to cover it. On the 12th 5th U.S. Army set up a headquarters near Albanella railway station. The site was unavoidably too close to the front, and the lateral tracks were so bad that a speedboat proved to be better than any vehicle as a means of personal liaison. House set up headquarters of XII Air Support Command some distance northward, to be ready to move on to Montecorvino airfield. Unfortunately wireless and land line communication between the two headquarters was almost non-existent and co-ordination of air support quickly collapsed. However, on the credit side, H.Q. U.S. 64th Fighter Wing which had also gone ashore on the 12th was by the evening controlling the fighter cover. Force V had by then withdrawn and had sent its 26 remaining serviceable Seafires to Paestum to serve as land-based fighters until the 15th.² In addition the 10th Corps was receiving the undivided attention of its own tactical reconnaissance squadron, No. 225 R.A.F., and the U.S. 6th Corps that of the U.S. 111th Tac. R. Squadron.

The number of airfields on shore continued to be unsatisfactory. Montecorvino could still not be used, and though the landing ground at Paestum was fit for limited use, and Tusciano too, neither appears to have been ready to receive squadrons from Sicily. Nor was the landing ground at Sele, and another by then under construction at Asa, ready for use. All remained within range of German artillery. On the 12th the fighters flew 972 sorties, 748 of them over the beaches, and the fighter-bombers attacked the German groups moving up from the south on the Lagonegro-Auletta road. On the night of 11/12th 98 Wellingtons had put Frosinone airfield out of action with 165 tons of bombs, and Mitchells, Bostons and Baltimores had attacked the roads into the battlefield. On the 12th Fortresses

¹ In this and succeeding paragraphs we follow M. Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino*, from whose Chapter VII the extracts are taken.

² Late on the 11th U.S.S. *Ancon* had handed over control of the night-fighters to *Hilary* which continued to control them during the night of the 12th/13th.

dropped a further 115 tons of bombs on Frosinone airfield. Other Fortresses bombed the more distant communications, roads at Mignano and a bridge between Naples and Benevento, while medium and light bombers attacked at Formia (Gulf of Gaeta), at Isernia and Ariano in mid-peninsula and the Lagonegro–Auletta road. 360 tons of bombs were dropped in these attacks. On the night 12th/13th 200 tons more of bombs were dropped on various routes leading to the beachhead. The Beaufighters repeated the success they had met with the previous night by destroying another two German bombers.

Balck now intended to renew the attack towards Salerno on the 13th from the direction of S. Mango. Herr, on the contrary, passed on at about 7 p.m. an air report that an enormous Allied convoy had entered the Gulf of Salerno (it was in fact a follow-up convoy) and that he proposed to shorten his front because his widely dispersed Corps could not sustain a major assault by fresh troops. von Vietinghoff queried the accuracy of the report, agreed to a small alteration of the front between Battipaglia and Eboli, and directed that Herr must nevertheless be ready to counter-attack late on the 13th. And then curious rumours began to stir. At 8.30 p.m. *AOK 10's* Signals reported that the Allies in Salerno were preparing to re-embark, and at 2.30 a.m. on the 13th Kesselring informed von Vietinghoff, Balck, and Herr that monitored radio reports indicated that the Allies were evacuating Salerno. At this stage the fog of war was fairly thick.

(ii)

General Alexander's report on the 12th September will have suggested that a crisis was approaching for 5th U.S. Army at Salerno. This crisis arrived on the 13th and lasted until the evening of the 15th. One might say indeed that there were two crises. One occurred in the beachhead in consequence of 76th Panzer Corps' counter-attack and the linked attacks by the Hermann Göring Division. 5th U.S. Army in meeting these attacks committed the very last man of its tiny reserves, and had no further means of influencing the battle other than sheer hard fighting. It desperately needed reinforcements very quickly. The second crisis arose from this need and struck the higher commanders outside the bridgehead—Eisenhower, Alexander, Cunningham, and Tedder. They alone could find the reinforcements and send them to Salerno but they could not do this by waving a wand. They had to try to overcome the immense difficulties which arose from the very careful build-up at Salerno which had been planned, and which now had to be interrupted and altered, if possible and at great speed. It will be best to look at the crisis of

reinforcement before looking at the tactical crisis, since in this way the narrative of the fighting on land, which led through the tactical crisis to the final phase of the battle, need not be broken.

In a great landing the build-up is as important as the assault. If the build-up falters, or is too weak, or wrongly shaped because of an incorrect balance between the fighting and ancillary arms and services, the force which has landed will be in peril. The danger arises in particular from the obvious tactical circumstances. Thus, for example, if 5th U.S. Army could not hold and expand its beachhead at Salerno the best it could hope for was to be withdrawn across the sea, for it could not manoeuvre in the sea. The Germans, on the contrary, had the whole hinterland of the beaches in which to manoeuvre in any way that was tactically desirable. Moreover they could, at a pinch, march to or away from the battle on their feet.

The units of 5th U.S. Army's build-up, planned to transform the assault forces into a powerful balanced force in stages corresponding with the probable development of the battle, could reach it only in ships, craft and aircraft. The scarceness of these forms of transport, the factors of time and space, and the predetermined scheme of the build-up imposed a programme of convoys which would sail at calculated intervals and would each be loaded with a particular cargo of men and material. The programme of convoys offered very small possibilities of alteration for two main reasons. From D-Day onwards all available ships, craft, and transport aircraft would be in transit, or loading, or discharging. There were none to spare for contingencies. Secondly the contents of a ship, craft or aircraft cannot be changed in a flash once stowage is even a little advanced, quite apart from the harm that changes would cause to a build-up planned for definite purposes. The result of these factors was that General Clark could not expect his first complete and powerful reinforcements, in the shape of an infantry and an armoured division, before the twelfth and seventeenth days. The crisis developed between the fifth and seventh days, and the cry was for infantry to meet it; infantry in numbers and at once, regardless of any considerations of balance. But by this time the almost inflexible programme of convoys was under way, and the scarce means of transport were virtually locked up in it.

This crisis did not take Eisenhower and his colleagues entirely by surprise. Eisenhower and Alexander had foreseen that the German rate of reinforcement by land would almost certainly be quicker than the Allies' rate by sea and air over great distances, and neither had discounted 'the possibility of a very bad time in the Avalanche area during the first few days'.¹ But the period July to September 1943

¹ The 'turn round' of sea-convoys between North Africa, where most of the potential reinforcements lay, and Salerno was calculated to be between five and six days.

was not one in which to take much counsel of fears. In war anything may happen to the enemy, and the risks which the 5th U.S. Army would run had been calculated and accepted.

Nevertheless Eisenhower had foreseen three principal measures to meet a crisis at Salerno if one occurred. First, 8th Army could be called on to advance further and faster in Calabria. We have seen that Alexander did so call on 10th September but that Montgomery had no possibility of responding until the 14th. Second, Eisenhower could try to send, quickly, to Salerno one of the formations most readily available. These were 34th U.S. Division and a U.S. Armoured Division in North Africa, and 3rd U.S. Division and 82nd U.S. Airborne Division in Sicily. But the divisions in Africa were a long way from Salerno, and of those in Sicily the 3rd was not complete in effectives, and the Airborne Division, far from being considered as a reserve in waiting, was on the brink of being given an important task in expanding Clark's beachhead. Third, Eisenhower could step up naval and air support. In spite of this foresight the actual crisis, as we have seen, appeared to demand infantry and the limiting factor was means of transport. It is part of the irony of the situation that Eisenhower and his colleagues, standing clear of the fog at Salerno, were able to see clearly and early that a crisis was approaching, and yet were hamstrung by circumstances in their attempts to take advantage of their foresight.

As early as 19th August Eisenhower had asked the Combined Chiefs of Staff to lend him 18 L.S.T. which had reached Oran under orders for India. On 11th September he was given permission to keep these landing-ships for a month, and it then seemed best to send them to 8th Army to reduce the administrative difficulties which threatened to halt it. The 82nd U.S. Airborne Division had been placed at Clark's disposal on the 9th September. At that moment Clark had no reason to expect a crisis and he put in hand preparations for airborne landings near Capua, or on the Sorrento peninsula, or the Avellino road, whichever might best help him to expand the bridgehead. He was naturally reluctant, when the crisis began to show, to divert these specially-trained troops from a promising offensive role exactly suited to them to the defensive role of infantry. His understandable hesitation led to the loss of an opportunity to reinforce Salerno created by chance and brought to his attention by Alexander. A release of craft from 'Baytown' and a windfall of others from Malta's dockyards made it possible to assemble in Sicily on the 10th enough craft to lift one R.C.T. to Salerno. Alexander suggested that part of the airborne division should go. But Clark remained anxious to use the whole airborne division offensively, and although 325th Glider Infantry embarked on the 11th it did not sail until the 15th, and then reached Salerno the same day.

Then, on the 12th, Cunningham and Hewitt scraped together some landing-ships and craft, 'returned empties' from Salerno and others, and these were placed under orders to sail to Sicily to embark part of 3rd U.S. Division for Salerno. Rapid second thoughts, however, showed that this expedient could not be effective sufficiently quickly to make it sensible to divert the vessels from their important and immediate part in the programme of build-up. The sole possibility remaining was to transport troops in warships, and how this was done will be described later.

On 13th September events at Salerno decided Clark to postpone his airborne operations, and he asked General Ridgway, commanding the airborne division, to drop a parachute regiment into the beachhead the same night. The 504th Parachute Infantry began to drop just after midnight 13th/14th September and was followed during the night 14th/15th, at Clark's request, by 505th Parachute Infantry.¹ We turn now to the parts played by naval and air forces.

On the 12th, at Admiral Hewitt's request, the U.S. cruiser *Boise* arrived to replace the damaged *Savannah*, and on the 13th Cunningham ordered the cruisers *Aurora* and *Penelope* to Salerno (they arrived on the 14th) to reinforce the bombarding ships, and U.S.S. *Ancon* to Palermo to load six-inch ammunition. On the 14th Cunningham ordered the cruisers *Euryalus*, *Scylla* and *Charybdis* from Bizerta to Tripoli, to embark 1,500 reinforcements for 10th Corps and sail to Salerno at high speed. They arrived on the evening of 15th September. On the 14th also Cunningham sent the battleships *Valiant* and *Warspite* to Salerno (they arrived on the 15th) and promised H.M.S. *Rodney* and *Nelson* if more heavy bombarding ships were required. Less dramatic but very useful was a decision to sail the second and third follow-up convoys together, and advance the date of the fourth to the date which had been fixed for the third. This would quicken the general build-up by about six days.²

On 12th September there began five days of intense air activity, and because of the critical situation on land by the evening of the 13th Tedder offered Alexander all the air support that could possibly be mustered. As a result air operations reached a peak during the day of 14th September and the night 14th/15th for well over 2,000 sorties of all kinds were flown in the 24 hours. This cold statistic masks the true effort because of the duration of the sorties. The ranges from Sicily and North Africa added considerably to the flying times and thus limited the sorties possible in the available time. Eisenhower for his part obtained permission from the Com-

¹ On the night 14th/15th 2nd/509th Parachute Infantry also dropped near Avellino to harass German communications.

² This decision was not just a matter of switching dates but was possible only because of a 'lucky break' with craft, and cramming in more cargo than had been thought to be possible.

bined Chiefs of Staff to keep temporarily three Canadian squadrons of Wellingtons which were due to return to the United Kingdom on the 15th. On that date Eisenhower also asked for a further immediate loan of three Groups of Liberators which had already returned there.

This was the story of the crisis at Salerno in terms of reinforcements. In Eisenhower's view a single infantry division would have resolved the crisis and transformed the battle overnight if only it could have been carried there in time. In actuality the difficulties were so great that the tremendous effort to reinforce resulted in no more than two parachute battalions and 1,500 infantry details reaching the beachhead while the crisis was at its height.

There was one rather strange accompaniment to the crisis which may best be described here since it involved commanders but not the troops. On 13th September Clark's staff were preparing plans to evacuate the beachhead should it become necessary. They drew two plans, named Sealion and Seatrain, one for each Corps. Whether the planners were thinking of withdrawing one Corps to reinforce the other, as some have said, cannot be confirmed. Clark asked Admiral Hewitt to prepare to evacuate troops from the beachhead if he (Clark) should give the order. Hewitt for some reason regarded Clark's request as a firm order rather than as a warning order. He opposed the plans but nevertheless called in Commodore Oliver to ask what help he could give. Oliver understood that he was being asked to embark part of the Army Headquarters and to join in a plan for switching one Corps to reinforce the other. He stated at once that this plan was impossible. He asked also if McCreery had been consulted. No one knew. Oliver then went off to McCreery who was greatly disturbed by the proposals, and protested. And so the schemes died, except for the precaution of stopping the unloading of stores on 6th U.S. Corps' beaches.

(iii)

We return, on the 13th September to forces in the beachhead and at first to the Germans, since their higher commanders believed that they held the initiative. On the 12th *AOK 10*, in the person of Colonel Wentzell, the Chief of Staff, had again declared that it intended to eliminate the Allied beachhead, and that it would strip bare all sectors other than Salerno in order to assemble every unit possible for the attack. Now on the 13th rumours that the Allies were evacuating Salerno were still current, and at 11 a.m. 16th Panzer Division's headquarters believed that the place had been taken. von Vietinghoff and Balck, in conference at 8 a.m. on the 13th, thought that affairs in 14th Panzer Corps' sector were decidedly

favourable. One reason for this belief was their opinion that the British troops were not fighting 'well'. By this they seem to have meant 'whole-heartedly', and they seemed to have deduced their opinion from reports that British prisoners were asserting that the war was already won. On the other hand the Allied naval forces were being most aggressive and Kesselring, they decided, was to be asked to urge *Luftflotte 2* to increase its attacks on the ships in Salerno bay. Plans for the 13th took the following shape by about 11 a.m.

The Hermann Göring Division's collection of battle-groups was to continue to attack at Salerno and to aim at gaining control of the Picentino valley. The main attack, however, was to be concentric against the gap between the Allied corps. 16th Panzer Division's Stempel Group was to strike towards Bellizzi, and its von Doering Group southward down the railway towards S. Nicola Varco. A new group, Kleine Limberg, was to attack towards Persano from the general direction Battipaglia-Eboli.¹ 29th Panzer Grenadier Division (Major General Fries) was to attack on the axis of the track running south-west to Persano, using Krüger's 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, two companies of 26th Reconnaissance Battalion, and a company of assault guns. Ulich's 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was to consolidate Altavilla and to ensure that no Americans remained in possession of the adjacent heights. Fries understood that a battalion of 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (26th Panzer Division) and some guns would join him later. Preparations were slow enough to attract a rebuke from Colonel Wentzell, for while optimism was in the air at the top, there was some 'stickiness' lower down. However preliminary patrols were largely uncontested and towards 1.30 p.m. all battle-groups moved off.

The German plans made it sure that the main clash would occur with the troops of 6th U.S. Corps on either side of the Sele river. The dispositions of the American troops in outline, from left to right, can conveniently be recorded in the table opposite.

Dawley's general purpose was to assemble the whole 45th U.S. Division in the area, rather naked of troops, on the 10th Corps' right hand. Just as in 10th Corps, almost every man was in action.

On the 12th afternoon Walker had given to Colonel Martin (143rd Infantry) the task of retaking Altavilla from the 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, but the reshuffle of the American troops prevented him from beginning his attack until 6.30 a.m. on the 13th. On this morning 3rd/143rd Infantry assaulted Altavilla, and 3rd/142nd Infantry assaulted Point 424 just beyond it. Two Field Artillery Battalions and a battery supported the attack. 3rd/142nd

¹ *Kleine Limberg Group* (Captain Kleine Limberg, commanding 16th Engineer Battalion): 16th Engineer Battalion, 2nd Battery 16th Artillery Regiment, one company 26th Reconnaissance Battalion.

did not get very far towards Point 424 but 3rd/143rd took Altavilla. Scattered fighting continued during the day while the Americans and Germans each prepared a further stroke: 3rd/143rd Infantry to take Point 424; 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment to regain its ground and to drive the enemy out of Altavilla. It now chanced that the German regiment attacked at 5 p.m., just fifteen minutes before the American battalion was due to launch its attack. When two small forces strike one another in this manner a dramatic hurly-burly commonly ensues. Thus it was at Altavilla. The Germans infiltrated upon both the American flanks, and cut the land lines to the supporting American artillery, which then found it hard to bring

Parent Division	Units	Place	
36th U.S. Div.	3rd/36th Engineers	Bivio Cioffi	In the infantry role
36th U.S. Div.	3rd/141st Infantry	Bivio Cioffi	Moved across from right flank of the Corps on the 13th
45th U.S. Div.	1st and 3rd 157th Infantry	West of Sele River	
45th U.S. Div.	179th Infantry	West of Sele River	
36th U.S. Div.	2nd/143rd Infantry	Point 54, north-east of Persano	
36th U.S. Div.	3rd/143rd Infantry	} Near Altavilla	Preparing to retake Altavilla
36th U.S. Div.	3rd/142nd Infantry		
36th U.S. Div.	1st/142nd Infantry	—	Remnants in divisional reserve
36th U.S. Div.	1st/141st Infantry	} Mt. Soprano-Ogliastro	In the infantry role
36th U.S. Div.	3rd/531st Shore Engineer Regiment		

down fire in answer to calls brokenly transmitted by the undependable wireless sets of the day. A fierce fight went on in the gathering darkness until Colonel Martin ordered both his battalions to withdraw to Mt. Chirico, three miles away, on the south side of La Cosa stream. Only Company K of 3rd/143rd was unable to withdraw and maintained a valiant defence in Altavilla until on the night 14th/15th it created an opportunity to filter away.

At about 4 p.m. Kleine Limberg's group and Krüger's 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment struck and overran 1st/157th near Persano. Leaving elements of 3rd Parachute Regiment to hold Persano, the Germans then crossed the Sele, fell upon 2nd/143rd at Point 54, and encircled it. Its commanding officer, with sadly mistaken judgement, ordered the troops to lie *perdu*, and called for a

MME—L*

destructive shoot from the artillery upon the enemy. Nothing of the sort could be produced by the available guns, and the Germans wiped the battalion out, for but a few more than 300 survivors straggled in during the next few days. The German thrust continued to the south and south-west until it reached the junction of the Sele and Calore rivers. At this obstacle the 158th and 159th Field Artillery Battalions, firing over open sights; part of 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion; drivers, cooks and clerks from the Army Command Post; and anyone else whom Walker could scrape together, stopped the enemy. Except for this stout-hearted American handful there was no one else between the Germans and the sea. The outlook seemed very black for the Americans and dazzling for the Germans. Indeed already, at 5.30 p.m., *AOK 10* had signalled confidently, to *OKW*, Kesselring, *Lufflotte 2*, and both Corps, that the Allied resistance was breaking, and that the Army was pursuing on a wide front although hard fighting was going on at Altavilla and Salerno. And so 10th Corps enters the picture.

On the extreme right of 56th Division a 'no man's land' existed. Although Dawley had agreed to extend his left boundary towards the Tusciano there was nothing much close to the British except the American Engineer battalion. A composite force under H.Q. 23rd Armoured Brigade had not yet taken over from 167th Brigade in the area of S. Lucia.¹ In this 'blind' and empty area 2nd/64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (Stempel) probed and patrolled until it reached the general line S. Lucia-Verdesca-Fosso. No Allied troops seem to have seen this solitary battalion, although its activities were no doubt reflected in *AOK 10's* report of pursuit on a broad front. Elsewhere in 56th Division's sector there was little to note except that shortly after midnight 13th/14th Stempel's group attacked the sector of 201st Guards Brigade opposite Bellizzi. 65th Field Regiment R.A. fired Defensive Fire tasks for nearly 90 minutes, and the attack faded out. In 46th Division's sector it was much the same story as on the 12th, shelling, mortaring, infiltration, small counter-attacks, and vigilance. Indeed some words of Brigadier Gascoigne of the Guards Brigade apply to the whole of the 10th Corps: 'There was very little to be done except to hold on at all costs to what we had got until further troops were landed, or until the presence in the vicinity of the Eighth Army made itself felt . . .'

The Allied air forces were active and vigilant over and beyond the veiled and higger-mugger battlefield.² The heavy and medium bombers attacked the roads just beyond the semi-circle of mountains

¹ *H.Q. 23rd Armoured Brigade* (Brigadier R. H. E. Arkwright): 44th Reconnaissance Regiment, Royal Scots Greys, 50th Battery 24th Army Field Regiment R.A., two companies 2/4th Hampshire, one company 6th Cheshire (M.G.).

² The weather was fine, hot, and often hazy.

which enclosed the plain. The fighter-bombers and fighters scoured all approaches. Kesselring's report of the day remarked that fighters and fighter-bombers were always over the battlefield in force, but recorded no special incident. Nearly 100 Wellingtons and a large mixed force of Mitchells, Bostons and Baltimores carried on where the day bombers had left off, and R.A.F. Liberators from the Middle East bombed communications in the Potenza area once more.

It was on the 13th that the aircraft from Sicily, two Spitfire squadrons from No. 324 Wing R.A.F., flew into the bridgehead. They settled down on the newly made Tusciano landing ground, and next day at noon relieved Force V's remaining Seafires, by then operating from Tusciano, of beach patrols. The Seafires flew off to Castelvetro on the 15th en route to Bizerta. Considering the number of aircraft available in Force V, the air effort achieved by the Seafires in the protection of the beaches was high compared with that of the land-based fighters, even allowing for the range at which the latter had to operate. During 9th-12th September the Seafires flew 713 sorties from the carriers of Force V, and their contribution to the safety of the beaches is deserving of the highest praise.

Also on the 13th two more landing grounds, Sele and Asa were completed. The same day H.Q. U.S. 64th Fighter Wing took over control of the night-fighters from *Hilary*, thus completing the transfer of fighter control ashore. Advanced H.Q. U.S. XII A.S.C. joined Battle H.Q. 5th Army at Albanella station, thereby restoring co-ordination of air support through No. 7 A.A.S.C. which from then on served both British 10th Corps and American 6th Corps. The 13th also saw the career of the U.S. Ninth Air Force in the Mediterranean and Middle East theatre come to a close when the American Liberators of M.E.A.C. were transferred to N.A.A.F., adding considerably to the striking power of the Strategic Air Force.

The bombarding warships were very busy and carried out some forty-two shoots during the day, some against targets of opportunity, some against points such as road junctions or bridges.¹ But the warships and others were again under air attack for the German air force was in some measure answering Kesselring's demands. H.M.S. *Uganda* was badly damaged, and H.M.S. *Loyal* and *Nubian*, and

¹ Some figures of the heavier shell expended on the 13th by H.M. ships are interesting:

H.M.S. <i>Mauritius</i>	102	rounds	6-inch
H.M.S. <i>Uganda</i>	87	" "	" "
H.M.S. <i>Orion</i>	78	" "	" "
H.M.S. <i>Roberts</i> (monitor)	10	rounds	15-inch

Between 10th and 13th the figures were:

H.M.S. *Mauritius* 1,019; H.M.S. *Orion* 559.

Between 9th and 13th:

H.M.S. *Uganda* 816; H.M.S. *Roberts* 120.

U.S.S. *Philadelphia* had narrow escapes. The hospital ship *Newfoundland* was struck, and was sunk when attempts to salvage her failed. She had no patients embarked, but five doctors, five nurses, and six orderlies were killed.

We revert now to the German side. At 6 p.m. on the 13th Herr and Sieckenius were planning an encircling advance on Paestum, to take the following shape. Kleine Limberg's group was to push down the railway to the Albanella railway station, and there to join von Doering before thrusting at Paestum.¹ 29th Panzer Grenadier Division was to cross the Calore, and at La Maida turn east, thus cutting off all the Allied troops on and north-east of the ridge of Mt. Chirico. However, Herr hedged when talking to von Vietinghoff. At 6 p.m. he reported stiff resistance west of Persano, and this, with reports which he had heard of hard fighting at Salerno, made him remark that an Allied collapse forecast by *AOK 10* was uncertain. von Vietinghoff replied that the Allies obviously would fight hard to cover their withdrawal, but that if they split in two their collapse was inevitable. The pursuit was to go on, and every available unit was to be thrown into it, no matter how much formations became disorganized in consequence. Towards midnight both Corps sent in reports. 14th Panzer Corps declared that the British (128th Infantry Brigade) were pressing harder, and that, far from evacuating Salerno, the British seemed to be getting ready to expand their beachhead. Balck nevertheless proposed to attack the high ground south-east of Salerno during the night. Herr reported fighting south-west of Battipaglia, fierce fighting west of Persano, and heavy fighting at Altavilla, but that he intended to keep up his drive towards Paestum, and to destroy the enemy north of Albanella. On the whole he believed that the enemy in his area had become so weakened and dispersed that the morrow should bring success.

On the Allied side 10th Corps reported its general situation to be unchanged. In 6th U.S. Corps Dawley, who had lost the best part of three battalions, decided to shorten his line and hold it to the last. 1st/179th Infantry reinforced the detachments at the Sele-Calore junction, and the remainder of 45th U.S. Division drew in a little on the west of the Sele and Calore. Most of 36th U.S. Division was spread along the high ground on the seaward side of the La Cosa stream, from Calore to Mt. Soprano, a front of about eight crow-flight miles. The arrival from the air of 1st and 2nd Battalions, 504th Parachute Infantry between midnight and 3 a.m. on the night 13th/14th was therefore a most welcome reinforcement. The parachutists dropped skilfully and safely, for on account of the frightful

¹ Albanella railway station is six miles west of Albanella itself. von Doering's activities on the 13th are obscure. By 8 a.m. on the 14th his group was spread out from just west of Battipaglia to a little north of S. Nicola Varco.

mishap at Gela in July all anti-aircraft fire had been prohibited, and special officers had taken post to enforce the orders.

On the 14th September the divisions of 10th Corps were resolutely stone-walling, and it is best to look at the day mainly from the German side.

The events of the night 13th/14th had not justified German hopes. Balck had failed to attack at Salerno, and reported that there were no signs that the British were softening, and that parachute troops had dropped (they had not) on the Naples–Nocera road. 76th Panzer Corps reported that Stempel was reorganizing at Bellizzi, and that von Doering had by-passed S. Nicola Varco, and was engaged west of Persano. Kleine Limberg was somewhere south of Persano. Part of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division was a mile east of the Sele–Calore confluence. Altavilla, Albanella, and La Maida might be in Allied hands. Herr told von Vietinghoff, at a meeting at about 8 a.m. on the 14th, that most of 16th Panzer Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division would continue to thrust towards Paestum. There was a battle-group of 26th Panzer Division near Eboli which could be used to turn westward against the British, when the other divisions had grasped a pivot south of the Calore at Albanella railway station. von Vietinghoff gave no directions other than that 26th Panzer Division should take over from 16th Panzer Division in the Battipaglia neighbourhood and prepare for an advance towards Salerno.

At 11.40 a.m. *AOK 10* passed on this information to Balck, and told him that 76th Panzer Corps was preparing a force which would push towards him via Bellizzi. Balck was to join up with this force by breaking through to Pontecagnano. Balck replied that the British were reinforcing the Salerno sector, and that he could not attack towards or as far as Pontecagnano, but that he would attack the high ground between Salerno and Pt. 419 during the night 14th/15th. *AOK 10* did not question Balck's reply. The Army headquarters indeed was not now well abreast of the situation because of faulty communication and scanty air reconnaissance, and believed that 6th U.S. Corps was falling back with a view to re-embarkation.

The fact was just the opposite. The Americans successfully defeated several attempts to penetrate their positions along the Calore and La Cosa stream. Moreover during the afternoon the remaining regiment of 45th U.S. Division, 180th Infantry, landed and was taken by Clark into reserve, a clear indication that 'hole-plugging' was needed no longer. At 5 p.m. too McCreery summed up 56th Division's sector as 'Nothing of interest to report during daylight' and 46th Division's in almost the same words. He had, however,

been very much aware that the Hermann Göring Division was growing stronger in the Salerno area, and during the day he moved 167th Brigade (except for 9th Royal Fusiliers) towards the right of the 128th Brigade and placed it under 46th Division's command. 23rd Armoured Brigade's 'ad hoc' force, with 9th Royal Fusiliers, replaced 167th Brigade on the right of the Corps.

During the 14th and the night 14th/15th Mediterranean Air Command fulfilled Tedder's undertaking by throwing every available aircraft into support of 5th U.S. Army.¹ By day, in hazy weather with high cloud cover, 34 Fortresses dropped 91 tons of bombs on roads around Pompei, and 37 dropped 97 tons on the roads at Torre Annunziata. A further 99 Fortress sorties, 420 by the Mitchells and Marauders, and 36 by the Baltimores were flown against German concentrations of troops and supplies in the Battipaglia–Eboli sector, the roads in the Avellino, Pompei, Torre Annunziata, Baronissi and S. Severino areas, and troops west of S. Cipriano. The Torre Annunziata–Pompei–Nocera road was put completely out of action. This intense heavy and medium bomber action was made possible by many of the aircraft flying two sorties during the day. Fighter-bombers attacked troops, vehicles, roads and bridges in the Eboli, Auletta, Torre Annunziata and Avellino areas and the marshalling-yards at Battipaglia dropping a total of 142 tons of bombs during 573 sorties. In addition 37 American Liberators struck at Pescara on the east coast. Altogether well over 1,000 tons of bombs were dropped on targets in Italy by bombers of all kinds in daylight on the 14th, and photographic air reconnaissance showed heavy damage and destruction to roads, railway tracks, installations of many kinds, marshalling-yards and other targets. Fighter activity over the beach-head and off shore shipping was understandably less than hitherto, but, in any case, German air opposition was beginning to fade. There were only 85 sorties on the 14th, of which 60 or so were against shipping—the *Bushrod Washington* was sunk. Some Allied fighters strafed targets of opportunity in the battle area while others, released

¹ The repercussions on the Strategic Air Force of Tedder's undertaking deserves mention. Not much of the night of the 13th/14th would have remained by the time orders had been drawn up and distributed downwards from H.Q. N.A.S.A.F. through subordinate formations to airfields. Yet a last-minute change in a strategic day-bombing programme, always complicated and taking many hours of planning and preparation before take-off, cannot be achieved by the wave of a magic wand. In this instance it would have involved: a re-issue of target information including maps or photographs, and details of A.A. defences; re-calculation of fuel to be carried, according to range, and the consequent reassessment of total bombload for each type of aircraft; reassessment of types of bombs to be used according to nature of target; rearrangement of fighter escort and rendezvous: re-routing and other navigational readjustments; and many other details arising from the change of plan.

On the bomber airfields the physical effect of the change would have been felt most. The readjustment of bomb and fuel loads would have involved the scurrying to and fro, at first in the dark, of ground crews, bomb trolleys and petrol bowers. For the aircrews it would have meant re-briefing and, for some, hectic preparations to be airborne soon after daybreak in order to complete two sorties before dark.

from 8th Army's front and using Reggio di Calabria airfield, swept north to strafe M.T. near Eboli.

On the night 14th/15th the Wellingtons surpassed any of their previous efforts since the Middle East campaign began. They flew 126 sorties and dropped 237 tons of bombs, and with 41 Mitchells led by eight British Bostons, they cut the railway tracks leading from Torre Annunziata to Castellammare, Salerno and Naples, and at Battipaglia those running from Naples to Metaponto and Reggio. The main road to Naples was blocked and the roads to Castellammare and Metaponto were seriously damaged. The towns of Battipaglia and Eboli were all but obliterated. Meanwhile 20 British and South African light bombers struck at roads leading to the battle area from Eboli, Contursi, Benevento, Capua, and Caserta. With six R.A.F. Liberators from M.E.A.C., they also bombed the roads in the Potenza area, where also a railway viaduct on the line to Battipaglia was attacked and partly destroyed. Meanwhile the night-fighters were out in considerable strength but found no quarry.

There is some evidence in German documents of the effects of air action in the area of the battle. On the 14th, 16th Panzer Division noted that during the past six days it had received no air support, 'and not one single reconnaissance plane have we seen'. The history of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division records that '. . . Even though we already knew from Sicily what Allied air supremacy meant, the strafing we underwent at this time, and particularly on 14th September, put all our previous experiences in the shade. It was an achievement if one small vehicle made one short journey, darting from cover to cover, and completed it unscathed.' Headquarters of 26th Panzer Division found much trouble on the 14th in getting into position, and its 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment at Eboli noted that the town was in ruins and that the men were 'much affected by the non-stop strafing'.

The Allied bombarding warships were again very active, and in 45 recorded shoots on the 14th 1,686 rounds of 4-inch, 4.7-inch and 6-inch shells were expended. On this day H.M.S. *Orion* departed to Malta to replenish with ammunition.

On the 14th there was announced an important development in the policy of the German high command, the first official statement of intentions for the phase after Salerno. This was discussed at a conference between Kesselring and von Vietinghoff on the 15th, and will be described in the context of some opinions held by the Allied higher commanders on that date. But there is a revealing expression in Kesselring's signal. *AOK 10* was now merely to strike (*schlagen*) the Allied forces which had landed at Salerno, and no longer to throw

them back into the sea as it had been ordered to do on 10th September.

During the night 14th/15th September 2,100 men of 505th Parachute Infantry, carried in 125 aircraft, dropped safely near Paestum, and increased Clark's reserve. On the German side 16th Panzer Division, whose men were very tired and had suffered heavier casualties from artillery fire on the 14th than on any earlier day, adopted the defensive in order to reorganize. 29th Panzer Grenadier Division also went over to the defensive and its centre of gravity was marked by the line Persano-Altavilla-Controne. The thrust towards Paestum had fizzled out, although General Dawley could not know the fact as yet.

However east of Salerno a violent engagement had begun during the night. The Hermann Göring Division's attack (an extension of what Balck had at first proposed) was to be in two parts, both commanded by Colonel Schmalz who had in Sicily proved himself tough and resourceful. An infantry group was to take Points 236 and 419 (the high ground north-east of Pastena) within the line held by 128th Infantry Brigade. When this flank was thus secure, an armoured group was to strike down the valley from S. Cipriano to Pontecagnano to meet a thrust converging from Bellizzi by 26th Panzer Division.¹ The Schmalz infantry group achieved surprise and pushed a company of 1/4th Hampshire and another of 5th Hampshire off two points named 'Crag' and 'White Cross Hill', possibly the German Point 236.² The British at once counter-attacked and the fighting became bitter and confused, the British intermingling at need under the nearest commander. The outcome was that the Germans could not penetrate southwards, and not until about 1 p.m. did they gain what they believed to be Point 419 near the boundary between 128th Brigade and 167th newly arrived on its right. But in this area too counter-attacks by 31st Royal Marine Commando and 2nd Commando, from 46th Division's so-called 'reserve', held the German infantry. Meanwhile the armoured group had moved south from

¹ The composition of Schmalz's groups is not certain. The infantry group contained 1st and 2nd/129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. The armoured group contained the Hermann Göring Panzer Regiment and 3rd/129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division. 2nd/29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division was in one or the other group. On the 15th the strength of the tank regiment was 11 Pzkw III, 28 Pzkw IV, 2 Czech 38. There were 49 assault guns. 2nd and 3rd Batteries (respectively of 15-cm and 21-cm werfers) of 71 Werfer Regiment were among the supporting weapons.

² The maps of 1943 and descriptions do not permit precise identification. It is, however, very likely that 'Crag' and 'White Cross Hill' were some hundreds of yards north of Point 236, on the opposite side of a re-entrant. The same doubt applies to Point 419. On the whole it is unlikely that the enemy reached either Point, but they gained the northern edge of the large feature.

Pezzano, its tanks leading and carrying the infantry, an expedient which the Desert had taught the British to shun. The column reached Filetta at about 2 p.m., and the tanks had found that they could not deploy from the winding road flanked by dense scrub. Successively at first, and later all together British units engaged them. These were 'A' squadron 44th Reconnaissance Regiment, 231st Anti-Tank Battery R.A., 7th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, and 'A' Squadron 40th R.T.R. The Germans were finally checked about two miles north of Pontecagnano and drew off towards S. Mango. Four tanks had been put out of action, and 3rd/129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment must have discovered (like the British in the Desert) that tanks attract fire as a pot of jam attracts wasps, for the battalion became completely dispersed and was rallied with difficulty. In short both Schmalz groups had incurred a rather high (so it was reported) number of casualties for very little result. Elsewhere attacks had made no impression on 46th Division, and 26th Panzer Division had not got under way from Bellizzi. Balck nevertheless reported that he intended to continue his attacks on the 16th. But he declared that he expected hard fighting because the British, though not numerous, were resisting with exceptional toughness in strong positions where they had been entrenched for days.

During the daylight of the 15th the total bomber effort of N.A.A.F. became less after the intense activity of the previous 24 hours, but it was powerful and effective, and concentrated in or near the battle area. 92 Fortresses bombed the roads Battipaglia-Eboli, Serre-Eboli, Auletta-Polla, those at Torre Annunziata, and the road junction at Eboli. 192 Mitchells and Marauders struck at other battlefield targets, the roads at Torre Annunziata, those leading into the plain, and troops at Roccadaspide. Meanwhile 48 light bombers bombed troops east of Albanella and at Eboli, and the roads in the battle area. The Germans reported that Allied air activity was as ceaseless as ever. Altogether the heavy, medium and light bombers of N.A.A.F. dropped 431 tons of bombs. In addition 25 American Liberators bombed the marshalling-yards and roads at Potenza. The fighter-bomber effort of 549 sorties was little short of the previous day's, and was made possible by some reduction in protective fighter duties which amounted to 364 sorties, 300 of them on defensive patrols. Lightnings, Mustangs and Kittyhawks (the Kittyhawks operating from a newly occupied airfield at Grottaglie) strafed and bombed M.T., guns, troops and traffic in the Eboli, Battipaglia, Auletta, and Avellino areas dropping over 150 tons of bombs, and widespread damage to enemy road convoys was reported.

As a result of all these offensive air operations on the 15th the enemy's communications over a wide, deep arc encircling the Salerno beachhead were cut, blocked or damaged. Kesselring,

reporting to *OKW* in the evening, stated that the Allied naval artillery and overwhelming air supremacy had been a cause of 76th Panzer Corps going over to defence. Herr had said much the same when informing von Vietinghoff that he should go over to the defensive.

During the 14th and 15th the strategic bombers had operated as a powerful and additional tactical air force, working directly to meet requirements of the Allied ground forces. Some of the bombing indeed was so close to 5th Army's front that an error of judgement could have had terrible results. The German Air Force offered little resistance in the air and concentrated instead against 5th Army and the off-shore shipping, thus leaving the German troops exposed to the Allies' round-the-clock air attacks. Allied naval gun-fire was also a thorn in their side and the German army formations time and again called on the *Luftwaffe* to attack the ships.

On the night of the 15th/16th the Wellingtons were out again in strength. In 123 sorties they dropped 240 tons of bombs on the railway at Torre Annunziata and the bridges and roads around Pompei. Meanwhile 43 American medium bombers led by six British Bostons attacked roads in the battle area, and 32 Bostons and Baltimores carried out armed reconnaissance and bombed Pescopagano, Eboli, Contursi, Corleto, and Lagonegro. R.A.F. Liberators from M.E.A.C. carried out their third consecutive night attack on Potenza. And throughout the night the Allied night-fighters were very active.

Allied warships made 49 recorded shoots on the 15th and fired 2,592 rounds including a contribution of 29 15-inch from H.M.S. *Warspite* on Altavilla. It required some hours to arrange bombardment liaison officers, observation parties, and target lists for the two battleships, and in the event H.M.S. *Valiant* was not required to open fire. The sight of these great ships off shore was heartening and their gun-fire awe-inspiring, but their contribution of 80 15-inch shell was not large compared with the total of naval shell expended by the supporting cruisers, destroyers and 15-inch monitors, namely some 23,000 rounds (or 1,000 tons) of 15-inch to 4-inch calibre fired for the most part between 9th and 19th September.¹

We must now turn from the battlefield to the German high command since on 12th September Hitler had issued a directive, of which we will mention only the parts immediately relevant to the battle at Salerno. The Führer took *OB Süd* and Army Group B under his direct command, temporarily ending, at least on paper,

¹ Warships usually do not carry quantities of land-service shell. The *Warspite* had 88 rounds, the *Valiant* 50, of 15-inch shell of this nature, and the plan was to fire half on the 15th, and half on the 16th. The *Warspite* engaged her target at ranges of 19,500 and 20,400 yards.

Kesselring's formal subordination to Rommel. He directed Kesselring to attack the Allies at Salerno with all his forces save what he might require for the defence of Rome and Naples and to maintain the link with Corsica. Whether the attack at Salerno succeeded completely or in part, thereafter the bulk of *AOK 10* was to be transferred to the area of Rome to control the countryside north of the capital. Rearguards and a scorched-earth policy were to delay the Allies. Army Group B was to hold down northern Italy and to find the best line of defence in the Apennines which was then to be fortified.¹ The German air force was first of all to attack the Allies at Salerno, and later to withdraw from its air base at Foggia, although continuing to support *AOK 10's* rearguards and to attack the Allies' sea communications.

On the 14th Kesselring, as we have noticed, passed on the gist of the policy to von Vietinghoff, and on the morning of the 15th he discussed the matter with him. Kesselring was in favour of launching a fresh attack from the area Albanella-Roccadaspide, but von Vietinghoff was not. In the end Kesselring reported to *OKW* that the Allies' powerful naval artillery and air supremacy had forced 76th Panzer Corps on to the defensive. Whether a decisive success south of Salerno could now be gained depended upon the efforts of the Hermann Göring and 26th Panzer Divisions, and upon the arrival of part of 1st Parachute Division from Apulia.² If a success could not be gained, *AOK 10* must break off the battle to avoid its troops being 'mangled'. The Allies had suffered too many casualties to be able to exploit if the battle were broken off. Whatever the result of the battle Kesselring proposed, after it, to defend four successive 'barrier positions'. The first of these would run from Salerno through Potenza to Cerignola (south of Foggia). 26th Panzer and 1st Parachute Divisions, under a Corps commander, would be disposed on this line. The Hermann Göring and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions would hold the Sorrento peninsula, 16th Panzer Division would be at Naples, and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division further north near Littoria.

On the Allied side Alexander had sailed from Palermo in the destroyer *Offa* on the evening of the 14th, and on the 15th visited the beachhead. The same evening he reported to Eisenhower: 'Although I am not entirely happy about present situation I am happier than I was 24 hours ago. Troops are tired but on the whole in good heart.'

¹ The boundary between Army Group B and *AOK 10* was to be Elba-Piombino-Perugia-Civitanova.

² These reinforcements (2/1st Parachute Regiment, and 2nd and 3rd/3rd Parachute Regiment) set off at noon on 15th September. Their subsequent movements are obscure, but they do not appear to have been in action at Salerno, and on the 17th it was agreed that 1st Parachute Division's dispersed battalions should reassemble between Potenza and Altamura.

He directed that 5th U.S. Army was to hold on, consolidate, and reorganize with a view to creating a mobile reserve.

The crisis in the beachhead was indeed manifestly subsiding. It is not easy to describe, without distasteful dramatization and the use of perhaps over-excited accounts, how grim and tense the atmosphere had been and was. Moreover the atmosphere was not everywhere the same. The Americans undoubtedly were experiencing the sharpest of the trials and the highest degree of nervous and mental strain. The British were having their trials too, and they were battle worn. But the issues did not appear, in 10th Corps' battle, as the stark opposites of holding a quickly shrinking beachhead or of being driven into the sea. To the British it seemed to be a matter of holding on stubbornly for some days while 5th U.S. Army grew to its full strength, and they settled to that dogged, aggressive defence in which British troops so often show their best qualities. There is ample evidence that the troops resented and scoffed at some of the highly coloured news bulletins which were broadcast from the home countries. It is therefore altogether difficult to give a balanced account, and it is perhaps best to approach one by the middle course of repeating some facts which, together, are soberly impressive.

On the 12th September there occurred a marked surge of German reinforcements, the Americans lost a key position in Altavilla, and the 5th U.S. Army, broadly speaking, began to let slip whatever initiative it had grasped. Clark, on that day, saw the onset of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division as a spear poised over the centre of the beachhead. He even had inner thoughts of destroying the equipment and supplies on the beaches to ensure that they would not be lost if the Germans broke through. Dawley was beginning to show signs of nervous strain. On the evening of the 12th Alexander signalled to Sir Alan Brooke 'I am not satisfied with the situation at Avalanche. The build-up is slow and they are pinned down to a bridgehead which has not enough depth . . .' He had already put in hand measures to divert landing-ships from the planned build-up at Salerno to an emergency reinforcement.

The desperate need for reinforcements was in everyone's mind. Thus, on the 13th, Clark threw to the winds most of his plans for 82nd U.S. Airborne Division, and sent an officer by air to Ridgway in Sicily with an injunction to drop troops in the beachhead the same night. Alexander ordered 3rd U.S. Division to prepare to sail immediately. Hewitt appealed for additional warships. Discussions began which resulted in Tedder later switching his whole strategic air force to the tactical role. On the battlefield itself the American commanders assembled at 6th U.S. Corps' Command Post and decisions were taken to shorten the front on a defensible line and there to make a last-ditch stand. Some commanders were evidently

near exhaustion and Walker inserted an extra echelon of command in 36th U.S. Division in the shape of three brigadier-generals, two of whom were attached from Army headquarters. Clark requested Hewitt to be ready to evacuate troops from the bridgehead, and the short imbroglio between Hewitt, Oliver, and McCreery followed.

With the arrival of the airborne reinforcements, of 180th R.C.T., of the *Aurora*, *Penelope*, *Valiant*, and *Warspite*, with the mighty intervention by the air force, and with the success of the staunch defence, the tension began to relax quickly. Our collection of facts need not be made larger. It is well to say forthrightly that it does not imply a censorious innuendo nor an invidious comparison between Americans and British. As so often in war it was when fortunes seemed to be at their worst that they began to mount, while the enemy also had as harsh trials of his own. But it is only the uncommon commander who can find, in action, that these commonplaces are fortifying or suggestive of courses of action, if he even thinks of them. Among Mediterranean commanders it was perhaps only the extraordinary Wavell who showed this ability, most notably in 1941 when for seven months he met and surmounted the frequent crises of first five, and then four, hard pressed, simultaneous, fronts.

During the afternoon of 15th September 26th Panzer Division had been trying to assemble a battle-group under Colonel von Mandelsloh to co-operate with Schmalz. Allied air attacks interfered greatly with the assembly, but in the end two battalions of 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (von Mandelsloh) and one of 4th Parachute Regiment collected as the hard core of the group.¹ The Panzer Grenadier battalions were to attack towards Bellizzi and the parachute battalion towards Fosso at 6 a.m. on the 16th. The Panzer Grenadiers' attack on that morning came in against 201st Guards Brigade in disjointed fashion and never cohered. The effort achieved nothing and 65th Field Regiment R.A. commented that the attack was 'a Gunner's dream; plenty of targets, all in the open, lots of ammunition, and nothing coming back at us.' The Parachute battalion struck 23rd Armoured Brigade's positions near S. Lucia, and infiltrated a little between 9th Royal Fusiliers and a squadron of 44th Reconnaissance Regiment. Counter-attacks by the Royal Fusiliers, 102nd Field Company R.E., and the Royal Scots Greys drove off the enemy by early afternoon. But already during the forenoon von Lüttwitz had concluded that he was unlikely to reach Pontecagnano, his ultimate objective, because of high losses and the Allies' supremacy in guns and aircraft. He intended, however, to try again during the late afternoon. On the other flank Schmalz's

¹ The other units are uncertain. Some artillery of 16th Panzer Division and of the 26th were to support the attack, but the O.P. parties, it seems, were not in communication with the guns.

armoured group tried at 3 p.m. on the 16th to advance upon Pontecagnano once more with a view to meeting von Lüttwitz. But after a very short distance it was heavily engaged by anti-tank guns, artillery, and naval guns, and three tanks were destroyed, while the unhappy 3rd/129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was scattered once again. The group could not advance and withdrew to S. Cipriano in the evening. Schmalz's infantry group had no better success on the fronts of 128th and 167th Brigades. The day passed in thrusts and counter-thrusts. In the evening 14th Panzer Corps reported that the Schmalz group had not gained its objectives, that the Allies seemed stronger and to have no intention of giving way, and that air attacks upon the forward troops and the rear area of the Corps were continual. A flank move through Montecorvino had been thought of, but was not pursued because an important bridge on the route had been destroyed.

Meanwhile the Allies though fighting defensively had not been altogether defensively minded. General McCreery on the 14th September had held a conference to consider renewed thrusts through Battipaglia, and towards S. Severino and Pagani. On the night 14th/15, 2nd/509th Parachute Infantry, 600 strong, had been sent to drop near Avellino to harass the enemy's communications. Unfortunately 11 of the 40 aircraft dropped 10 miles 'wide' and 12 others between 8 and 25 miles 'wide'. The countryside, as General Bedell Smith had once forecast, was peppered with parachutists, useless as a fighting force, who straggled back after several days of lurking in the hills. On the evening of the 15th a battalion of 179th Infantry made a little ground between the Sele and Calore. On the evening of the 16th two battalions of 504th Parachute Infantry took Point 315 near Altavilla, but were unable to recapture Point 424.

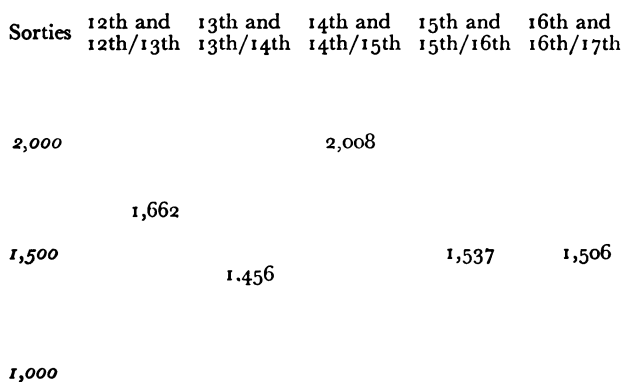
At sea the Allied warships had 39 shoots during the 16th and fired 1,076 rounds. But there was a serious naval casualty. At 2.10 p.m. H.M.S. *Warspite* was attacked by ten F.W. 190s. At the same time three radio-controlled bombs were released apparently by aircraft at 20,000 feet. One bomb hit, penetrated No. 4 boiler room, and burst. Five boiler rooms became flooded almost at once, and at 3 p.m. the last boiler room filled and all steam failed. Tugs and other warships took the *Warspite* in tow, and 'after an adventurous passage sideways through the Straits of Messina (wrote Admiral Cunningham) reached Malta on the 19th'. There were fortunately few casualties, 9 killed and 12 wounded, among her people.

The Allied air forces continued their attacks with results which we have already noted from the German viewpoint. Fortresses, Mitchells, and Marauders dropped about 360 tons of bombs on bridges and roads at Benevento and Capua and roads in the Mignano, Isernia

and Eboli areas. The light bombers concentrated on enemy movement in the Eboli-Contursi area while the fighter-bombers—Lightnings, Mustangs, and Kittyhawks (of the Desert Air Force)—traversed the battlefield and its nearer approaches. Farther afield the American Liberators bombed communications at Potenza. Since and including the night of the 13th/14th 100 British and American Liberators had showered heavy bombloads on this key road and rail centre.

Since the 13th three squadrons of Kittyhawks from the U.S. 33rd Fighter Group and the Mustangs of the U.S. 111th Tac. R. Squadron had flown into Paestum; another Spitfire squadron of No. 324 Wing R.A.F. into Tusciano; a detachment of No. 225 Tac. R. Squadron R.A.F. into Asa; and some of the Spitfires of the U.S. 31st Fighter Group into Montecorvino. On the 16th the landing ground at Capaccio was ready for the Mustang dive-bombers of the U.S. 86th Fighter Group to move in shortly afterwards, and fighter-bombers from Sicily began to use the landing grounds in the bridgehead as staging posts during daylight. The mounting difficulties because of range which had beset the U.S. XII A.S.C. were coming to an end.

The fluctuations in the air effort of the Northwest African Air Forces, excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports, in direct and indirect support of the fighting in the Salerno beachhead during the five days of intense air activity are shown in the following graph:



On the evening of the 16th General Clark was able to report to Alexander ' . . . Situation vastly improved and gets better hourly . . . ' Of the same day General Eisenhower, who had spent it in the beach-head, wrote ' . . . there was every indication that the Germans had expended their energy and were battle weary: signs of withdrawal were evident all along their front; but it was a certainty that this

withdrawal would be planned to impede our advance and to inflict the greatest number of battle casualties on us . . . ' There was little doubt in fact on either side that the battle on the beaches at Salerno was closing.

(iv)

In fact at about 4 p.m. on the 16th von Lüttwitz (26th Panzer Division), after a look at the front for himself, turned his division over to defence, with the intention of attacking again if Schmalz reached Pontecagnano. Herr confirmed this decision and later both he and Balck reported that they were to all intents and purposes stuck. From far away Apulia Heidrich (1st Parachute Division) reported mistakenly that Canadians were in Bari, and added that three of his battalions were en route to Salerno. During the evening of the 16th von Vietinghoff sent an appreciation to Kesselring who had asked for one. The salient points follow.

von Vietinghoff believed that *AOK 10* had been successful in so far that it had allowed no German troops to be cut off in southern Italy, and had prevented the Allies from gaining Naples. His Army had not been able to drive the Allies into the sea at Salerno because of their supremacy in the air and power at sea. Air and naval power were decisive influences which *AOK 10* could not neutralize with its present means. To continue the battle would result only in heavier losses. It was now necessary to break off the battle south of Salerno and to prepare to move into the Salerno-Cerignola line. Salerno would be the pivot and *AOK 10* would continue to try to drive the enemy away from it. Elsewhere a withdrawal should begin on the night 18th/19th September.

Kesselring's reply reached *AOK 10* at 6.15 a.m. on the 17th. He said that if the arrival of reinforcements from Apulia did not bring about a decisive success, *AOK 10* must suspend its current operations. A retreat was then to be ordered, having as its aim to put two divisions into the Salerno-Cerignola line. The Hermann Göring and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions were to stay in their present positions; other divisions were to keep contact with the enemy by rearguards. However, Naples-Amalfi would be the main bastion of defence, and one division was to be placed north of Naples in readiness to counter-attack, and another at Littoria. All roads and centres of communications relinquished by *AOK 10* were to be destroyed as were all equipment and goods of military value which could not be carried off. von Vietinghoff at once began to plan the withdrawal, for which orders were issued on the 18th. Besides his troubles at Salerno, he was well aware of the threatening approach of the 8th Army from the south.

On the Allied side Clark gave orders to provide for an immediate pursuit if the enemy began to withdraw. He ordered a force based upon 180th R.C.T. of 45th U.S. Division to be ready at four hours' notice to move on Benevento by way of Eboli and the Tusciano valley, a flank move. 10th Corps was to make strong reconnaissances of its area, particularly of Battipaglia. The resulting operations belong to the Allied advance to Naples and Foggia and occupy the next chapter.

It is impossible, as so often, to reckon precisely the account of casualties because the statistical returns do not coincide with the periods of battle. 2,734 British battle casualties were treated in 10th Corps medical units between 9th and 18th September, and besides these there were some 725 killed and 1,800 missing. The American historian gives the losses in 6th U.S. Corps as about 3,500. The German figures, as imprecise as the Allied for the same reason, are 840 killed, 2,002 wounded, and 630 missing. On the above basis the Allies suffered in all 8,659 casualties against the German 3,472. The losses of the land forces in equipment are so inexactly recorded as to be scarcely worth mentioning. The Germans made claims against the Allies that are certainly extravagant since the Allies remained in possession of the battlefield. They gave their own tanks destroyed as 70; assault guns as 21.¹ Allied losses of major war vessels sustained in support of 'Avalanche' during the period covered by this chapter comprised only the U.S. Destroyer *Rowan*, sunk by an E-boat thirty miles south-west of Salerno. Also sunk were the hospital ship *Newfoundland*, two merchant ships and some twenty craft. Among the various ships seriously damaged were the battleship *Warspite*, the British cruiser *Uganda* and the U.S. cruiser *Savannah*, all by radio-controlled bombs. Allied air losses from dusk on the 8th September to dusk on the 16th September amounted to some 60 aircraft. Confirmed German losses were 81, and a further 8 aircraft were destroyed in the Eastern Mediterranean. The total sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command from the eve of the landing in Calabria until dusk 16th September were 21,696 and are shown in detail in the table at the end of this chapter.

'That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?' The analyst of a battle cannot see things exactly as they were, and his theories may hold up their distorting mirrors to reality. In the land of theory and of its neighbour Might-have-Been there is none of war's friction. The troops are, as in fact they were not, perfect

¹ 14th Panzer Corps to 21st September; 76th Panzer Corps to 23rd September.

Tactical Men, uncannily skilful, impervious to fear, bewilderment, boredom, hunger, thirst, or tiredness. Commanders know what in fact they did not know. The vital groups of the cipher or code are never corrupt, and every message travels as if it were prefixed 'Clear the Line', is understood, and obeyed. Lorries never collide, there is always a by-pass at the mined road block, and the bridges are always wider than the flood. Shells fall always where they should fall. Painstaking patrols do not report that there are no machine-guns in a wadi which in fact they have not visited, because for all their pains they confused the landmarks, miscounted their paces, and misread the compass. With this sketch of a few causes of error in reflection we venture to look at the battle at Salerno, with the Allies mainly in view.

This battle was one of the several kinds of soldiers' battle. The Allies could not use, in the shallow and congested beachhead, tactics other than to seize certain obvious features and areas and to hold them against counter-attack. They had for days no reserves worth speaking of which commanders could use to attempt anything more subtle. Reserves will be referred to again. The enemy had almost as little choice but he had use of several approaches to the battlefield, and therefore an opportunity of a flexible approach to battle, and of putting his troops into action on the right foot from a number of directions.

The Allied infantry soldier became the most important man on the battlefield because on his shoulders, as things were, lay the final responsibility for victory or defeat, according as he stood firm in spite of fatigue, unreplaced casualties, and mounting strain, or gave way. At Salerno there were never enough infantrymen because battalions landed at the clipped assault scale and for seven days received only trifling reinforcements or none at all. Moreover whether the ground was rugged, wooded foothills or the blind and trappy plain it proved once again the truth that in such surroundings infantry has no substitute, and must be plentiful. No fire-power whether of artillery, aircraft, or automatic weapons can do what the infantry does on such a battlefield, 'winkling-out' in attack, and meeting infiltration in defence.

This is not to belittle the fire-power which in these three forms and the form of naval guns turned the wavering balance at Salerno in favour of the Allies. The artillery was successful, apart from its competence, because the administrative branch succeeded in providing the gunner's weapon, the shell, in quantities. The air's outstanding contribution was made when Mediterranean Air Command used the flexibility, speed, and range of aircraft to switch almost all its bombers to the tactical role and concentrated a great number of aircraft against a small area. The tactics of air concentration in

support of land forces had been demonstrated in attack, to give only one example, at the Tebaga Gap in Africa on 25th March 1943, and at Salerno they were demonstrated in defence. The British Services at least, before the invasion of Sicily, had formed rather a habit of paying lip-service to naval gun-fire as a means of supporting troops, but also of finding in the difficulties a reason for avoiding it. The difficulties were certainly real. They arose spontaneously in inter-Service control and direction of fire, and, in applying fire accurately to targets on land, from the characteristics of the naval gun and its unstable, moving platform, and from the ballistics of the shell. These were the obvious difficulties, and continual advances towards overcoming them were being made. Sicily had given an up-to-date opportunity for trial in battle. At Salerno the manifest need joined with improved knowledge and confidence to make naval supporting fire a daily and very powerful influence on the battle. The warships, Robert Bridges' 'murderous Queens', reached out with power to the murderous scuffles of the land. General Eisenhower said concerning the vital matter of support in general perhaps all that need be said '... It appears to me important that one major lesson should never be lost sight of in future planning . . . This lesson is that during the critical stages of a landing operation every item of available force including land, sea and air, must be wholly concentrated in the support of the landing until troops are in position to take care of themselves. This most emphatically includes the so-called Strategic Air Force.' His last sentence means of course that a name and a role must never prevent any kind of force from being applied where it is most needed.

Although we have given Salerno the name of a soldiers' battle this is not to assert that the higher commanders were waxworks. The battle places in the clearest light two of the most important matters which can concern a higher commander: reserves; and how in a landing to gain speed and momentum. These matters were raised in the most practical form by the remarkable resistance which 16th Panzer Division offered, for a time, to three Allied divisions, and by the power of the Germans to reinforce this division more quickly by land than the Allies could reinforce their divisions by sea or air. The problems which arose from these matters show something of the brutal intractability of the actual circumstances of war. There came a point in the battle at which Clark, Dawley, and McCreery had no more reserves and no means of creating any. Eisenhower and Alexander had some reserves but by no means, whether of foresight or of actual measures, could they have got them to Salerno more quickly than they did. It was almost not quickly enough. In the end all was settled, as it so often is, by the fighting qualities of the subordinate leaders and troops, and by the blind chances of battle. The

questions of speed and momentum in the landings bring up the whole question of how to land.

There is small doubt in theory that to gain a deep bridgehead on D-Day is one of a landing's most valuable prizes. D-Day, too, offers certain advantages in the struggle for this prize which are powerful but not lasting. Such are: landings at chosen places and times which the enemy cannot know and is unlikely to guess; a temporary initiative; an immediate follow up that is planned and timed in the way that is best to develop the assault. After D-Day, however, the situation is likely to hang in the balance for a time, and then to tilt in the enemy's favour. The main reason is that when the enemy begins to discern in events the essentials of the invader's plan, he should be able to concentrate greater force, more quickly, by land than can the invader who depends upon his very inflexible programme of build-up by sea. It therefore follows that momentum, or the drive forward, and depth are supremely important to the invader.

If we look at the Salerno landings in their broadest aspect it seems evident that momentum was less than what was required to gain a satisfactorily deep beachhead. Lack of momentum, however, was mainly because the follow-up forces were insufficient to maintain it after the assault. The follow-up forces were insufficient because there were not enough landing-ships and craft to lift larger ones. But could some other plan of landing have offset these insufficiencies?

In order to examine this question it is necessary to recall the objects of the landing and to see how these shaped the plan. The 5th U.S. Army's object was to advance towards Naples and to capture it. Three conditions in achieving this object were: a secure beachhead; the establishment of a force of fighter aircraft on shore; and, though less important, to develop Salerno harbour as a port in order to free scarce landing ships and craft for tasks other than administrative. With this object and these conditions in view, it seemed advisable to direct the greater part of the available force to secure the approaches to Naples, the airfield at Montecorvino, and the harbour and hinterland of Salerno. Two out of three divisions, a Commando brigade, and a force of Rangers were employed to these ends; one division and one R.C.T. remained for other purposes. The more successful the northern force was, the less secure its inland flank and rear, and the beachhead would be. To protect all these from the danger of a thrust from the south and south-east by known enemy forces, it seemed no more than prudent to secure the arc of high ground marked by Altavilla, Roccadaspide and Agropoli. To deny this high ground to the enemy would deny him access to the Salerno plain by the Sele valley, deprive him of a series of observation points, and hold off his artillery in this quarter to the longest possible ranges. One division was scarcely an adequate force for this task, but one

only was available if any reserve at all, one R.C.T., was to be kept in hand.

Brief and inconclusive though it is, this discussion may suggest why the battle at Salerno took the shape that it did, and why there can be no textbook answer to the question: how to land?

TABLE
Sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command dusk 2nd-dusk 16th September 1943
(excluding anti-shipping and troop carrier operations and attacks on ports)

Command	Land Rece	Fighters Includes shipping protection shown in ()	Bomber and Fighter-Bomber				Bomber Totals			
			Sardinia L. of C. and other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	L. of C. and other Targets	Italy Airfields and L.G.s	Greece L. of C. and other Targets	Aegean Airfields and L.G.s	Day	Night
N.A.A.F.†	562*	10,247 (2,535)*	—	—	866	324	—	—	1,190	—
			4	—	1,938	505	—	—	2,447	—
			—	—	503	1,044	347	—	538	1,391
			13	112	2,559	415	6	—	2,690	415
Malta	23*	414 (204)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M.E.A.C.	117*	1,297 (1,024)	—	—	138	4	111	1	38	5
			—	—	—	31	—	31	—	62
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
Totals	702	11,958 (3,763)	17	112	6,004	981	—	—	38	7,152
			—	—	1,494	—	379	3	8	1,884

Total Sorties Flown = 21,696 or 1,550 every 24 hours.

* Estimated.

† The sorties flown by N.A.A.F. during 11th/12th-16th September have been arrived at by deduction from a variety of sources, some contradictory, but they can be considered reasonably accurate for our purpose.

CHAPTER X
THE ADVANCE TO NAPLES AND
FOGGIA
(17th September to 1st October 1943)

(i)

See Maps 13 and 17

BY 17th September the 5th Army had won its beachhead at Salerno, and the 8th Army was advancing northwards from the Castrovillari isthmus, heading for Auletta and Potenza. The German 10th Army was withdrawing its right wing although covering the direct approaches to the plain of Naples, and was withdrawing also its left wing to the area of Manfredonia on the Adriatic coast via Altamura and Potenza. The German aim was to hold a coast-to-coast line from Manfredonia to the Sorrento peninsula until at least 30th September. The Allied 15th Army Group and the supporting air forces faced the immediate need to seize certain areas which contained groups of all-weather airfields, ports, and centres of communications. Then the two Armies, and the air forces in their rather different way, could be regrouped, reorganized, and balanced in these firm bases, and strong offensive operations could be undertaken from them to destroy the German forces in the field. There was another set of activities which went on concurrently. This was the collection and transportation of the ground and air forces and the material backing to transform the invasion of Italy into a campaign: in short 'build-up' in the widest sense of the term.¹ There was a special circumstance concerning 'build-up', in this wide sense, in Italy. It had not been possible to plan the invasion with the careful calculation which was later given to Overlord. The plan had in fact been a projection because so many things depended upon what might

¹ It is perhaps worthwhile to remark the two manners of using the term which had established themselves by 1943. The first is 'build-up' in the context of an amphibious operation, and it is illustrated in Chapter II. The second use became a short way to describe a much larger business than an amphibious operation. This was the business of putting into an invaded country the men and materials required for extended operations. 'Build-up' in this sense is a term that can be extended indefinitely, but a rule of thumb limit can be placed at the point when the ports in the area of invasion are in working order and maintenance is following a normal course.

happen in Italy, in other words upon conjecture.¹ The operations in Calabria and at Salerno had been the beginning in transforming the projection into hard fact. In the third week of September many further 'hard' measures were required immediately.

This chapter first describes the operations up to about 1st October, and then some administrative matters.

On 17th September 15th Army Group directed 5th Army to secure the general line of Highway 7 between Teora and Avellino and thence south-west to Nocera, and Castellammare on the Bay of Naples. 8th Army was to secure the area of Potenza, which is thirty-three miles south-east of Teora. A pause was to follow in order to build up forces and to complete administrative arrangements before advancing to Naples and Foggia. On the 21st Alexander expressed his general intentions:

'The seizing of certain vital areas which contain groups of all weather airfields, ports and centres of road communications. On these firm bases the Armies can be regrouped, reorganized and balanced, and from them strong offensive operations can be developed to destroy the German forces in the field. Light mobile forces and patrols will be operating ahead of these bases against the enemy continuously. This advance screen harasses the hostile rearguards, obtains information of all natures and aids us to keep the initiative.'

On 21st September too, Alexander wrote to Clark and Montgomery to give them a forecast of operations. This contained four phases. The first, now being completed, was to consolidate the line from Salerno to Bari; the second was to capture Naples and the group of airfields at Foggia; the third aimed at gaining Rome and its airfields, and the rail and road centre of Terni; the fourth, dependent on many matters yet unknown, was to gain the port of Leghorn and the centres of communications at Florence and Arezzo. Alexander gave his forecast in the well-founded belief that the bulk of *AOK 10*, covered by delaying forces, was withdrawing to the area of Rome. He had no reason to suspect that in a fortnight the German policy would change. He gave later a very rough forecast of the pace of operations. It was the Gulf of Gaeta-Termini by 7th October; Rome-Termini by 7th

¹ It is relevant to transcribe again the resolve of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, dated 17th August:

- (a) First phase. The elimination of Italy as a belligerent and establishment of air bases in the Rome area, and if feasible, farther north.
- (b) Second phase. Seizure of Sardinia and Corsica.
- (c) Third phase. The maintenance of unremitting pressure on German forces in Northern Italy, and the creation of the conditions required for "Overlord" and of a situation favourable for the eventual entry of our forces, including the bulk of the re-equipped French Army and Air Forces, into Southern France.'



November; Lucca (north of Leghorn)—Ravenna by 30th November.¹ As regards amphibious operations Alexander wrote 'We shall take full advantage of our command of the sea and skies to put ashore small but hard-hitting mobile forces behind the enemy so as to cut him off. These will be in the nature of Brigade groups and Commandos . . .'

The corresponding administrative phases were outlined by Major-General C. H. Miller, 15th Army Group's Major-General, Administration. First, to develop the Heel ports to maintain both Armies and the supporting air forces, and to set up an organization to control administration in Italy. Second, to maintain the 8th and 5th U.S. Armies estimated to be composed respectively of seven British and five United States divisions,² plus some Italian divisions. Miller considered that it would not be desirable to create at Naples a main advanced base; rather the area should be developed to maintain 5th U.S. Army until the Allies gained Civitavecchia and Leghorn, and also to supplement the east coast ports in their function of maintaining the 8th Army. The third and fourth phases were scarcely outlined because scarcely predictable as yet.

Air Marshal Coningham's plan for Northwest African Tactical Air Force was that U.S. XII Air Support Command would support 5th U.S. Army, and Desert Air Force the 8th Army, although each air force would help the other if need be. Northwest African Tactical Bomber Force was to remain divided between U.S. XII A.S.C. and D.A.F. but could be concentrated in either direction as needed. N.A.T.A.F. would be responsible for protecting Naples, the ports in the Heel and the shipping in both these areas until Northwest African Coastal Air Force could take over the task.

See Map 20

We must now glance quickly at the German side. On 20th September Kesselring defined his task as to delay the northward advance

¹ An extract from the text of Alexander's letter shows interestingly how he hoped that the four phases would work out in terms of his general intentions.

'Phase I . . . ensures the build-up in the Salerno area, the concentration of Eighth Army in the Potenza area . . . It also secures the ports of Taranto, Brindisi, and Bari and in addition enables us to build up our air forces in the Heel.

Phase II . . . secures the port of Naples, the cluster of airfields at Foggia and the important network of roads in the Foggia area . . .

Phase III . . . aims at securing the Capital, the port at the mouth of the Tiber and the use of the river, the group of airfields in the Rome area and the centres of road and rail communications at Rome and Terni . . .

Phase IV . . . must aim at securing the port of Leghorn and perhaps Spezia, the cluster of airfields in the Pisa area and the important centre of communications at Florence and Arezzo. At this stage it will also be important to seize and secure gateways or exits into the valley of the Po, possibly in the mountains north-east of Florence and at Rimini . . .'

² The distribution of British and American troops was always important because the British and American systems of administration differed, and separate, though parallel, sections of the British and American administrative staffs worked their own systems.

of the Allied forces which had already landed in Southern Italy, and to prevent further landings on the western or eastern coasts. This action would gain time in which to ravage the country through which the Allies would try to pass, and would hold their air forces at a distance from Germany. Very great importance was attached to the 'scorched earth' policy which included the removal of all German and Italian military equipment and stores, the destruction of all kinds of resources which could not be removed, and the impressment of Italians for transfer to Germany as slave-labour. *AOK 10* was to hold the area Salerno–Sorrento as the pivot and point of its main defensive effort while withdrawing its left (or Adriatic) wing. The general line (named Line O) Salerno–Bovino–Manfredonia was to be held at least until 30th September. The next withdrawal might be to the Volturno (Line A) and Biferno (Line A.1) rivers. These lines, which were later renamed the Viktor Line, would be held until at least 15th October. A yet further withdrawal was contemplated to a defensive position, Line B, which was being made under Kesselring's direction. This ran roughly from Mondragone on the Gulf of Gaeta through the tract of the Abruzzi Apennines known as the Maiella, and along the Sangro river to the Adriatic coast south of Ortona. As we shall see in Chapter XIII only in the central Abruzzi sectors did October's Bernhardt Line resemble this original Line B.

14th Panzer Corps formed the German right (Tyrrhenian) wing; 76th Panzer Corps the left (Adriatic) wing. *Fliegerkorps XI*, which was for practical purposes a land formation because it had no flying units except perhaps some air transports, was responsible for the defence of the area of Rome and of the western coast from Piombino (100 miles north of Rome) to Gaeta. 29th Panzer Grenadier Division was to be added to the *Fliegerkorps*.

On 20th September General Hube returned from sick leave, and took over acting command of *AOK 10* from von Vietinghoff, who departed to deputize as C.-in-C. Army Group B for Rommel who was ill.¹

The main task of *Luftflotte 2* was to attack Allied shipping in the Gulf of Salerno, and besides this to delay the advance of 8th Army, and to cover the evacuation of troops from Corsica.

(ii)

It is convenient to describe the operations of 5th Army and 8th Army in separate sections although this division blurs the general

¹ von Vietinghoff resumed command of *AOK 10* on 28th September. Hube began to reconnoitre the Bernhardt line, and Balck continued to command 14th Panzer Corps.

5TH AND 8TH ARMIES: TABLE OF ACTIONS 335

		5th Army		8th Army	
		<p>To hold the high ground north of Maiori. To gain, preparatory to an advance on Naples, the line of Highway 7 Teora-Montemarano-Avellino, then south-west to Nocera and Castellammare.</p>		<p>To gain the area Potenza-Auletta. With light forces to clear away any enemy remaining south of the line of Highway 96 Altamura-Gravina-Potenza preparatory to an advance towards Spinazzola-Melfi.</p>	
		10th Corps	6th U.S. Corps	13th Corps	5th Corps
18 Sept.			Adv. on roads: Eboli-Teora, Battipaglia-Acerno	Adv. on roads: S. Arcangelo-Potenza, Lagonegro-Auletta	Under comd 8th Army area north of Taranto
20 Sept.				1st Cdn Div at Potenza	
21 Sept.				5th Div at Auletta. Main body of Corps to halt on line Altamura-Potenza-Auletta until 1st Oct.	
22 Sept.	Begins attack on axes: Vietri-Nocera, Baronissi. Slow progress		45th U.S. Div at Oliveto. 3rd U.S. Div at Acerno		
24 Sept.				Patrols enter Spinazzola	Patrols at Barletta
25 Sept.	56th Div takes Mt. Stella				
26 Sept.			45th U.S. Div at Teora		
27 Sept.			3rd U.S. Div near Avellino	4th Armd Bde enters Foggia. 1st Cdn Div enters Melfi	
28 Sept.	46th Div at Nocera 56th Div at S. Severino				
1 Oct.	23rd Armed Bde enters Naples				

picture. To offset this disadvantage there is a parallel table of the actions of both armies on page 335.

Before 5th Army could begin a battle to break out from the Salerno beachhead it was necessary to regroup and to seize certain positions which were being held by German rearguards. During preliminaries the Allied air forces continued to be very active. In fact during the last fortnight of September the average tally of sorties in each twenty-four hours was nearly 1,000, and many accomplishments which a Squadron Mess would once have celebrated with a party were now taken as a matter of course. On the 18th September bombing (by which Allied aircraft is uncertain) destroyed the bridges over the Volturno at Capua and Trifisco. This bombing, with attacks against other bridges on the 19th, formed the prelude to an offensive, sustained from 20th to 24th September, against bridges, road junctions, and other key points on the German L. of C. north and east of Naples. The aim was to create a system of road blocks behind the main body of the German western wing. The method was to cover two areas in depth. The first was astride the line of the Volturno and its tributary the Calore. This area was to get the greater share of the bombing, and in it the road and rail bridges at Benevento were the main targets. The second area was astride a line from Formia at the north end of the Gulf of Gaeta to Mignano, a bottleneck, on Highway 6. During the five days Mitchells and Marauders of the Strategic Air Force joined once by its Fortresses and once by Mitchells, Bostons, and Baltimores of the Tactical Bomber Force, continuously attacked targets in both areas by day. The Bostons and Baltimores were out on four nights and the Wellingtons on two. There was a climax on 24th September when the Mitchells and Marauders flew 275 sorties and the Bostons added 24 sorties during the night 24th/25th.

German reports mention that the rail bridge over the Volturno at Cancellio was destroyed, and the adjoining track damaged, and that Highway 7 between Caserta and Maddaloni was cut for some hours. Moreover damage to the railway south of Formia compelled 14th Panzer Corps to use a great deal of motor-transport for 'scorched-earth' removals, while traffic on the coast road was at times suspended. Allied photographic reconnaissance showed damage to bridges (craters which blocked the approaches were also a useful kind of damage) at Formia, Caserta, and Benevento, and a rail bridge at Benevento demolished, road bridges demolished at Avellino, and at Capua and north of it, and many cuts in railway lines. The five-day offensive had certainly achieved some success.

10th Corps intended to capture the high ground overlooking Nocera from the south, preparatory to advancing north-westwards

across the plain of Naples, and to move on two axes: the Vietri–Nocera and Salerno–Baronissi roads. The main preliminary activities were the following. The British Armoured Brigade would move to Maiori to reinforce the American Ranger Force during 18th and 19th September. The Ranger Force had already received a battalion group of 143rd Infantry and on 20th September was to receive from 82nd U.S. Airborne Division the 325th Glider Regiment plus a battalion of 504th Parachute Infantry. 46th Division was to concentrate at Vietri and 56th Division had to close up from its positions extended to the east of Salerno. 7th Armoured Division had begun to land over the beaches on 15th September and had to complete its landings (in fact on 23rd September) and to concentrate for action. This landing led to an interesting battlefield relief and later to an event which may well be unique in British regimental history. The relief was that of 169th Infantry Brigade by 131st Lorried Infantry Brigade, and its interest was due to the fact that each brigade contained three battalions of the Queen's Royal Regiment. The possibly unique event occurred on 27th September when six battalions of one regiment, the Queen's, were in effect leading the advance of 10th Corps.¹

10th Corps, its preparations completed, was to begin its attack on the night 22nd/23rd September. 46th Division was to make the main thrust, some six miles deep, to the area of Camerelle where the road emerges from the hills. 56th Division in a simultaneous though subsidiary attack, was to gain ground towards S. Severino and to secure the use of the lateral road through S. Mango. The Ranger Force was to act against the enemy's right and rear in the area Scafati–Nocera to form a bridgehead overlooking Piazza from which 23rd Armoured Brigade could debouch, and to take ground on which to cut off enemy withdrawing through the Nocera defile. The artillery in support of the whole attack amounted to upwards of nine

¹ (a) In 1939 the 131st Lorried Infantry Brigade (then commanded by Brigadier J. S. Hughes, in 1943 by Brigadier L. C. Whistler) was constituted as a First Line Territorial Army Infantry Brigade, and contained the First Battalions of 5th, 6th and 7th Queen's. In 1939 35th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier E. E. F. Baker)—redesignated in 1940 169th Infantry Brigade (commanded in 1943 by Brigadier L. O. Lyne)—was constituted as a Second Line Territorial Army Infantry Brigade and contained the Second Battalions of 5th, 6th and 7th Queen's. It will be remembered that in the summer of 1939 H.M.G. decided to double the strength of the T.A.'s infantry, and that each battalion, broadly speaking, therefore threw off another.

(b) *7th Armoured Division* (Major-General G. W. E. J. Erskine).

Main formations and units:

- 22nd Armoured Brigade (Brigadier W. R. N. Hinde):
 - 1st and 5th R.T.R., 4th County of London Yeomanry
 - 1st The Rifle Brigade
- 131st Lorried Infantry Brigade (Brigadier L. C. Whistler):
 - 1/5th, 1/6th, 1/7th Queen's
 - 11th Hussars; 3rd and 5th Regiments R.H.A.
 - 146th Field Battery R.A.; 65th A/Tk. Regiment R.A.
 - 15th L.A.A. Regiment R.A.; 4th and 621st Field Squadrons
 - 143rd Field Park Squadron R.E.

field regiments and four medium, and four cruisers and a destroyer added their fire.¹ When 46th Division had gained its objective, 7th Armoured Division was to issue from the Camerelle gap, cross the Sarno river at Scafati, press northwards to capture the gap between Vesuvius and Palma Campagna to the east, and also reconnoitre the gap between Vesuvius and the coast. 46th Division was to secure the whole area from Pagani through Scafati down to the sea at Castellammare, and to reconnoitre beaches for a possible sea-borne landing by 82nd U.S. Airborne Division. 56th Division was to make a firm base between Sarno and S. Mauro, and to throw out a strong flankguard north of S. Severino until 6th U.S. Corps had occupied Avellino.

U.S. XII A.S.C., supplemented by N.A.T.B.F., was to support 10th Corps by a preliminary bombing of Nocera, Camerelle, and S. Severino during the nights 21st/22nd and 22nd/23rd September, and by providing the greatest possible support from fighter- and medium bombers during the 23rd. The air forces were also to ring in the Germans by creating road blocks. The air forces by this time enjoyed the advantage that the Asa and Tuscano airfields had been extended to take five squadrons apiece, and that by the evening of the 23rd the airfield at Serretelle would also take five squadrons. But a disadvantage was that N.A.T.B.F. was by this time suffering from shortage of aircrew and insufficiently trained replacements, while most of its Boston aircraft were worn out.

The troops of 10th Corps had to face, in their attack, some very nasty country. The lines of advance led through valleys in the Lattari mountains and in an off-shoot of the Campanian Apennines. The hills on either side were of heights between 1,640–3,280 feet, were in some places unpleasantly bare and in others unpleasantly wooded, and abounded in false crests, steep gullies, and small cliffs. The roads could easily be blocked, and swept by fire from positions in good natural cover. The ground, off the road, set many problems to troops unaccustomed to fighting in semi-mountainous country. Some of the problems remarked on by some who had faced them, were as follows. The need and the difficulty of occupying crests and, conversely, of not chasing false crests, and (a surprise to troops used to moving their impedimenta everywhere on wheels) the difficulty of getting ammunition, water, and food up the hill, and the wounded down it. The work of Pioneer Companies (including Basutos and Swazis) was to be gratefully acknowledged.²

We must now glance at the enemy facing 10th Corps and 6th U.S. Corps. On the west (the German right) were 14th Panzer Corps and

¹ H.M.S.: *Penelope, Sirius, Dido, Aurora, Loyal.*

² The Pioneer Companies in 10th Corps were Nos. 47, 59, 68, 216, 240, 1246, 1941.

on the east (German left) 76th Panzer Corps. The boundary between them ran Mt. Stella (Pt. 951, south-east of Baronissi)—Arienzo (off Highway 7, north-east of Naples)—Venafro (east of Cassino), and so 14th Panzer Corps faced the British, and 76th Panzer Corps the Americans as far as 8th Army's boundary.

From 18th September onwards the plans of retreat of both Corps were constantly refurbished, but on this date von Vietinghoff gave 14th Panzer Corps, as a first task, the establishment of a connected defence line from Castellammare to Salerno [*sic*], from which it was 'stubbornly to prevent any Allied attempts to advance north or north-westwards'. The line chosen by Balck ran Castellammare—Corbara on the Maiori road—south of Nocera—Cava di Tirreni—Mt. Stella. 15th Panzer Grenadier Division (less the units detached to the Hermann Göring Division, most of which were retained by this formation until the end of September) held the right at Castellammare. It had also to protect the coast as far as Gaeta, but on 24th September Kesselring agreed that additional elements of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division could be sent south for this purpose. The units of this Division which had already fought at Salerno were therefore gradually absorbed into a new Battle Group Möller, which assembled near Minturno with two battalions of 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, assault guns and an artillery battery. The Hermann Göring Division held the centre and left of the defence line, roughly speaking north of Vietri and Salerno. For the time being, it retained under command 2nd/67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (of 26th Panzer Division), 3rd/1st Parachute Regiment and the Reconnaissance Battalion of 16th Panzer Division. This last-named formation, which reverted to 14th Panzer Corps command on 19th September, was allotted interim positions north and south-west of Caserta, into which it had withdrawn by the 22nd.

The right (western) portion of 76th Panzer Corps was withdrawing (as from 17th September) with 26th Panzer Grenadier Division moving through Acerno towards Avellino and Montemarano, and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division through Contursi towards Teora.

On 21st September the air forces began their preparatory operations. A strong force of N.A.T.B.F.'s Mitchells caught a body of the enemy at Solofra, south of Avellino, and that night the Bostons and Baltimores included Avellino among their targets. The light bombers began those nightly armed reconnaissances of the roads leading into the battle area which were to become a feature of this period. On the 22nd Marauders and Mitchells of the Strategic Air Force bombed the more distant road and rail bridges, and Mitchells of N.A.T.B.F. those nearer at hand. Wellingtons attacked Formia. On the 23rd a

large number of Mitchells attacked targets at Sarno (where there were bridges over the Sarno river) and Avellino, and U.S. XII A.S.C.'s fighter-bombers flew a total of nearly 170 sorties against Pompei, Sarno, Nocera, and S. Severino.

During the night 22nd/23rd September 46th Division's attack began with an attempt by 139th Brigade to gain a line running from the high ground at S. Croce, east of the Vietri road, to La Molina, and to Corpo di Cava high up on the west of the road. This was to gain a start-line for 138th Brigade, the next to pass through. Well-sited enemy machine-gun posts, however, spoiled the attempt and neither S. Croce nor La Molina were cleared, although the York and Lancaster gained a foothold in Corpo di Cava. As a result 138th Brigade, attacking between 3 and 3.30 a.m. on the 23rd, began its task 'on the wrong foot'. On the right 2nd/4th K.O.Y.L.I. had the misfortune to be hit by its own guns, but gained the lower slopes of a hill called 'Telegrafo', nearly a mile short of its objectives. 6th Lincolns, on the K.O.Y.L.I.'s left, also fell short of their objective. On the left, however, the 16th D.L.I., passing through Corpo di Cava took Pt. 600 just beyond; this was their objective and a valuable observation post for the artillery. In sum, 46th Division had been unable to fulfil its intention to clear the whole area of Cava di Tirreni so that a third brigade might pass through northwards. 56th Division carried out its subsidiary role by establishing 169th Brigade on a ridge from S. Mango to Le Cappelle, and 201st Guards Brigade in an almost parallel position on the left of the Baronissi road.

On the 24th September 46th Division set right the disorganization caused by the previous day's fighting and cleared the area of Cava di Tirreni from which the enemy was in fact falling back. The prospect was promising, and at 5.30 p.m. 128th Brigade was ordered to advance. But disappointment was in store. Very soon well-sited machine-gun posts began to make themselves felt, and a full divisional attack appeared to be necessary for further progress.

56th Division intended on the 24th to advance some two and a half miles northwards, capturing the hills on each side of the road, to the line approximately of Antessano-Capriglia. The dominating hills were the 3,000-foot Mt. Stella on the right of the road, and Pt. 270 on its left. It seems evident that both 169th Brigade on the right and 201st Guards Brigade on the left fell into the trap of underestimating the strength which must be used against big features. Thus a single company of 2nd/5th Queen's made an attempt, unsuccessful, to take Mt. Stella. The 6th Grenadier Guards reached Pt. 270, but found that their supplies of ammunition, water, and food now lay a three hours' journey on foot behind them. The administrative problem seemed insoluble and the battalion withdrew some distance to Taborra. These are just two telling instances from a hard day during

which the division advanced to about half the distance intended. However, on the evening of the 25th the 2/5th Queen's with a company of the 2/6th took Mt. Stella. The fight had been toilsome; on a big hill, in places thickly wooded, and broken by cliffs and chasms. A detail which shows how such country can deceive was that the 'final' objective turned out to be a false crest, and that the troops had to climb still higher. The administrative side can be illustrated by one quotation: 'A continuous stream of grimy, sweating men toiled up the steep mountain side. Every load was worth its weight in gold, but quite a number were lost as their carriers slipped and fell headlong among the blackened rocks.' On the opposite side of the road the 3rd Coldstream Guards took Pt. 270 in a two-hour fight at a cost of 120 casualties. Here C.S.M. P. Wright won a Victoria Cross, at one time destroying three machine-gun posts single-handed, while also displaying superb leadership throughout the action.

A point should now be made concerning casualties in infantry battalions. To take three instances: on the 23rd the 2/4th K.O.Y.L.I. had suffered 116, and 6th Lincolns 93, and on the 25th the Coldstream Guards had 120. These casualties fell mainly upon the rifle companies because about half a battalion's strength was taken up by essential 'specialists' (signallers, mortar-men, anti-tank gunners, carrier platoon, administrative) who were necessarily not always fighting among the foremost. But it was the rifle companies who could least afford casualties, particularly in hill warfare. A battalion could soon become an unbalanced fighting instrument, no matter how high its fighting spirit remained.

On 24th September Hube (now acting commander of *AOK 10*) conferred with Kesselring, and thereafter drafted a memorandum in which he appreciated that the Allies would soon take the offensive on a big scale. He felt that an inflexibly stubborn defence would lead to high casualties, particularly among his infantry of whom there were not many,¹ and Kesselring agreed that no operations were to be planned or conducted which would lead to a high cost in lives or to a 'mangling' of German troops. His commanders stepped up their retreat plans accordingly, and 14th Panzer Corps orders for a phased withdrawal into the Viktor Line, issued on 25th September, were followed the next day by *AOK 10*'s preliminary directive for a general fighting retreat into the Bernhardt Line.² The first intermediate position, 'Anton' (so far as concerns 14th Panzer Corps), ran from Torre del Greco on Naples Bay, south of Vesuvius, to Monteforte.

¹ Contemporary reckoning of fronts and the infantry's fighting strength was:

Hermann Göring Division	55 km., 4,691 men.
26th Panzer Division	34 " 3,232 "
29th Panzer Grenadier Division	44 " 2,225 "
1st Parachute Division	62 " 2,000 "

² See pp. 334, 429-30 for the Viktor and Bernhardt lines.

Preliminary moves to this line began on the night 27th/28th September. Pressure from 6th U.S. Corps, as well as from the British, was building up for on the 26th 45th U.S. Division began to reach Teora, and 3rd U.S. Division approached Avellino on the 27th.

Battlefield reports and a general loosening of the fronts on the 26th indicated to McCreery that something more than a local withdrawal was occurring. He placed 7th Armoured Division at short notice to move, and on the 27th gave orders for the next phase. In brief, 46th Division was to secure the Camerelle gap and patrol northwards and eastwards. The Ranger Force, at last, was to strike for its bridgehead overlooking Piazza, and to send 23rd Armoured Brigade into the plain.¹ 131st Lorried Infantry Brigade (7th Armoured Division) was to pass through the Camerelle gap at first light on 28th September directed on Scafati. 56th Division was to continue to advance on S. Severino.

The air forces had been playing their part in shaking the Germans from their holds, in weather that was becoming almost daily worse for flying. The cloud-base came down over the battlefield to 2,000–3,000 feet and heavy showers fell frequently. And so the light bombers were grounded on the night 25th/26th September, handicapped during daylight on the 26th, and grounded again from the night of 26th/27th onwards for the rest of the month. The mediums, too, were grounded from 26th/27th onwards until managing to operate on the 29th. The fighter-bombers also were handicapped. Indeed on the 27th all airfields and landing grounds in the area of 10th Corps were unserviceable for several hours. Nevertheless on 25th September 96 Mitchells and Baltimores joined with the fighter-bombers in attacks at Nocera and Sarno, and dropped 156 tons of bombs, and that night 49 Wellingtons dropped 91 tons of bombs on Formia. On the 26th September a small force of the Strategic Air Force's Mitchells attacked Nocera, and one from N.A.T.B.F., Sarno. On the 27th 75 Mustangs from U.S. XII A.S.C. made a fighter sweep over S. Severino. Tactical reconnaissance aircraft maintained their watch. 14th Panzer Corps noted that on the 24th the Allied fighter-bombers were very active over its whole area, and on the 25th that numerous high- and low-level attacks were causing casualties in the Hermann Göring Division. 76th Panzer Corps recorded that the roads around Benevento had been so damaged that supply traffic had been diverted, and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, in the same area, that it was constantly spied upon from the air.

¹ On 27th September 82nd U.S. Airborne Division took under command the Ranger Force and 23rd Armoured Brigade.

In broad terms the Allied forces were now in train to carry out General Clark's scheme (of 22nd September) of operations: 10th Corps to capture Naples and press on until the enemy was driven north of the Volturno; 6th U.S. Corps to seize the line Nola-Avella (Highway 7 *bis*, 15-20 miles east of Naples), to be prepared to help 10th Corps to capture Naples, and to be prepared also to seize Benevento.¹ The main obstacles were now topographical. In front of 10th Corps (north of the spine of the Sorrento peninsula) the Sarno plain was heavily cultivated and thickly wooded in its southern part, the roads were narrow, and the Sarno itself was a barrier. The roads through the Sorrento peninsula were sure to be thoroughly obstructed, although their unobstructed features alone were capable of creating a fearsome traffic problem. On the other hand the German rearguards seemed light, possibly three battalions of the Hermann Göring Division east of Vesuvius, and south of it 103rd Reconnaissance Unit. One German embarrassment was not fully known to the Allies. In Naples parts of the population were rioting fiercely and a garrison battalion, helped out by tanks, had to fight to enable planned demolitions to be made. On the 29th September Balck decided that he could keep no troops south of Naples after the night 30th September/1st October, and von Vietinghoff confirmed his decision.

The paragraph above anticipates events on the fronts of both Allied Corps which can quickly be told. On the left the Ranger Force and 23rd Armoured Brigade, on 28th September, penetrated rapidly to Castellammare and towards the Sarno river. By the morning of the 28th 46th Division had gained the Camerelle gap. On that morning 131st Lorrain Infantry Brigade (7th Armoured Division) passed through the gap, and 1/6th Queen's dashed ahead and seized the bridge, almost undamaged, over the Sarno at Scafati. The Germans tried hard to recapture the bridge in order to demolish it, and failed. 56th Division secured S. Severino and the lateral road as far west as Castel S. Giorgio. In 6th U.S. Corps, commanded since the 20th by Major-General John P. Lucas, 3rd U.S. Division took Avellino by a night attack on 29th/30th September, while 45th U.S. Division was securely established at Teora.

On the 30th September 23rd Armoured Brigade, with two battalions of 505th U.S. Parachute Infantry under command, reached Torre Annunziata. On 1st October the brigade continued to advance unopposed, and at 9.30 a.m. 'A' Squadron, 1st King's Dragoon Guards reached the centre of Naples. Allied bombing and German demolition had caused great damage in the port, the water and electricity systems had been demolished in whole or in part, all

¹ General Clark's orders for 6th U.S. Corps were dated 29th September superseding earlier ones of fleeting effect in the changing situation.

public transport had been removed, and stocks of food were very low. Fortunately a report that cholera and typhus were wide-spread turned out to be false. The damage in the port, however, including destruction by the Germans of all tugs, barges, and other equipment, was to prove to be a great administrative handicap.

During the closing stages of 5th Army's advance to Naples, Avellino, and Teora, little help could be given by the Tactical Air Force. For example, on the 29th and 30th September the fighter-bombers of U.S. XII A.S.C. do not appear to have operated at all, and only once were the Tactical Bomber Force Mitchells airborne—on the 29th. N.A.S.A.F., however, was able to give considerable indirect support, and on the 29th its Mitchells together with 24 from N.A.T.B.F. attacked enemy traffic ahead of 10th Corps as far as Cancellò, Benevento, and S. Giorgio. Next day N.A.S.A.F.'s Marauders joined the Mitchells in bombing road and railway bridges at Piana, Castelvenere, Amorosi, Capua and in the Benevento area, and its Lightnings dropped 30 tons of bombs on roads and bridges. In the two days N.A.S.A.F. flew 283 bomber and 67 fighter-bomber sorties by day, and during the night of 29th/30th and the one following its Wellingtons added 81 sorties in attacks on Formia.

(iii)

We left the 8th Army, in particular Dempsey's 13th Corps (in Chapter VII), advancing on two main axes: 1st Canadian Division on the east coast of Calabria via Scanzano and 5th Division on the west coast at Sapri. Dempsey's immediate task was to carry out Montgomery's intention of securing the area Potenza–Auletta as soon as possible in spite of acute administrative problems, especially as regards supplies of petrol. On the other hand, as was evident, the German delaying forces were light. 1st Parachute Division, on the general line Potenza–Altamura was responsible for the left of 76th Panzer Corps, but owing to its numerous detachments to Salerno and elsewhere, it was still very incompletely assembled in Apulia. 13th Corps was therefore able to carry out its task easily and quickly. A small mixed Canadian force under Colonel Bogert, moving on Highways 104 and 92 through S. Arcangelo and Corleto, expelled German detachments from Potenza during the night 19th/20th September and the following morning. 5th Division, moving on Highway 19 through Lagonegro, reached Auletta on 21st September. On the 20th September Dempsey gave orders for the next phase as at that time he conceived it to be. 13th Corps was to halt until 1st October to reorganize administratively before advancing to Foggia. Then the Canadian Division would move on Foggia on Highway 97 and 16, on the right, through Gravina and Canosa, and by lesser roads, on the

left, through Melfi. Taranto would be the Corps' base for future operations.

However, a much quicker advance to Foggia was made possible because by 25th September Herr had decided that 1st Parachute Division must not be outflanked. And so during the night 26th/27th Heidrich's units took up positions west and north of Foggia. On 27th September Foggia was occupied by a force composed of 4th Armoured Brigade and some extra units, while Canadian patrols pushed up to the Ofanto river beyond Melfi. Alexander, on 29th September, gave instructions for his next phase, the third of his programme, the capture of Rome and its airfields, and a general advance to the line across Italy, S. Benedetto (on the Adriatic coast)—Visso—Terni—Civitavecchia. This instruction committed 8th Army to the east of the Central Apennines, and its next 'bound' became Termoli—the line of the Biferno river—Isernia.¹ General Montgomery had in fact already decided to regroup his army for this phase but had been unable to begin until Clark was assured of the security of the operations at Salerno. On the 24th September Clark was satisfied on this point, and Montgomery began to regroup next day.

Until the capture of Auletta on the 21st, and apart from attacks on the town itself by medium and light bombers of N.A.T.B.F. on the 17th and 19th, air support for 8th Army came mainly from the fighter-bombers. For example, on the 19th 270 or more sorties were flown in the Contursi—Pescopagano—Andretta—Avellino area and on the 20th 420 sorties (by both U.S. XII A.S.C. and D.A.F.) in the S. Angelo area. After the 21st what little tactical medium and light bomber effort was possible was enjoyed by 5th Army and indeed most of the fighter-bomber effort as well. On 22nd it was the U.S. XII A.S.C. fighter-bomber force which operated in the Manfredonia area. The Desert Air Force's fighter-bombers were active only on the 25th in support of 78th Division's advance on Foggia, on the 26th in support of 5th Division's move and on the 28th when a small force operated over a wide area between Benevento and Termoli. Though the weather played havoc with tactical air operations towards the end of the month, it was fortunate that the speed of 8th Army's advance called for little direct air support, and in any case German ground movement after the 21st was on a small scale whenever the weather was favourable enough for Allied air attacks. These may well be the reasons why preference appears to have been given to air support to 5th Army during the last week of September.

8th Army had to assimilate reinforcements. 78th Division (Major-General V. Eveleigh) had begun to arrive from Sicily on 22nd September. 8th Indian Division (Major-General D. Russell), from

¹ The boundary between 5th U.S. Army and 8th Army was to run (south to north) Benevento—Pontelandolfo—Isernia—Celano—Salto river—Terni—Todi.

Egypt, would be arriving from 23rd September. A further arrival, on 28th September, would be the S.S. Brigade (3rd Commando, 40th R.M. Commando, 1st S.R. Squadron). These arrivals were for the most part at Taranto where H.Q. 5th Corps (Lieutenant-General C. W. Allfrey) had been since 17th September, with 1st Airborne Division (see Chapter VII) under command.¹

For the period of the advance to Foggia (briefly noticed above) 13th Corps was to have 1st Canadian and 78th Divisions, 4th Armoured Brigade, and also 5th Division at Potenza. Changes would then occur which would bring into being, on paper, by 3rd October the following Order of Battle (in outline):²

<i>5th Corps</i>	<i>13th Corps</i>
5th Division	78th Division
8th Indian Division	1st Canadian Division and Army Tank Brigade
1st Airborne Division	4th Armoured Brigade

During the re-shuffle the scheme of operations from 27th September, consequent upon the gain of Foggia, was to be as follows. 13th Corps was to concentrate in the quadrilateral Barletta-Bari-Gravina-Canosa by 30th September, in preparation for a further advance north-westwards. While the concentration was going on, light forces were to push ahead. 5th Corps for the time being was to stay in reserve in the Taranto area keeping an eye on the safety of 13th Corps' left flank.

At the end of September 8th Indian Division was disembarking and concentrating, using Taranto and Brindisi. The next big move by the 8th Army would begin on 1st October; by 13th Corps to gain possession of the lateral road Termoli-Vinchiaturò as a stepping-stone to the line Termoli-Isernia. But before this could happen there was much to be done.

The development of the campaign beyond the immediate future, in the view of H.Q. 8th Army on 29th and 30th September, seemed to give scope to use about six divisions and a brigade of armour. This was about as large a force as the ground could hold and the roads could maintain. The Germans were retreating and their air force

¹ H.Q. 5th Corps had served throughout the campaign in French North Africa. In August 1943 it was in Algeria, and became occupied in planning for a landing at Crotona in Calabria which was cancelled. 78th Division had been in 5th Corps throughout the campaign in French North Africa, and had next fought in Sicily. 8th Indian Division had led a wandering life in 1943—from Iraq to Syria, thence to Egypt, and back to Syria. It was the first Indian division to land in Europe.

² The dates of landing at Taranto of certain brigades were:

78th division
 11th Infantry Brigade—22nd September
 36th Infantry Brigade—24th September
 38th Infantry Brigade—25th September
 4th Armoured Brigade—23rd September

seemed to be very weak. The most powerful factor at the moment was administrative. 8th Army's administrative staffs and services had performed a conjuring trick to meet the sudden demand to push on through Calabria come what may, and could not repeat it without rearranging the hats and rabbits. An inward flow of requirements for maintenance was simultaneously occurring and being reduced to system at Taranto, Brindisi, and Bari. But stocks on the ground at ports was one thing, while for stocks to be up with the Corps was another. Moreover there was as yet no organized Base, and maintenance requirements and administrative units were widely dispersed. It was with this background in mind that on 29th September Montgomery informed Alexander that he would advance on 1st October and hoped to be on the line Termoli–Campobasso by 3rd October. He went on:

‘ . . . The general administrative situation is such that on reaching the line Termoli–Campobasso–Vinchiaturo I will have to pause for about 10 to 14 days. I have absolutely no reserve stocks and the whole administrative business in rear is in a bad way and must be tidied up. Presume when 5th Army reaches the Volturno river line it will also have to halt and get right administratively. I will operate with light forces right up to the Pescara river line but my main bodies will not be able to advance beyond the Termoli line before about 15th October and possibly 20th October. When this movement begins I will get through to the Rome line in about ten days. Suggest above should be adopted as the policy as it is useless to become involved in large scale operations in Europe until the administration in rear is on a very sound wicket.’

The administrative question, however, covers a wider field than 8th Army alone, and before turning to it it will be well to summarize in the shortest form the progress of the air forces' deployment.

(iv)

During the second fortnight of September additional landing grounds in the Salerno beachhead were becoming available for U.S. XII A.S.C., enabling existing squadrons to be rehoused and others to be brought in. On the 22nd September a landing ground was completed at Serretelle, north of the River Sele, and five days later one at Battipaglia. No. 322 Wing R.A.F. (Spitfires), which had been using Asa as an advanced base, was operating its five squadrons from Serretelle by the 25th. The remaining two squadrons of No. 324 Wing R.A.F. (Spitfires), which had arrived at Montecorvino on the 23rd and had begun to operate from Asa next day, moved into Battipaglia on the 28th. Meanwhile the U.S. 86th Fighter Group

(Mustangs) began to move into Capaccio on or about the 18th, and the same day the U.S. 27th Fighter Group (also Mustangs) into Sele. On the 22nd the U.S. 31st Fighter Group (Spitfires) completed its move into Montecorvino, No. 600 Squadron R.A.F. (Beaufighter night-fighters) joining it on the 26th, and by that time pierced steel planking, with which to make Montecorvino an all-weather airfield, had arrived in Salerno Bay.

By the end of September there were thus four U.S. fighter groups, two R.A.F. fighter wings, a night-fighter squadron and a Tac. R. squadron established in the Salerno area.

See Maps 14 and 17

In the Toe, the Instep, and the Heel of Italy the necessary condition of the air forces' progress was the preparation and repair of airfields by 69th Airfield Construction Group. Besides the airfields which stage by stage fell into the air forces' hands in usable condition, the Construction Group had provided seventeen airfields by 30th September, if one includes three at Foggia. Without mentioning all, an idea of the lay-out on the ground can be gained as follows: in the Toe: Reggio, Vibo Valentia, and Crotone; in the Instep: Scanzano, Pisticci, and Ginosa. In the Heel the main airfields will appear in the telling, but the pattern is a chain stretching north-westwards along the length of Apulia to Foggia. The Desert Air Force and some squadrons of N.A.T.B.F. were the air forces concerned.

By 20th September Air Vice-Marshal Broadhurst had set up his Advanced Headquarters near Crotone, and two groups of American fighters and a detachment of No. 225 Squadron (Tac. R) had joined the two wings of British fighters in southern Italy. On 21st September Broadhurst began to move his air forces by stages to the area of Scanzano, where No. 7 (S.A.A.F.) Wing, with three squadrons of Spitfires, arrived on the 23rd. Next day Broadhurst moved his Advanced Headquarters to Montalbano (near the coast at about the middle of the Instep), while the U.S. 79th Fighter Group (Kittyhawks) moved into neighbouring Pisticci and No. 239 Wing (Kittyhawks) began to operate from Bari on the Adriatic coast. On 25th September the U.S. 57th Fighter Group (Kittyhawks) moved into Gioia del Colle (north-west of Taranto) where No. 244 Wing (Spitfires) had already established itself.

By 28th September No. 285 Reconnaissance Wing was beginning to move to Spinazzola. On 27th September U.S. 47th Light Bombardment Group (Bostons) had settled down at Grottaglie (Taranto), and on the 28th No. 232 Wing (Baltimores) was transferred hurriedly to Brindisi from Sicily to escape from being foundered in the mud caused by heavy rain there. The rest of N.A.T.B.F., however, had to remain in Sicily for the time being.

13. Hunt class destroyer
bombarding near Augusta.
Mt. Etna in background.



14. H.M.S. *Mauritius*
bombarding. Salerno Bay.



15. Surrendered Italian
battleships lying off Malta.





16. DUKWs taking to the water. Italy ahead.

17. Infantry on the Salerno plain.





18. R.A.F. Baltimore light bombers. Area Salerno–Naples.

19. Mt. Camino.





20. Italy. Flood. A bridge over the River Sangro, wrecked.



21. Italy. Mud. Extracting a medium gun.

By the end of the month the 'spread' through Apulia was becoming more apparent. No. 7 (S.A.A.F.) Wing was preparing to move to Gioia del Colle from Scanzano, and No. 244 Wing from Gioia del Colle to Tortorella. The U.S. 57th Fighter Group was preparing to move from Gioia a long hop northwards to Trinitapoli, and No. 239 Wing from Bari to Foggia. No. 285 Reconnaissance Wing had taken over Palazzo (near Spinazzola), U.S. 79th Fighter Group from Pisticci had settled down at Campello, and Broadhurst had set up his Advanced H.Q. roughly in the middle of his air forces at Minervino.¹

The air forces' deployment was thus progressing in parallel with that of 8th Army. But there were certain snags. There seemed at the moment to be no policy from Mediterranean Air Command regarding the allotment of airfields in the future because its original plans had been thrown out of gear by the slowing down of the advance. Movement by road was difficult because of shortage of transport, and there were no transport aircraft nearer than Sicily. Moreover, delays were occurring in supplies because the bidding for D.A.F.'s tonnage had been taken out of 8th Army's hands. However, great advantages would accrue to air operations from the possession of the airfields at Foggia. These would not only serve D.A.F.'s purposes but would enable the strategic bombers to operate in due course from a base very much nearer than before to targets in the Balkans, and in Austria, Hungary, and Rumania.

(v)

See Map 14

We must now give an outline of 8th Army's administrative state during the last part of September. The administrative side of the operations at Salerno is of less consequence because maintenance across the beaches there worked well for as long as it was needed, and because the capture of Naples on 1st October provided 5th Army with a first class, if much damaged port, as well as small satellite ports such as Salerno itself, Castellammare, and Torre Annunziata.

The advance of the 8th Army in Calabria had not been accompanied by a satisfactory build-up of L. of C. troops and stocks. The root of the trouble lay in the absence of an administrative master plan for the campaign in Italy, a matter which is discussed in Chapter XII. Other causes were the extension of the L. of C. as Montgomery pushed 13th Corps ever onwards in answer to Alexander's requirement for sustained pressure by 8th Army to influence the battle of Salerno, and the consequent lack of any pause to help

¹ Units of No. 285 Reconnaissance Wing at Palazzo were No. 1437 (Strat. R.) Flight and detachments of Nos. 225 and 40 (S.A.A.F.) Squadrons, both Tac. R., which shared these duties on 8th Army's front on alternate days.

the labouring administrative machine. By 20th September the 8th Army's administrative support for 13th Corps was split between two axes of advance and stretched along their length in a way that threatened an imminent breakdown in maintenance.

The administrative lay-out of the 8th Army in Italy at the end of the third week in September was as follows. Sea-borne supplies were entering at the small ports of Reggio and S. Venere (near Vibo Valentia) on the west coast and of Crotone on the east coast. Five successive F.M.C.s had been set up in step with the advance.¹ From 16th September five L.C.T. on the west coast and four on the east coast were at work carrying forward maintenance stores. As regards the land L. of C. there was an Army roadhead at Vibo Valentia. Rail communication to maintain 5th Corps in Apulia by the east coast line from Taranto would probably be open by 27th September with a railhead at Roccella Ionica. The first ship arrived at Taranto on 16th September but the port was not then in working order.

In all a little more than 24,500 tons of maintenance stores had been landed in Italy by 16th September. In theory this quantity was sufficient to maintain the land and air forces and to allow something over to go towards reserves, but the stores were by no means distributed to the right places nor were they flowing smoothly forward along the L. of C. Some 4,000 load-carrying vehicles had been landed, a number which was satisfactory in theory. But in practice the two L. of C.s and their dispersed installations forced an uneconomical use of transport. Moreover, paradoxically, there were too many vehicles (when fighting vehicles and First Line transport were added) for the bad, narrow, obstructed roads to carry, and irregular running and delay resulted. Further, the intake of petrol, oil, and lubricants had made a bad beginning at about one-third of the quantity planned because cased-petrol ships were scarce and for other reasons.

The tasks of operational maintenance in the immediate future were very great when measured against the administrative resources. The tasks, generally speaking, were to maintain 13th Corps during the advance to Foggia, 5th Corps (some three and a half divisions), the Desert Air Force as regards common-user stores and services, and four Italian divisions, and also to begin to accumulate reserves.² The best answer to a great part of the administrative problem was to switch the maintenance of the 8th Army to new advanced base ports

¹ *West Coast*

No. 103 Vibo Valentia

No. 104 Nicastro

No. 105 Sapri

East Coast

No. 106 Cariati, later moving to Rotondella

² The Italian divisions are explained by the Allies' policy of accepting at face value military assistance offered by Badoglio's Government even though the problems of Italian co-belligerence had not yet been thrashed out by the political and military authorities.

at Taranto, Brindisi, and Bari. The advantages of the switch would be: better equipped ports and a shorter road L. of C. from these ports along more and better roads, supplemented by rail transport. The difficulties lay in the need to maintain operations while the switch was occurring, and in the generally confused state of the L. of C. from Fortbase rearwards. Fortbase, although formally under command of 15th Army Group could draw no help from 15th Army Group's almost non-existent administrative branch, and its efficient organization was overburdened. It had to act as the Base and L. of C. organization for the 8th Army, to conduct in practice almost the whole 'Italian end' of the business of controlling in-coming ships and what was in them, and to conduct general and local administration in Sicily as well as in Italy apart from purely American domestic business. This state of affairs was owing to the failure of A.F.H.Q. and Headquarters 15th Army Group to set up any means of central administrative control in Italy, a matter which is discussed in Chapter XII.

Although Fortbase might aim at opening depots at Taranto on 1st October for 8th Army (except for 13th Corps troops and 5th Division on the west coast still being maintained by ship through Sapri), the fulfilment of this aim depended on the circumstances at the time and was likely to be much delayed. As regards maintenance A.F.H.Q. required that demands should be submitted for ten-day periods, thirty days in advance of each period. Thus on 9th September Fortbase was submitting its demands for a period beginning on 14th October. On 9th September it was unknown what formations would be in what places in mid-October, and ports of destination could merely be indicated as a deep-water port which might be Taranto, another port in Apulia, or Naples; a coaster port, say Reggio or Crotone; and Syracuse or Catania. The 30-day notice was ineluctably determined by the period required to prepare convoys in North African or Middle Eastern ports. By the third week of September the uncertainties of deployment and destination had been cleared up, but an aggravating consequence remained. In colloquial phrasing this was that the wholesalers in Africa put up the wrong package for the retailers in Italy and Sicily to distribute.¹

None the less Fortbase and H.Q. 8th Army made arrangements for the maintenance stores which had been landed in Calabria to be transferred to Taranto by sea, road, and rail. General Robertson had earmarked H.Q. No. 6 Base Sub-Area (Brigadier G. V. Palmer) for Taranto, and had ordered it to reconnoitre an administrative lay-out

¹ This was no new feature; it had appeared at times during the campaign in Africa. Last minute adjustments of cargo in ships are difficult, and impossible as regards bottom-stowage. Some flexibility can be gained by holding a small margin of tonnage in suspense for as long as possible.

capable of containing 14 days' holdings for a force of six divisions and an associated air force, or some 58,000 tons. The advance party of H.Q. No. 6 Base Sub-Area reached Taranto on 11th September and the main body on the 16th. On 17th September Fortbase issued more detailed instructions. For the near future, up to 23rd October perhaps, Taranto would be the main port for maintenance. The aim was to put into it some 50,000 tons which represented, on a closer calculation of force, maintenance until 23rd October plus fifteen days' reserves. The hope was to arrange a regular intake to complete this programme by 19th October. For the more distant future the plan was to set up Bari as the main base for army requirements, Brindisi for the air forces, and Taranto for naval needs. Reggio and Crotone would be closed as maintenance ports.

The translation into fact of this programme had many difficulties to overcome. However, the establishment of various L. of C. Headquarters began to produce system. No. 6 Base Sub-Area set up a detachment at Brindisi on 19th September to prepare for the arrival on the 24th of No. 71 Sub-Area from Alexandria. No. 86 Area H.Q. reached Bari on 25th September, and Fortbase itself opened at Taranto on 27th September under a new title, H.Q. No. 2 District. We may pass over details but may note that up to 4th October some 33,000 tons were taken in by the 'Heel' ports, while nearly 40,000 tons had come in to Calabria. Intake was rising yet stores in the port areas were not the same thing as stores with the troops. The main difficulties in the port areas arose because the ports themselves were undeveloped and unorganized for large-scale working until a sufficient amount of machinery and a sufficient number of technical units to handle large tonnages could be installed. Moreover, stocks remained for a time unbalanced in many particulars. This awkward fact had two main causes. First, there was the difficulty in breaking down the contents of bulk-loaded convoys which we have noticed above. Second, there were no buffer stocks at hand to enable rapid adjustments to be made. As a matter of policy full Base depots had not been built up in Sicily for the island had not been considered as a base for further operations. Moreover, at the end of July the scale of reserves in the island had been halved.

These pages have been concerned with the rearward aspect of 8th Army's administrative problem, and do not extend to the detailed development of the L. of C. Enough perhaps has been said to illustrate Montgomery's message to Alexander on 29th September '... I have absolutely no reserve stocks and the whole administrative business in rear is in a bad way and must be tidied up.'

(vi)

See Map 16

We must now turn to the Allied and German air forces to add to the picture of their activities.

First comes the Northwest African Strategic Air Force's attack on the enemy's airfields. This had been suspended when this air force joined in the battle in the Salerno beachhead; it was resumed on the night 16th/17th September and continued, in concentrated fashion, until the 19th when the German Air Force began to withdraw from the group of airfields at Foggia. This occurrence confirmed the belief that the German air force was re-deploying.

84 Wellingtons dropped 150 tons of bombs on the Cisterna airfield near Rome during the night 16th/17th September, and put it out of action. On the 17th daylight attacks in strength began on the Rome group of airfields, when 60 Fortresses dropped 95 tons of bombs on Ciampino North and South, and 136 Mitchells and Marauders dropped 120 tons on Pratica di Mare. The Germans recorded heavy damage to a wing of fighters based on the Ciampino fields and that at Pratica di Mare two aircraft were destroyed and 48 damaged, and that a fuel dump was set on fire. On the night 17th/18th September 66 Wellingtons dropped 119 tons of bombs on the fighter base at Cerveteri. These set the hangars on fire, put the runway out of action, and damaged a large number of Ju. 52 transport aircraft which for some reason unknown to us were at this base. On the 18th 86 Marauders bombed (70 tons) Pratica di Mare again and destroyed many gliders and tugs. 36 Mitchells bombed (36 tons) Ciampino South, and 71 Fortresses dropped 112 tons at Viterbo and destroyed or damaged several bombers. 91 Lightnings strafed and bombed four satellites at Foggia used by Ju. 88s. Here six Lightnings were shot down.¹ During the night 18th/19th September the Wellingtons followed up the Fortresses' daylight attack on Viterbo by dropping 98 tons of bombs, and closed, for the time being, the assault on German air bases. From dusk on the 16th to dawn on the 19th the German official list of aircraft casualties records 45 as destroyed and 27 damaged on the ground by Allied bombing. German records also show that human casualties were heavy.

The next class of targets is L. of C. Northwest African Strategic Air Force and Middle East Air Command gave a large share of the air effort to this class. We have described on an earlier page the attacks on the Volturno-Calore and Formia-Mignano zones between 20th

¹ The account of German losses on the 18th is drawn from German records which, however, note only 15 aircraft as destroyed and 2 damaged. It is probable that the much heavier losses suggested by the reports' wording occurred among commandeered Italian aircraft.

and 24th September. Before this offensive, R.A.F. Liberators and Halifaxes from M.E.A.C. bombed Potenza on the night 16th/17th September and the railway at Foggia on the night 17th/18th. In daylight on the 17th and 18th a total of 75 Liberators of U.S. Ninth Air Force dropped 145 tons at Pescara. This was an important railway centre and widespread damage included direct hits on bridges and the destruction of a junction.¹

On 20th September, in daylight, Fortresses of N.A.S.A.F. bombed marshalling-yards at Venice. Then on the 24th 52 Liberators from the three Groups which the United Kingdom had loaned to Mediterranean Air Command dropped 109 tons of bombs at Pisa.² This attack cut the railway lines to Florence and the coast, disrupted the marshalling-yards, and scored hits on military installations in the city. On 25th September 96 Fortresses dropped 86 tons of bombs on the marshalling-yards at Bologna, Verona, and Bolzano (a key point on the Brenner route through the Alps). Fighters, flak, and bad weather accounted for ten Fortresses, and bad weather greatly handicapped bombing operations until 29th September.

Malta's fighter-bombers made a few attacks on Italian airfields and Middle East Air Command's bombers and fighter-bombers, except as noticed above, were mostly employed in the Eastern Mediterranean and against Crete.

When the German air force withdrew from Foggia the danger lessened to Allied shipping and to the beaches in the Gulf of Salerno, busy with maintenance. Nevertheless the Allied fighters usually flew over 200 sorties daily on protective duties. In these the American Kittyhawks began to play a full part alongside the Spitfires, and N.A.S.A.F.'s Lightnings returned to it from loan to N.A.T.A.F. As 5th U.S. Army advanced, so did the fighters extend their operations but on 24th September those Spitfires of D.A.F. which had been supporting 5th U.S. Army were switched to 8th Army's front.

The German air support bases were now over-near the battle-front, while the general German policy of withdrawal to north of Rome

¹ The Liberators' attacks appear to be the last made by U.S. Ninth Air Force against targets in Italy. See chapter VII, p. 229.

² The 389th Heavy Bombardment Group, and from U.S. Eighth Air Force in the United Kingdom the 44th and 93rd Heavy Bombardment Groups, had been loaned to M.A.C. in June and July. After operations against Ploesti and elsewhere they returned to England. On 15th September Eisenhower asked for a further loan of these groups. The aircraft left England on 16th September, and were in action against Bastia and Leghorn on the 21st. These operations, on account of their connection with the maritime war, find their place in the next chapter. Eisenhower had also asked that the U.K.-based strategic air forces should attack the enemy's L. of C. in Northern Italy. On the night of 16th/17th September 340 R.A.F. Halifaxes, Stirlings and Lancasters and five U.S.A.A.F. Fortresses set off to bomb the marshalling-yards at Modane in south-east France in an attempt to close the northern end of the Mont Cenis Tunnel. As a result the marshalling-yards were heavily cratered and the tracks strewn with debris. Additionally another 12 Lancasters bombed the Antheor Viaduct, which appears to have escaped serious damage.

suggested a fresh deployment. On 16th September half the fighter force withdrew to the Rome airfields where, as we have seen above, it was at once assailed. Two *Gruppen* were so badly mauled that they were removed to Lucca to re-form. The remaining *Gruppen* took over their aircraft and those of another *Gruppe* which was going back to Germany to refit. Other fighters moved to Viterbo and Aquino. Of the seven *Gruppen* of bombers two moved to Istres in southern France, two to north Italy, and then by the end of September to Germany to re-equip, two to Piacenza and Villafranca, and one to Bergamo. All these moves to a great distance from the battle-front much reduced the effectiveness of the air support and fighter forces.

At the battle-front therefore German air activity was small—over 5th U.S. Army's area perhaps 30 sorties daily were flown after 17th September. At night small formations of Ju. 88s and Do. 217s were active, but the Beaufighters warded off these attacks and inflicted losses.

From dusk on 16th September to dawn on 1st October, and excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports, Mediterranean Air Command flew a total of 13,838 sorties of all kinds, the equivalent of 984 every 24 hours.¹ The Allies suffered the loss of some 120 aircraft. The Germans lost through Allied action 113 aircraft (12 of them in the Eastern Mediterranean) in the air and on the ground. These losses brought the total German aircraft losses by Allied action for the whole of September to 190, and a further 134 failed to return from operations for reasons unknown. In addition, of 832 enemy aircraft in various states of repair captured on the Italian Mainland by the end of the month, 410 were German: they included 185 bombers and air transports and 197 single- and twin-engine fighters. This was an attrition which would rapidly become disastrous unless it could be checked.

¹ See Table of Sorties at the end of the chapter.

TABLE
Sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command dusk 16th September—dawn 1st October 1943
(excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports)

Command	Land Rece	Fighter Includes shipping protection shown in ()	Bomber and Fighter-Bomber										Bomber Totals		
			Corsica Airfields and L.G.s	Italy L. of C. and other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	Greece L. of C. and other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	Crete Airfields and L.G.s	Agean L. of C. and other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	Day	Night			
N.A.A.F.†	716*	5,386 (1,500)*	—	230	131	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	361	—
			36	1,479	258	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,773	—
			—	143	438	242	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	143	680
			—	2,249	165	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,414	267
Malta	13*†	87 (70)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M.E.A.C.	199*†	1,520 (1,168)	—	75	15	14	—	27	—	—	—	23	—	140	19
			—	15	—	—	1	27	—	—	—	—	23	—	66
			—	—	—	—	1	1	1	3	—	—	—	—	7
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	28
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	928	6,993 (2,738)	36	4,176	569	—	27	28	—	1	—	23	—	4,831	19
			—	725	256	2	28	32	—	1	—	1	—	42	1,086

Total Sorties Flown = 13,838 or 984 every 24 hours

* Estimated. † Photographic Reconnaissance only.

† The sorties flown by N.A.A.F. have been arrived at by deduction from a variety of sources, some contradictory, but they can be considered reasonably accurate for our purpose.

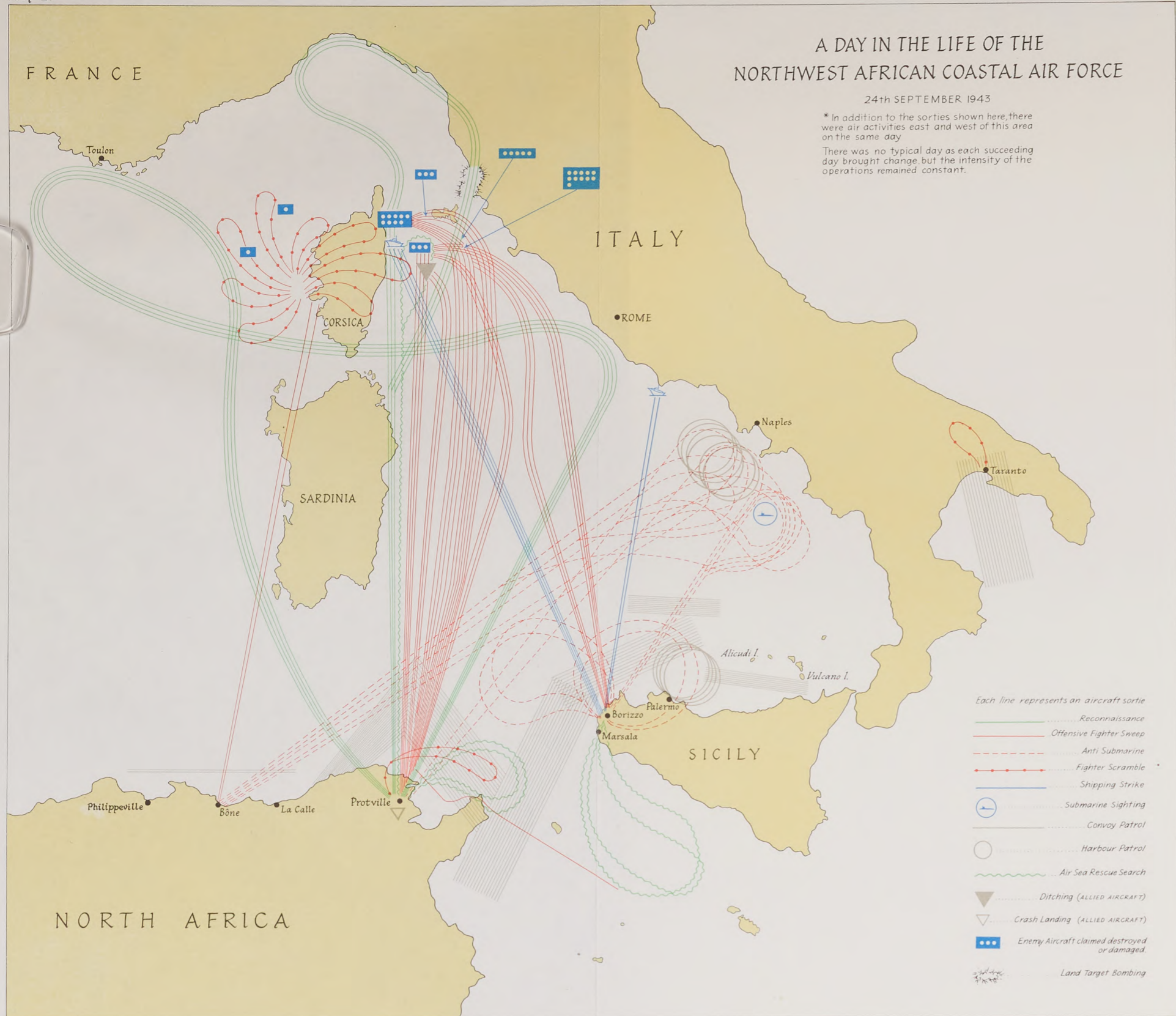
Access to this document requires purchase of the book.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE NORTHWEST AFRICAN COASTAL AIR FORCE

24th SEPTEMBER 1943

* In addition to the sorties shown here, there were air activities east and west of this area on the same day

There was no typical day as each succeeding day brought change but the intensity of the operations remained constant.



CHAPTER XI
NAVAL ACTIVITIES, JUNE TO
OCTOBER 1943; ALLIED AND
ENEMY PLANS TO THE END
OF 1943

(i)

See Maps 12 and 22

OUR account of the war at sea, in the Mediterranean, has been occupied so far almost entirely with the invasions of Sicily and Italy. In this chapter we look at some of the other activities on, under, and over the Mediterranean Sea between the end of May 1943 and of the following October.

Within a few days of the end of the campaign in Africa in mid-May the Allies, who had gained the airfields in the area of Cape Bon and had swept channels through the most obstructive of the minefields at sea, were able to resume regular traffic through the Mediterranean after an interval of almost exactly three years. This great accomplishment had been one of the main strategic aims of the campaign in Africa. Its fulfilment had very many consequences great and small for the war in general and in the Mediterranean, although here some examples of the great alone can engage our attention. Contemporary estimates were that an 'open' Mediterranean would release some 225 merchant vessels for other uses than maintenance of the Mediterranean theatre by convoys on the Cape route. The potential general saving in shipping was put as high as a million and a half tons.¹ A merchant vessel, passing through the Mediterranean, from Liverpool to Egypt, saved some forty-five days on both her outward and homeward voyages, ninety days in all. In carrying men, a 'through' Mediterranean passage saved 60% in shipping time between England and Egypt, and 20% if the voyage was to India. These were solid advantages when, to take a

¹ Mr. Ehrman discusses judiciously the difficult topic of the Allied shortage of shipping in *Grand Strategy*, Volume V (H.M.S.O. 1956) pp. 26-33. We may quote here part of his final sentence: '... a shortage of shipping accordingly remained a shadow, and occasionally a vivid fear, until the last few months of the war, a continuing potential danger whose extent appeared the more alarming because its causes, though finally appreciated, could never be entirely mastered.'

single example at a period of intense activity from 10th July to 31st August 1943, movement between England and the Mediterranean was of the order of 571 ships and 1,800,000 tons of stores and equipment. It was a natural consequence of the great operational activity in the Mediterranean theatre during the second half of 1943, and of the projected operations of South East Asia Command, that voyages to, and through, the Mediterranean should increase.

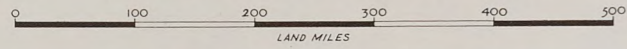
But if Allied traffic in the Mediterranean was increasing the enemy's traffic had most markedly diminished because of the destruction of the Axis forces in Africa in May. And so the Allied aircraft, submarines, and surface warships were robbed of a large part of their usual prey. What remained consisted of the ships and miscellaneous craft which the Axis, and the Germans alone after 8th September, must needs use for voyages along the coasts of Italy, southern France, and the Adriatic, and to the islands of the central and eastern Mediterranean. Allied aircraft might find compensation in attacks on German road and rail communications in Italy which were immensely valuable to the enemy.

The new ports and airfields which fell into Allied hands made control of the western and central Mediterranean much easier, but easier control did not greatly alter the nature of day to day activities. There were still convoys to defend against submarine and air attack, the land forces to support, and enemy ships to find and destroy. The Allies' naval and air superiority was overwhelming, although even in 1943 the Allies did not have it all their own way. New methods and new equipment were constantly introduced by both sides in the unending duel between attack and defence.¹ Yet conditions were utterly changed from those, vivid in many memories, of Malta convoys in 1942 and of the evacuations of Greece and Crete.

As was natural, some changes were made in the organization and protection of Allied convoys to the Mediterranean. Convoys in the principal series, from the United Kingdom and the United States, usually combined on reaching Gibraltar and then, in the Mediterranean, became a British responsibility although the Americans helped over surface and fighter escorts and anti-submarine patrols. Force H, powerful in battleships and aircraft carriers, continued to give cover to these convoys against attacks from surface warships until the Italian fleet surrendered in September. The increasing demands of operations in the Mediterranean and the Far East increased the volume of shipping and led to a series of convoys, additional to the principal, being instituted. Four of these convoys, eastbound, left Gibraltar in June, and the Commander-in-Chief Eastern Fleet arranged that ships of suitable type, which were loading

¹ We have discussed in Chapter IV, p. 131 the paradox that the loss of Allied merchant shipping in the Mediterranean was greater in 1943 than in 1942.

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in India, should join at Alexandria convoys westbound through the Mediterranean. In July 'through' (in the strict sense) convoys, westbound and eastbound, were suspended while the Allied invasion burst upon Sicily. From 13th September convoys from the Middle Eastern ports sailed to Italy instead of to Sicily.

Some of the convoys were very large, and as an interesting example we can take that which entered the Mediterranean on June 2nd, the largest of the war up to that date. 74 British and 55 American ships sailed in it, 129 in all, and there were 19 escorting warships. The whole array covered 68 square miles. 86 ships peeled off for Oran and Algiers but others joined and so 65 ships continued eastward. Some of these were detached for various North African ports and some for Malta, but 28 ships arrived at Tripoli on 8th June. No ship had been lost or damaged and indeed the enemy made no serious attempt to interfere. It was otherwise when another large and important convoy passed the Sicilian Narrows on 26th June for then some large formations of German aircraft attacked. They were intercepted and beaten off, and the convoy was unscathed.

The Allied air forces had gained much experience in arranging air cover, and the arrangements over the Mediterranean were the following in general terms. When a convoy entered from the west it came under the protection of aircraft operated by Air Headquarters Gibraltar until Oran was reached. Then Northwest African Coastal Air Force took over protection. This had been provided as far eastward as a line protracted from the boundary between Tunisia and Tripolitania but, by October, the limit had been extended to a line joining Misurata in Tripolitania to Cape Killini in Greece. Eastward from where N.A.C.A.F. was relieved of its responsibility, No. 201 Naval Co-operation Group protected convoys which passed at more than forty miles from the North African shore. Convoys which passed closer inshore were covered by fighters controlled by Air Defence Headquarters Eastern Mediterranean which was subordinate to Middle East Air Command. Ships which passed within fifty miles of Malta were the charges of Malta Air Command. However, on 15th October N.A.C.A.F., with its now considerably extended area of responsibility, assumed operational control of Malta and the same day delegated to Malta Air Command full responsibility for all fighter, general reconnaissance, anti-submarine and air/sea rescue operations in the whole of the Central Mediterranean and the greater part of the southern half of the Tyrrhenian Sea.¹ Malta Air Command's responsibilities

¹ Roughly an area bounded by a line from Cape Colonne to a point on Longitude 19° 30' E due west of Matapan, then to Misurata, then along the coast to off Sousse, across to Pantelleria, then north-west to Latitude 38° 40' N Longitude 10° 30' E and on to 39° 40' N 10° 30' E (both co-ordinates about 50 miles east of Sardinia) and, finally, due east to the Italian mainland.

were also extended to include the protection of shipping within 100 miles of the island, and the air defence of Sicily and of the foot of Italy as far north as approximately Corigliano—roughly in line with the northern boundary of Malta Air Command's Tyrrhenian Sea responsibility. It also took over operational and administrative control of the air units in Sicily formerly subordinate to N.A.C.A.F. No. 335 Wing R.A.F. set up two Fighter Operations Rooms at Catania and Palermo, and No. 325 Wing R.A.F. at Borizzo carried out general reconnaissance together with No. 248 Wing R.A.F. in Malta. Northwest African Coastal Air Force, to control the part of the Tyrrhenian Sea which lay north of Malta Air Command's portion, placed a Command Post at Naples and took charge of the anti-submarine operations of No. 323 Wing R.A.F. at Montecorvino. N.A.C.A.F. also began to take a larger share of Adriatic operations. On 18th October the Advance H.Q. of its No. 242 Group R.A.F. moved to Taranto, and the Beaufighters, which had covered the area of Naples, were joined by Spitfires to protect Taranto, Brindisi, and Bari, and convoys in those neighbourhoods. Marauders of No. 14 Squadron performed general reconnaissance from Corfu northwards. A Wing of Italian seaplanes (Cant. Z. 506) began to undertake anti-submarine operations in the Adriatic in October. During all these developments No. 201 Naval Co-operation Group and Air Defences Eastern Mediterranean continued to share responsibility for the eastern Mediterranean.

When one considers the vast and interlocking Maritime air organization which the above paragraph outlines, it is with some astonishment that one recalls its small beginnings in No. 201 Group R.A.F., and the prolonged and sometimes warm arguments between the Services which preceded the transformation, on 20th October 1941, of this formation into No. 201 Naval Co-operation Group R.A.F. of seven squadrons.¹

Although the Allies held the initiative in the maritime war their operations, so often within close range of the enemy's shore-based aircraft, provided so many opportunities for enemy air action that it may be interesting first to see what enemy air action was provoked. During the three months before the armistice with Italy the Italian air force took little part in the war at sea. The strength and distribution of the German Air Force in the Mediterranean on various dates between June and October 1943 is shown in the table on page 362.

¹ Two General Reconnaissance Squadrons R.A.F., one General Reconnaissance Squadron (Greek), one Flying Boat Squadron R.A.F., one Flying Boat Squadron (Yugoslav), two Long-Range Fighter Squadrons R.A.F. See Volume II, pp. 277-78, 286.

This strength rose sharply in July, owing to rising production of bombers and dive-bombers, but began to fall in September because since June the defence of the Reich had been absorbing more and more fighters, and because of the growing demand to meet the Russian front's need of more fighters and bombers. Of the 991 German aircraft present in October in the Mediterranean 335 were bombers, 207 were dive-bombers, and 296 were fighters.

The North African ports were an obvious objective and during the first half of June the Germans made several attacks, mostly small, and spread their action between Algiers, Bougie, Djidjelli, Bône, Bizerta, and Sousse. During the second half of June the attacks consisted of raids, sometimes by single aircraft, and Philippeville, Djidjelli, and Bizerta were the main targets. During June the enemy did not do much damage and lost at least 18 bombers shot down by Allied fighters and anti-aircraft guns. On the night 6th/7th July 65 bombers attacked Bizerta where a large part of the Sicilian invasion-fleet was gathered, but three aircraft were shot down and the rest did little damage. For the remainder of July the Germans were too occupied in defending Sicily to pay attention to the North African ports. In the first fortnight of August several small raids were made on Bizerta and the Germans began to use 'Window' in an attempt to confuse Allied radar.¹ In the second fortnight of August attacks became heavier, and in September Bizerta had one attack by about 75 aircraft based on Viterbo, Foggia, and southern France on 17th/18th, and another by 60 aircraft the next night. The first attack destroyed oil installations and damaged some craft, the second caused small damage. In the first attack the Germans lost five aircraft, and in the second five, of which two fell to the Beaufighters of No. 153 Squadron R.A.F. Algiers was attacked ineffectually by 40 bombers on the night of 26th/27th August and two were shot down, also by No. 153 Squadron.

Sicilian ports in Allied hands of course received a share of attacks: Syracuse and Augusta on many occasions, and Palermo on four. The attack on 31st July/1st August on Palermo by 25 Ju. 88s and Do. 217s put the best dock temporarily out of action, sank the British coaster *Uskide*, and destroyed an ammunition train and stocks of petrol and food. But Beaufighters shot down two Ju. 88s and American Spitfires two Do. 217s. The fourth attack on Palermo sank two submarine-chasers and a coaster. In all these attacks the Beaufighters accounted for seven aircraft, four certainly victims of No. 255 Squadron R.A.F., and the Americans for two.

In September the Germans were compelled to turn long-range

¹ 'Window' was the British code-name for strips of paper which had been made metallic. If large numbers of strips were dropped they affected the working of radar screens on certain frequencies, and prevented accurate measurements.

German Air Force strengths (excluding transport aircraft)

Date	Western and Central Mediterranean					Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean				Grand Total Strength
	Sardinia	Italy	Sicily	S. France	Total	Greece, Crete	Rumania	Croatia	Total	
10. 6-43	120	190	289	Unknown	599	243	67	31	341	940
10. 7-43	88	616	289	15	1,008*	244	63	175	482	1,490
31. 7-43	77	531		63	671*	216	63	166	445	1,116
20. 8-43	86	478		135	699*	262	64	163	489	1,188
31. 8-43	64	443		132	630*	215	71	193	479	1,109
30. 9-43†					432				538	970
20.10-43		393		100	493	250	80	168	498	991

* Includes aircraft of *Lufflotte 3* based in southern France and operating in the Mediterranean area but not under the control of *Lufflotte 2*. Numbers of such aircraft are unknown for September and October.

† Deployment unknown.

bombers against the Allied Forces which were invading Italy. Moreover the Allies denied to them refuelling bases in Sardinia and southern Italy. In consequence attacks on North African ports ceased after the first week of September. The Germans turned next, after an expensive and unrewarding interlude at Salerno, against ports on the Ligurian coast and in the Adriatic—for they were treating Italian ships as hostile—and shipping at sea in general. So far as our knowledge goes, 14 Italian merchant vessels (62,906 tons in all) were sunk in September, and 8 (12,702 tons in all) in October. In October Naples began to suffer. On 21st/22nd October 113 aircraft bombed this port, and ten Ju. 88s failed to return. Some may have been shot down by A.A. On 23rd/24th October 90 aircraft set out for Naples but 78 of these appear to have turned back because of bad weather and other unknown reasons. Of the remaining 12 two were destroyed by Beaufighters of No. 255 Squadron R.A.F. (of N.A.C.A.F.) and No. 108 Squadron (Malta, but operating from Sicily), two by those of No. 600 Squadron (N.A.T.A.F.), and two by unknown causes, possibly A.A. gun-fire.

In October the enemy became a little more active in the western Mediterranean, and on the 4th attacked a convoy off Cape Tenes (Algeria) with glider bombs, sinking one ship. No. III/6 Squadron Fighting French Air Force destroyed two He. 111s in exchange. On 21st October 49 aircraft attacked a convoy in the same area and sank a merchant ship and a trawler. Escort Airacobras of 345th Squadron U.S.A.A.F. and Beaufighters of No. 153 Squadron R.A.F. destroyed three bombers, and a reconnaissance aircraft had been shot down earlier. In the Eastern Mediterranean reconnaissances were the usual operations apart from those in the Dodecanese which are related in a later chapter.

From the enemy's aircraft we pass to his submarines. The Italians in June possessed about 45 operational submarines which did little harm to Allied ships up to the Italian armistice. At the beginning of June there were 17 German U-boats in the Mediterranean, sole survivors of the 47 which since September 1941 had run the gauntlet of the Straits of Gibraltar. By the end of October 1943 although three more U-boats had entered, seven had been lost, leaving a balance of 13. These were based on Toulon and Spezia, and on Pola for operations in the eastern Mediterranean. German and Italian submarine losses between June and October are set out in Tables I and II on page 364.

During the same period two Italian destroyers were sunk, one by aircraft and one by submarine attack, as were three Italian Destroyer Escort vessels, one by surface action, one by aircraft and one by

TABLE I

*German U-boat losses in the Mediterranean between
1st June and 31st October 1943*

Date	Number	Place	Sunk by
16th June	<i>U.97</i>	West of Haifa	459 R.A.A.F. Sqn
12th July	<i>U.409*</i>	Between Algiers and Bougie	H.M. Destroyer <i>Inconstant</i>
12th July	<i>U.561</i>	Straits of Messina	<i>M.T.B.81</i>
30th July	<i>U.375</i>	Central Mediterranean	American patrol boat
22nd Aug.	<i>U.458</i>	S.E. of Pantelleria	H.M. Destroyer <i>Easton</i> and Greek Destroyer <i>Pindos</i>
11th Sept.	<i>U.617</i>	Western Mediterranean	Aircraft of 179 Sqn and H.M. Corvette <i>Hyacinth</i> , A/S Trawlers <i>Haarlem</i> and <i>Woolongong</i> R.A.N.
30th Oct.	<i>U.431</i>	Off Toulon	H.M. Submarine <i>Ultimatum</i>

* *U.409* was hunted by air and sea to exhaustion and forced to surface. The 'Swamp' operations which are described in Chapter XV had their origin in the experience gained in the sinking of this submarine.

TABLE II

*Italian submarine losses in the Mediterranean between
1st June and 9th September 1943*

Date	Name	Place	Sunk by
5th June	<i>H.8</i>	Spezia	U.S.A.A.F. bombs
11th July	<i>Flutto</i>	Straits of Messina	<i>M.T.B.s 640, 651, 670</i>
12th July	<i>Bronzo</i> (captured)	Off Augusta	H.M. Minesweepers <i>Seaham</i> , <i>Boston</i> , <i>Poole</i> , and <i>Cromarty</i>
13th July	<i>Nereide</i>	South-east of Messina Straits	H.M. Destroyers <i>Echo</i> and <i>Ilex</i>
13th July	<i>Acciaio</i>	North of Messina	H.M. Submarine <i>Unruly</i>
15th July	<i>Remo</i>	Gulf of Taranto	H.M. Submarine <i>United</i>
18th July	<i>Romolo</i>	East of Augusta	Aircraft of No. 221 Sqn
23rd July	<i>Ascianghi</i>	South coast of Sicily	H.M. Destroyers <i>Laforey</i> and <i>Eclipse</i>
29th July	<i>Pietro Micca</i>	Straits of Otranto	H.M. Submarine <i>Trooper</i>
3rd Aug.	<i>Argento</i>	Off Pantelleria	U.S. Destroyer <i>Buck</i>
7th Sept.	<i>Velella</i>	Gulf of Salerno	H.M. Submarine <i>Shakespeare</i>

submarine attack. The old cruiser *Bari* was sunk in Leghorn by aircraft.

In June, the German *Captain U-boats* Italy considered that the best hunting grounds were the customary Allied convoy routes in the Western Basin, where traffic was heaviest. He stationed six boats,

between Alboran Island and a longitude some fifty miles west of Bougie, where the area assigned to Italian submarines began. But he was ready to move his own boats eastward if signs appeared that the Allies were about to use the Tunisian ports as jumping off places for assaults on Sardinia and Sicily. In the Eastern Basin he could not afford to maintain more than two boats on patrol and experience had shown that here the most rewarding positions were off the hump of Cyrenaica and off Haifa. In early July it became obvious that Sicily was to be the first point of Allied attack. Six U-boats were sent through the Straits of Messina to operate off the east coast of the island, but none arrived off the landing beaches before 11th July. By then Allied patrols were well established and the best opportunities had been lost. *U.407*, however, damaged the cruiser *Newfoundland*, and the cruiser *Cleopatra* was hit by a torpedo, probably from the Italian submarine *Alagi*. German U-boats were next distributed between Gibraltar and Bône, but in August few were operational because three were standing by to rescue Mussolini from Maddalena Island while others were being fitted with new radar location equipment. After the Armistice with Italy *Captain U-boats* had to move his headquarters and his submarines to Toulon. From there patrol areas were widened in an attempt to include those previously occupied by Italian submarines.

The enemy's aircraft and submarines could not complain of want of targets. Yet, if we take into account the great volume of shipping passing into and through the Mediterranean between June and October, and that much of it was exposed in highly vulnerable positions during landing operations, the Allies' losses were light. They are set out month by month in the following table.

Number and G.R.T. of Allied Merchant Ships of over 500 tons sunk at sea or in port in the Mediterranean

Month	By Submarine	By Aircraft	From other causes	Total
June	5-23,645	1- 813	—	6-24,458
July	4-26,404	7-46,288	2- 9,200	13-81,892
Aug.	3-20,440	3-11,467	3-24,142	9-56,049
Sept.	3-21,485	1- 7,191	2- 5,573	6-34,249
Oct.	3-17,688	3-15,504	1- 4,736	7-37,928
Total	18-109,662	15-81,263	8-43,651	41-234,576

The Hospital Ships *Talamba* and *Newfoundland* are not included in the above table. They were sunk by deliberate air attack, one when lying off the beaches of Sicily, and the other in the Gulf of Salerno.

MMR-N

All but three of the eighteen merchant ships sunk by U-boats were in convoy, twelve of them in the Western Basin. Of the fifteen ships sunk by air attack, twelve were sunk by bombs and three by torpedoes. Seven were sunk off Sicilian beaches or in Sicilian ports. Of the ships under the heading 'other causes', four sank as a result of fire or explosion, two on mines, and two from limpets attached to their bottoms by Italian frogmen in the merchant ship anchorage at Gibraltar.

Italian merchant shipping and German-controlled shipping in the Mediterranean had, in 1943, suffered devastating loss and damage until the end of the African campaign in May. From that month until the armistice with Italy in September the monthly total of losses, although heavy, fell. This was partly because Axis traffic was much less and partly because much of the Allied naval and air forces were engaged on operations other than against shipping. After the armistice with Italy what Italian ships remained were seized or sunk by the Germans, scuttled by the Italians, or sent by them to Allied ports to comply with the armistice terms. Between June and October the pattern of enemy movements at sea was much affected by rapidly changing circumstances. Allied progress on land closed first the Sicilian Narrows, then the Straits of Messina, and soon afterwards the Straits of Otranto. For the enemy the Mediterranean became split in three. On the west coast of Italy their available ships and craft were adequate for their needs, which were for the most part the transport of supplies from the Gulf of Genoa to small ports south of Rome, to the island of Elba and to Sardinia and Corsica until these were evacuated. In the Adriatic the shipping available was far less than needed. By October the Germans had assessed their requirements of supplies by sea on the east coast of Italy at 30,000 tons each month, to supplement road and rail. Most of this was transported from Trieste to Ancona and transferred to small craft for onward passage to lesser ports. On the Dalmatian side, road and rail capacities were small and subject to Partisan interference. The monthly supplement by sea for this quarter was therefore put at 100,000 tons. Experience soon convinced the Germans, who had previously left the Adriatic to the Italians, that the Adriatic was a sea for small craft. They began busily to collect Siebel ferries, naval ferry barges, infantry landing-craft and many other types of coastal small craft. Before long some of these were being sent from Germany by the Rhine-Rhone route to the Mediterranean, and thence overland from Spezia to Piacenza, from where they reached the Adriatic by using the River Po. Others were being built, in southern France and the northern Adriatic, of parts sent from Germany. Some E-boats were transported by train from Kiel via Vienna, and Villach in Carinthia, and thence to Monfalcone at the head of the Adriatic. Between

Tarvisio and Udine the rail route ran through a wild and rocky ravine, where amidst cuttings, tunnels, bridges, and viaducts the width of the E-boats proved very awkward. A new naval command system was set up for the Adriatic including Sea Defence Commandants for the Western and Northern Adriatic with headquarters at Venice and Trieste, and on the Dalmatian coast an Admiral entitled *Admiral Adria*. His appointment coincided with a drive by German troops in October to clear the Yugoslav Partisans from the ports and islands which they controlled on the Dalmatian coast. It became increasingly difficult for the Germans to find crews for their ships and craft. The violence of the enemy, whether the German vessels were at sea or in port, was plain to see and affected not only the provision of crews but of port facilities. To set and keep their convoys in motion and to give them better protection the number and armament of escorts was increased, but the strength and frequency of Allied attacks outstripped anything the Germans could do.

In mid-October some big ships unsuited to the Adriatic but badly needed in the Aegean were collected for an attempt to break out through the Straits of Otranto. There were nine ships, including three tankers, but they were quickly spotted and attacked by Allied aircraft, and after British destroyers and the submarine *Sickle* had taken their toll, only two reached Piraeus.

With this success we now take up the tale of Allied activities, for it was typical of the teamwork which warships and aircraft had built up through much experience and which could have particularly happy results in the coastal and narrow waters in which so many operations now took place. We have mentioned earlier that events had deprived the Allied maritime forces of much of their prey. However, for British submarines it chanced for the 10th Flotilla, based on Malta, that June produced the best crop of sinkings since the previous December. But many boats were resting in preparation for Sicily and operations in the Eastern Mediterranean, and although patrols and mine-laying in the Aegean continued, the 1st Flotilla on the other hand had only two submarines available until 'T' class boats began to arrive in July. Sicily absorbed nearly all the available submarines on beach reconnaissance, duties as beacons off the beaches, and patrols to intercept Italian heavy ships. The 10th Flotilla was next employed on patrols in the Adriatic, and the 8th Flotilla off the west coast of Italy, where *Simoom* sank the Italian destroyer *Gioberti*. During Salerno only one submarine was used as a beacon, and others patrolled the channel between Corsica and Elba lest the Italian warships at Spezia should come south. Allied submarines played active parts in shepherding Italian submarines and merchantmen after the armistice. *Unrivalled* made contact with the Italian authorities at Bari, assembled a convoy of merchant ships

from that port and, joined later by *Unruly*, escorted them to Malta. *Unshaken* put a prize crew on board the Italian submarine *Menotti* and took her to Malta, while the Polish *Sokol* encountered two more Italian submarines, one of which was truculent at first, and sent them both to Taranto. *Sokol* also arranged with the Italian authorities in Brindisi for merchant ships to sail for Allied ports from that overcrowded harbour. Allied losses of submarines totalled four British and one Greek. The first was the *Parthian*, presumed to have struck a mine off Brindisi about 10th August. Four days later two Italian corvettes sank H.M.S. *Saracen* off Bastia. On 14th September, the Greek submarine *Katsonis* was sunk by a German A/S vessel in the Aegean. Another German A/S vessel sank the *Usurper* in the Gulf of Genoa on 3rd October, and during that month the *Trooper* was presumed mined in the Aegean to the east of Leros.

The only British surface warships lost during these five months in the Western and Central Mediterranean were the Fast Minelayer *Abdiel* which, as related in Chapter VII, swung over a mine in Taranto harbour, and the destroyer *Puckeridge* torpedoed by a German U-boat near Gibraltar on 6th September. In the Eastern Mediterranean six destroyers were lost, but as these losses occurred during the Dodecanese operations they have been included, later, in the account of these operations. Four American destroyers were lost in the Mediterranean during the period June to October.

All the maritime air forces in the Mediterranean spent June and the early part of July preparing for Sicily, and the rest of July and part of August supporting and sustaining that operation. After a short spell of less activity they were fully stretched once more in early September during the operations in Calabria and at Salerno.

Much of the burden of the air side of these operations fell on Northwest African Air Forces, mainly the coastal squadrons.¹ This had been foreseen and Northwest African Coastal Air Force was reinforced from the Middle East, Malta, and the United Kingdom. The Middle East sent No. 47 Squadron R.A.F. (Beaufighter torpedo-fighters), No. 458 Squadron R.A.A.F. (Wellingtons). Malta lent No. 221 Squadron R.A.F. (Wellingtons). The United Kingdom lent No. 144 Squadron R.A.F. (Beaufighter torpedo-fighters), and No. 219 Squadron R.A.F. (Beaufighters) for the air defence of ports. The American 414th and 415th night-fighter squadrons joined also. Other measures included the conversion of the Beaufighters of No. 39 Squadron R.A.F. to the torpedo-fighter role, and the strengthening of Spitfire and Airacobra day-fighter squadrons with some

¹ See Map 21.

Spitfire IXs and Lightnings to counter fast and high-flying enemy reconnaissance aircraft in their missions against north-west African ports and coastal shipping. The expansion of N.A.C.A.F. continued in fact from June to October, and although the strength of the R.A.F. component remained almost constant, the strength of the combined U.S.A.A.F./Fighting French component almost doubled, so that by October it was equal to that of the R.A.F.

In October too the co-belligerent Italian Air Force appeared on the side of the Allies. We have mentioned earlier the Italian anti-submarine wing of seaplanes in the Adriatic. Besides these, A.F.H.Q. allotted to the Italian Air Force the aircraft to equip five squadrons of fighters, one of bombers, one of torpedo-bombers, and of a half-squadron (Reconnaissance)—all to be serviced by the Italians. On 16th October this Italian Air Force made its debut when a force of M.C. 205 fighters escorted American Lightnings flying to attack shipping in the Levkas Channel, south of Corfu.

The Allied air forces benefited from increasing numbers of radar units, and from improving equipment for anti-submarine search. The Americans put a considerable amount of radar equipment, and numbers of operators, into the Western Mediterranean. This action released the more mobile R.A.F. radar stations for use elsewhere, particularly the C.O.L. (Chain Overseas Low) stations required in the islands for the protection of shipping. It was thus possible to extend the radar system to Pantelleria, Lampedusa, Sicily and Ustica Island. By September the Coastal Air Force had 90 radar stations within its command. In June some aircraft at Gibraltar began to use centimetric search transmission to detect submarines, and in July Wellingtons equipped with Leigh Light began to arrive there.¹ The consequent tactical advantages lasted until the end of 1943.

The sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command, from June to October, in finding and attacking ships, including submarines, at sea, and in attacking the enemy's ports are enumerated in a table at the end of this chapter. The gross total, with certain qualifications made in the notes to the table, was 20,274. The number of enemy vessels of over 500 G.R.T. which were sunk at sea or in port by Allied action in the Mediterranean is presented in the table overleaf. In each column numbers of ships sunk are followed by total of tonnage.

Besides the 76 vessels shown, 110 of less than 500 tons G.R.T., giving a total tonnage of 50,000, were sunk. A further 480 ships of all types, of a total tonnage of 453,000, were scuttled, surrendered after

¹ (a) The main advantage of centimetric, over metric, search transmission was that it was much less susceptible to jamming.

(b) Leigh Light was an airborne searchlight.

Month	Submarine	Air	Other or shared	Total
June	9- 44,378	6- 30,687	1- 1,413	16- 76,478
July	7- 26,668	9- 34,003	2- 10,946	18- 71,617
Aug.	4- 7,188	6- 37,759	2- 2,862	12- 47,809
Sept.	7- 28,165	5- 8,897	7- 17,106	19- 54,168
Oct.	4- 13,795	4- 13,307	3- 6,744	11- 33,846
Total	31-120,194	30-124,653	15-39,071	76-283,918

the armistice with Italy, or lost from causes not attributable to Allied action.

This loss of over three-quarters of a million tons requires some illustrative comment. In June the bombers found their best targets in port, including their largest victim, the *Campania* (5,247 tons) sunk at Leghorn by Fortresses. From July onwards the picture at sea began to change. The fall of Sicily, the Allied capture of ports in southern Italy, the surrender of the Italian fleet, and the evacuation of Sardinia and Corsica by the enemy, resulted in alterations in the balance and areas of Allied operations. The long-standing watch on the Italian Fleet came to an end in September. The enemy's surface vessels in great part became confined to the Gulf of Lions, the Ligurian Sea, and the Tyrrhenian Sea, making short hops between Marseilles, Toulon, Genoa, Spezia, and Leghorn within the cover of shore-based fighters. In the Adriatic small ships such as F-boats and Siebel Ferries were busy, carrying oil from Trieste to southern ports. In the first-mentioned Mediterranean waters the Beaufighters and Marauders found prey, but there was nothing to attract the long-range night-flying Wellingtons, and these aircraft turned almost wholly to anti-submarine duties, as escorts to convoys or as hunters. An exception was during the evacuation of Corsica in the second fortnight of September. Sicily became a useful forward base for N.A.C.A.F.'s anti-submarine and fighter aircraft.

July was a good month for N.A.C.A.F. Its torpedo-carrying Beaufighters sank three ships (total 13,693 tons) and its Wellingtons and Marauders two (total 9,543 tons). U.S. XII A.S.C.'s Mustangs bagged the *Nicolo Tommasco* (4,572 tons) at Catania. In August the bombers had most success, the U.S.A.A.F. sinking four ships of over 500 tons, and the R.A.F. bombers and fighter-bombers one each—all six ships were in port. In a devastating raid on Naples on 4th August the Fortresses sank 30,481 tons of shipping, more than three-quarters of the total (37,759) sunk by aircraft during the month. September was again the bombers' month for they sank the month's whole bag of six ships of over 500 tons, five of them in port, one at sea.

American Liberators did the most damage for twenty of them at Bastia, in Corsica, on 21st September sank five ships including the *Nikolaus* (6,397 tons). The Polish submarine *Dzik* claimed a share of the *Nikolaus* for it believed this ship, and one other, to have been hit by its torpedoes in harbour.¹ On the night 21st/22nd September 75 Wellingtons finished off whatever remained afloat at Bastia with 125 tons of bombs. In October (18th/19th) Wellington torpedo-bombers of No. 38 Squadron R.A.F. sank in the Aegean the *Sinafra* (4,470 tons) which was on passage from Crete to Piraeus with troops on board. However, three Lightnings of Northwest African Strategic Air Force, using 500 lb bombs, sank the largest ship of the month, the *Marie Roselli* (6,835 tons) in Corfu harbour.

For the first part of October N.A.C.A.F. had given much attention to the coastal routes between Marseilles and Leghorn, risking interception by shore-based fighters and finding, as it chanced, only small fry to attack. Thereafter, N.A.C.A.F. and Malta too turned mainly to the Adriatic. Allied aircraft found southern Italy a very favourable base, for in particular they were well placed to keep surveillance over the Strait of Otranto, sixty miles wide, through which all shipping must pass, into or out of the Adriatic.

The surrender of the Italian Fleet, and the end of the battle at Salerno meant that there was no longer a need to keep a large naval force in the Mediterranean, and Force H was disbanded. Between 5th October and the end of that month the battleships *Valiant*, *Howe*, *King George V*, *Nelson*, and *Rodney* and the aircraft carriers *Formidable* and *Illustrious* sailed for the United Kingdom. On 13th October Vice-Admiral Sir Algernon Willis hauled down his flag as Flag Officer Force H on appointment as Commander-in-Chief Levant in succession to Admiral Sir John Cunningham, who was succeeding Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham as Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean. During September two other changes in Mediterranean Flag Officer appointments had taken place when Vice-Admiral Sir Harold Burrough succeeded Admiral Sir Frederick Edward-Collins as Flag Officer Commanding, Gibraltar and Vice-Admiral L. H. K. Hamilton succeeded Vice-Admiral A. J. Power as Vice-Admiral Malta.

With the departure of the battleships for the United Kingdom, where some of them were to be prepared for service in the Far East, a new epoch, unremarked because unfortold, was opening in the Mediterranean. For 250 years, almost uninterruptedly, British ships of the line had served in that sea and for much of that time virtually

¹ For this reason the *Nikolaus* has been included in the table on page 370 as shared.

controlled it. Several of them had borne the same names as those which sailed home in 1943. But battleships would not serve there again, except for one brief interval in the spring of 1949 when *Vanguard* flew the flag of the Commander-in-Chief. The days were passing in which the control of sea communications was exercised by navies whose ultimate challenge was the concentrated gun-fire of their battlefleets.

When the battleships and Fleet Carriers departed, the Mediterranean fleet was left with some ten cruisers, five anti-aircraft cruisers, four escort carriers, about thirty destroyers for Fleet work and a further eighty vessels made up of destroyers, sloops, frigates, corvettes, and trawlers for escort purposes. There were twenty-four submarines in the 8th and 10th Flotillas. The Coastal Forces comprised 39 M.T.B.s, 13 M.G.B.s and 16 Motor Launches.

These Coastal Forces had been ubiquitous during the Army's advance from El Alamein to Tripoli and off the Tunisian coast. They had been conspicuous in the various amphibious operations in July and September and in the Messina Straits. But their activities had been rather overshadowed by those of their larger relations, the destroyers and the submarines. At length, however, the Coastal Forces were revelling in conditions to which they were ideally suited. At the end of September a base was set up at Maddalena off the north-east corner of Sardinia and, as soon as the Germans had left Corsica, an advanced base at Bastia. American P.T. boats joined the British M.T.B.s and patrols were maintained between the mouth of the Tiber and Spezia to the discomfort of German patrols and supply ships. In the Adriatic, Coastal Forces began by operating from Taranto, from where on 21st September a successful night raid was made on shipping in Valona harbour. In October the base ship H.M.S. *Vienna* moved from Brindisi to Bari. A foothold was established on the Dalmatian island of Vis and contact gained with the Partisans just at a time when those Partisans were to meet what they termed the Sixth Offensive, the strongest attack yet organized by the Germans to rid themselves of a thorn in their side.

(ii)

To understand the position in Yugoslavia it is necessary to summarize very briefly events since the spring of 1941. Of the two main resistance movements which had formed after the German invasion it was the Serbian Cetniks, under Mihailovic, who had first attracted Allied attention and sympathy. But as time went by a suspicion grew, later confirmed as fact, that the Cetniks were interested to ensure that the Serbs should retain their political ascendancy in Yugoslavia when the war was over, rather than to expend them-

selves during it in fighting Germans and Italians. The other movement, known as the Partisans and most ably led by Joseph Broz, nicknamed Tito, the Secretary General of the illegal Communist Party of Yugoslavia, soon showed much more ability and activity as guerrillas, and slowly Allied interest turned to them. By the summer of 1943, however, neither movement had proved a serious handicap to the enemy, although various attempts by German forces to destroy them had always petered out in heavily wooded hills. The guerrillas lacked the supplies and equipment which they needed if they were to deal heavy blows, and the Allies lacked the aircraft to deliver these things. Between June 1941 and June 1943 only 23 tons reached the more favoured Cetniks while the Partisans received a mere six tons.

In June 1943 developments in the Mediterranean campaign and the Partisans' increasing successes led the Prime Minister and his Chiefs of Staff to study the question of supply, with the result that the number of bombers at the disposal of S.O.E. in Cairo was to be raised to 32.¹ This number, it was hoped, would enable 150 tons to be delivered each month to Yugoslavia, and the future aim was to be 500 tons monthly.

In September the whole situation was transformed by the collapse of Italy. The Partisans, who were mostly in Bosnia and Croatia and were by now some 150,000 strong, exploited their opportunity with great vigour. Of the 15 Italian divisions in the country at the time of the capitulation the Partisans disarmed six before the end of September, and two other divisions defected, with their equipment, to the Partisans. The Partisans had made territorial gains as well. They seized Istria and the mountains between Trieste and the Austrian frontier; they surrounded Zagreb and cut the railway to Belgrade; and they occupied Split and much of the Dalmatian coast and its islands in many of which they placed garrisons. The Partisans also consolidated their positions in Bosnia and Croatia while in the south they moved into Montenegro where many Cetniks, who had done far less to exploit the situation, came over to them.

The British had been sending missions in first to Mihailovic and later to Tito for some time and the arrival of Major Deakin at Tito's H.Q. in May 1943 had been a turning point in strengthening these relations.² In July, it was decided to appoint Mr. Fitzroy Maclean, M.P.³ with the rank of Brigadier, as head of the mission to Tito and he was dropped into Yugoslavia on 18th September.

¹ S.O.E. was the organization which was specially concerned with this type of warfare.

² Deakin, Frederick William Dampier. Born 1913. Fellow and Tutor Wadham College, Oxford 1936-49; 1939-41, Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars; seconded to Special Operations 1941. British Military Mission to Tito, May 1943.

³ Maclean, Sir Fitzroy Hew, M.P. since 1941. Born 1911. Diplomatic Service 1933. In 1939 enlisted in the Cameron Highlanders. Joined 1st S.A.S. Regiment 1942. British Mission to Yugoslavia 1943-45.

Lieut.-Colonel Armstrong was dropped six days later to add strength to the mission to Mihailovic.

At the beginning of October the Partisan forces were well equipped and had gained control, in varying degree, of over half Yugoslavia. By the end of that month Brigadier Maclean reported that their numbers had reached 220,000 organized in twenty-six divisions. They had become a serious military menace to the Germans who decided to act. In the last week of October they drove the Partisans out of Istria and from much of the Dalmatian coast, including the town of Split. From early December onwards approximately eight German and three satellite divisions took part in the Sixth Offensive which is mentioned in Chapter XV.

Meanwhile the Prime Minister had been discussing with the C.O.S. the practicability of opening ports on the Dalmatian coast so that munitions and supplies might be sent in to the Partisans by sea. The problem was an intricate one for it could not be allowed to prejudice the main effort in Italy by drawing the British into a fresh campaign. This consideration settled the matter in favour of continued support by air.

(iii)

At Quebec it had been agreed that the occupation of Sardinia and Corsica by the Allies should follow the elimination of Italy and the establishment of air bases in the Rome area. In the event it was the Germans who acted first. Their plan for dealing with an Italian collapse, put into force on 8th September, included the evacuation of all German forces in Sardinia to Corsica. Corsica itself was to be held. Maddalena and S. Teresa in Sardinia were the ports of departure, Porto Vecchio and Bonifacio the Corsican ports of entry. The Italians in control of neighbouring coastal batteries agreed not to interfere. Siebel ferries and landing-craft released after the Sicilian evacuation transported the garrison as did such barges as could be spared from carrying fuel between Leghorn and the front in Italy. *Fliegerführer* Sardinia transferred his headquarters to Ghisonaccia airfield in Corsica on the 10th and became *Fliegerführer* Corsica, and on the 11th the remaining 44 German aircraft in Sardinia, mostly F.W. 190s and Me. 109s followed. Between the 8th and 15th the Germans wrecked seven of the Sardinian airfields. Nevertheless, on the 10th, more than 50 Italian aircraft from Italy landed on other airfields and 22 of them later flew to Sicily and Tunisia to join the Allies. The remainder prepared to operate from Sardinia in support of the Allies and on the 16th five Z. 1007 bombers attacked German evacuation shipping in the Bay of Bonifacio. For the next four days the Germans retaliated with attacks on the serviceable Sardinian airfields. By 19th September 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, a

fortress brigade, and anti-aircraft and air force units, totalling 25,800 men with 4,650 vehicles, 4,765 tons of stores and numerous guns had been carried across to Corsica and evacuation was complete.

On the night of 13th/14th September an American detachment parachuted on to Decimomannu airfield and established communication with Allied H.Q.s. On the 18th two British M.G.B.s, with Brigadier-General Roosevelt representing the Supreme Allied Commander, entered Cagliari. The Italian authorities gave him a friendly reception and Sardinia was taken over in the name of the Allies.

In Corsica the German forces in occupation at the time of Italy's collapse included the Brigade Reichsführer S.S., an infantry battalion of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, two batteries of coast artillery and one of heavy Flak. On 7th September Lieut.-General von Senger und Etterlin had arrived to become the German commander. The commander of the Italian forces, General Magli, assured him that his troops would continue to fight the 'Gaullists' and that he would not oppose the evacuation of Sardinia. There were, however, an estimated 20,000 French patriots, mostly in the mountainous interior of the island whom, it was believed, many Italians would like to join.

General Giraud who feared that the French patriots might be overwhelmed, obtained General Eisenhower's agreement to send French troops to their help. Eisenhower however could offer no transport for no ship or aircraft could be spared from the Salerno battle. The solution was to use French warships and between 13th and 27th September the submarine *Casabianca*, two French destroyers and two cruisers, recalled from other duties, were the principal means by which 6,400 men and stores and vehicles were carried to Ajaccio.

Unknown to the Allies, the situation had already changed for the Germans when on 12th September Hitler ordered that Corsica, too, was to be evacuated. Fregattenkapitän von Liebenstein, known for his part in the successful evacuation of Sicily, was sent to Corsica to organize sea transport. The plan was to concentrate in the north-east of the island, using the port of Bastia and neighbouring airfields for evacuation to the Italian mainland, and to the island of Elba which the Germans had occupied. The lift by sea was to Leghorn, Piombino and Elba. Up to the 24th September the air transports operated from Ghisonaccia airfield, midway up the east coast of Corsica, to mainland airfields at Pisa, Lucca, Metato and Pratica di Mare. On the 24th the German Air Force evacuated Ghisonaccia airfield, and the operational units returned to Italy. The next day Bastia and a nearby airfield came into use for the air lift.¹ By this

¹ *Fliegerführer* Corsica transferred his H.Q.s from Corsica to Pisa in Italy and became *Fliegerführer Luftflotte 2*. He was made responsible for the air lift and for the air protection of both air and sea lifts. A fighter direction ship was positioned for the purpose.

time 'Gaullists', reinforced by the French Army units landed at Ajaccio, were close on the Germans' heels. On the night of 29th/30th September the Bastia bridgehead was penetrated but the Germans succeeded in holding on until evacuation was complete.

The evacuation, carried out with customary German efficiency, ended on the evening of 3rd October. The air lift had carried out 21,107 men and some 350 tons of stores. Fifty-five transport aircraft were lost in the process, most of them on Italian airfields from bombing, and the remainder in combat with Beaufighters of Nos. 39 and 47 Squadrons R.A.F., and Spitfires of the French Groupes de Chasse I/3 and II/7 from Ajaccio—all N.A.C.A.F. units. By sea, 6,240 troops, about 1,200 prisoners of war, over 3,200 vehicles and nearly 5,000 tons of stores had been trans-shipped.¹ Some 17,000 tons of ships and small craft were lost, chiefly to British submarines and Allied bombers including American Mitchells equipped with 75-mm cannon, attached to N.A.C.A.F. The Allies could no doubt have inflicted much more damage if they had considered it worthwhile to divert more force to this secondary task.

(iv)

In October the character of the Italian campaign began to change. Until 8th Army's entry into Foggia on 27th September and 5th Army's entry into Naples on 1st October the Allies had steadily and slowly advanced from their beachheads in Calabria and Salerno Bay against German forces whose principal object was to delay. Between October and December 1943 and until May 1944 the Allied and German forces in Italy found themselves engaged in dour, static warfare in which the brute strengths of attack and defence were pitted against one another. The Germans offered a protracted defence from coast to coast of Italy, and the Allies strove to penetrate this, in mountainous terrain on the west side, and on the east side in rugged foothills through which successive rivers flowed to the Adriatic, and in some places in mountains proper. The whole fighting on land may be called mountain warfare. Both German flanks rested upon the sea, and so amphibious warfare comes into the picture as well. It will be helpful to summarize the sequence of German and Allied policies which, with the physical features of Italy, changed the character of the campaign. The summary necessarily refers to matters which have found their place, in more detail, in earlier chapters or will find it in chapters to come. Because of the special nature of mountain warfare a short account of some of its general

¹ Statistics speak with many voices. An *OKH* figure for the total numbers evacuated by air and sea is: 30,500 men, 7,430 tons, 3,500 vehicles.

features follows the summary, as an interpretative introduction to Chapters XIII, XIV, and XVI.

The Quebec conference in August 1943 had reaffirmed that Overlord was to be the principal Anglo-American enterprise in Europe during 1944. Whatever was done in the Mediterranean before Overlord was to be directed towards ensuring Overlord's success by containing German divisions in the Mediterranean theatre, and by complementing the bombing of Germany from the United Kingdom with the bombing of southern Germany and the Balkans from Italian airfields. A lodgement was to be made in southern France to create a diversion for Overlord, while in the Balkans, apart from strategic bombing and minor raids, operations were to be limited to supplying maintenance to guerrillas by air and sea.

See Maps 13 and 20

As we have seen in Chapter IX on 12th September Hitler issued a directive for operations in Italy. Army Group 'B' and *O.B. Süd* (Kesselring) were to remain under Hitler's direct command until further orders. *O.B. Süd* was to attack the enemy at Salerno, and to concentrate all his forces for this purpose while having regard also to the forces which he required in Rome and Naples, and to maintain the link with Corsica. Whether the attack at Salerno succeeded completely or partly, the greater part of *AOK 10* was thereafter to assemble near Rome 'to clean up the countryside north of the capital'. Rearguards were to delay the Allies' advance. Army Group 'B' was to hold down northern Italy, and to find the most favourable defensive line in the Apennines, upon which defences would then be constructed.¹ Corsica was to be evacuated but Elba was to be occupied.

Salerno was lost and Naples fell, yet *OKW* noted (1st October) 'the opinion still prevails that the enemy is more likely to jump into the Balkans than to fight his way through to the north of Italy, but whether he will bring this project to execution in what remains of this year is doubtful'. Earlier, on 24th September, Hitler had agreed with opinions, expressed by Grand Admiral Dönitz at a conference, that southern Italy and its airfields should be held for as long as possible 'to block the enemy's bridge to the Balkans'. And so, on the 30th September, instructions in outline were given to Kesselring to use delaying tactics as far only as the line Gaeta-Ortona. This line

¹ The Apennine Line, as chosen by Army Group B, ran from south of Massa on the Ligurian coast to south of Rimini. In the spring of 1944 the Germans named it the Gothic Line, but in June of that year they finally rechristened it the Green Line.

would be held. German thinking followed the line that the Allies had little to gain in Italy other than the political prize of Rome, and a base from which they could wheel right into the Balkans or left into southern France. In the Balkans the Allies could help, and could be helped by, the Partisans; could deprive Germany of chrome, bauxite, and oil; could gain airfields from which to attack Austria; could promote a collapse in Bulgaria and Hungary, and could establish a cordon before the Russians overran the area. It was even possible that the Allies might bid for victory in Europe mainly by a drive through the Balkans, but accumulating intelligence of the preparations for Overlord refuted this idea. Other circumstances encouraged the view that the Allies' aims in Italy were not far-reaching. Their forces were advancing from Naples and Foggia more slowly than had been expected and the fact counted as a success for Kesselring and increased his formerly restricted credit with Hitler. Furthermore reports that assault shipping was leaving the Mediterranean for the United Kingdom reduced fears of future large Allied descents upon the coasts of Italy.

On 4th October Hitler issued a formal general directive for the Italian theatre, beginning 'I expect that the enemy will direct his main operations from Italy against the south-eastern theatre, possibly also using some forces from Africa'. It was not yet clear, however, whether the Allies would turn from southern Italy towards Albania, Montenegro and southern Dalmatia, or would first try to push the German forces further north in order to acquire a jump-off base in central Italy for an attack on northern Dalmatia and Istria. Therefore *OB Süd* must use only delaying tactics as far as the Gaeta-Ortona line. This line was to be held. Time to organize its defence must be won by delaying engagements forward of the line. Should the enemy not continue his attack northwards, or push forward only weak forces in order to turn against the Balkans while still south of the main defence line, *OB Süd* was to prepare a plan for an offensive against Apulia. He was to report what additional ground and air forces, and supplies he would require, and the time needed for regrouping.

On 22nd October Kesselring submitted a list of reinforcements which he would require for an operation in Apulia. These amounted to six divisions and a large number of air units. The demand was so large that the project was shelved.

The functions of Army Group 'B' were defined in Hitler's directive as:

- (a) To pacify the Army's territory, using as strong forces as possible to crush the insurgents in Istria and Slovenia.
- (b) To protect the L. of C., and the coastal flanks of *OB Süd* in depth.

- (c) To organize the defences of northern Italy. A position was to be reconnoitred and established in the Apennines, and along the adjacent coasts, especially of Liguria.

The *Kriegsmarine* was to support military operations in every way possible, particularly by preventing enemy landings behind the German front. Coastal shipping was to be maintained and protected, because it would become a decisively important factor if the enemy should largely succeed in breaking rail communications. Although attacks on enemy shipping were to continue to be the main pre-occupation of the *Luftwaffe* in Italy, German naval units also were to join in this task. The German Air Force must support ground operations, 'at least when the enemy was strongly on the offensive', and protect the main routes for supply and retreat.

There is little doubt that up to a date between 17th and 24th October Hitler intended to make Rommel the principal commander in Italy. Rommel himself, and apparently Jodl too, expected this appointment immediately. Quite what made Hitler change his mind we do not know. Perhaps Rommel seemed to have too little optimism, whereas Kesselring had plenty. Perhaps Kesselring's success in delaying the Allies in the south was influencing Hitler in his favour. Whatever the cause, Kesselring was interviewed by Hitler on 24th October and on 6th November it was announced that he was to be the commander of all German forces in Italy. His command was renamed Army Group 'C', to include *AOK 10* in the south and a new *AOK 14* (General von Mackensen) in the north.¹ On 21st November Kesselring took up his new appointment (*OB Südwest*).

On 6th November Rommel was given a special appointment, under Hitler's direct command, to study the defence of the German-occupied coasts of western Europe and to prepare operational plans against invasion. It was to be his fate to have no opportunity in Italy to enhance the renown which he had won in Africa.

Brief mention must be made of the political and administrative side of affairs in Italy. After his rescue from the Gran Sasso on 12th September, Mussolini flew to Germany to discuss with Hitler the setting up of a new Fascist Government. Hitler's political and military advisers in Italy disliked the idea, but the Führer decided to permit it, and after announcements had been made on 23rd September a government of sorts was, by 10th October, established at Salò on the western shores of Lake Garda. Three days later Badoglio's government declared war on Germany, but by that time Italy's

¹ Colonel-General Eberhard von Mackensen had previously commanded 1st Panzer Army in Russia.

vassalage to her former ally was complete, as measures to ensure that her economy worked entirely for Germany's benefit had been introduced even before Mussolini was rescued. On 10th September a cumbersome para-military organization came into being to administer the parts of Italy which were not under direct military control. German Military Governors were appointed for the northern frontier provinces of Venezia Giulia and Alto Adige, where two Gauleiters controlled civil administration. Kesselring, then *O.B. Süd*, had plenary powers in central and German-held southern Italy. The rest of the country was designated 'occupied territory' and was administered by a German Military Governor, General Toussaint, and a horde of agencies. Political relations with the nascent Fascist government were confided to Rudolf Rahn who had replaced the former Ambassador, von Mackensen. Himmler's Chief of Staff, S.S. General Wolff, was sent to Italy as senior S.S. Police Commander, to 'advise on police matters' including raising Italian police units to serve under his command.

By the end of November Hitler and his entourage believed that the Allies would be unlikely to make Italy the springboard for invasion of the Balkans. German policy for Italy remained as defined in Hitler's directive of 4th October with such changes in detail as the tactical situation seemed to demand from time to time. The object was protracted defence of the deep barrier across Italy which became known as the Winter Line.

(v)

The broad object of the Allied forces in Italy remained, during the period of our summary, as defined by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 17th August:

'First phase. The elimination of Italy as a belligerent and establishment of air bases in the Rome area, and if feasible, farther north'.¹ When Foggia had been entered and the fall of Naples seemed imminent, Alexander, on 29th September, directed his armies to capture first the general line Termoli-Sessa Aurunca, and thereafter S. Benedetto-Terni-Civitavecchia. He had in mind also, but did not specify, small amphibious operations. The Allies did not know as yet of the change in German thinking which led Hitler to order a stand south of Rome. They assumed that the Germans intended to with-

¹ The Badoglio Government was granted the status of a co-belligerent with the Allies after it declared war upon Germany on 13th October 1943.

draw gradually up the leg of Italy, and the disadvantage of following them was obvious. The build-up of the Allied Forces would become increasingly difficult. Even had the Allies possessed abundant shipping they could not expect to rival by sea the German build-up by rail and road, because in Italy there were no large ports in convenient places, and moreover the oncoming winter weather would lessen the Allies' power to damage the German L. of C. by air action. If the Germans withdrew far enough—for instance to the Alpine foothills—they might end by containing the Allies.

As October drew on the German change of plan became apparent and was not altogether unwelcome. The Allies' task in Italy was to contain there as many German divisions as possible for at least another ten months, that is until about two months after the landing in France. It looked as if hard and prolonged fighting lay ahead which would do much to contain large German forces. Yet the disadvantages mentioned in the preceding paragraph were having some effect and seemed likely to increase. On 21st October Alexander reviewed the situation in a paper for discussion at meetings between Eisenhower and his Commanders-in-Chief, held at La Marsa on 24th October, and on 3rd and 8th November. The paper stated that in southern Italy eleven Allied divisions were opposing nine German who were in a position eminently suited for defence. In the north were a further fourteen German divisions, and so there was a total of twenty-three and perhaps more to the Allied eleven. In mid-September the estimated comparison had been eighteen German to thirteen Allied. The Allied rate of build-up offered a maximum of sixteen to seventeen divisions by the end of January 1944. Deliveries of vehicles in Italy, formerly estimated at 1,300 a day, had fallen to 2,000 a week with a consequent delay in the deployment of Air and Army formations.

Before continuing this summary it is interesting to use our after-knowledge to notice some matters relating to Orders of Battle that were not known to the opposing commanders in the Mediterranean in the winter of 1943, and were perhaps not even surmised by them.

The dominant fact in the German situation was the never-ending strain of the Eastern or Russian front, coupled with the size of the garrisons in Europe. The outline distribution of the German Army on 4th October 1943 was:

Eastern Front	163 German Divisions.
Scandinavian Countries	17 German Divisions.
In the Reich	2 Reserve Divisions,
	31 Replacement Divisions.
France and the Low	34 German Divisions.
Countries	
Balkans	13 German Divisions.

Northern Italy (Army Group B)	9 German Divisions of which 3 were to leave for Russia and 2 for southern Italy by the end of October. Two divisions were to be received from France.
Southern Italy (AOK 10)	8 German Divisions plus two from Northern Italy by the end of October.

OKH never ceased its struggle to find manpower for the Eastern Front, and on 3rd November Hitler issued a directive which stated that although 'the danger in the East remained' the greater one of an Anglo-American landing was now looming up in the west. As this did not check the flow of changing appreciations and forecasts the Western theatre's new priority was at first more apparent than real, but the pillaging of von Rundstedt's forces was halted and thus the deployment of German formations in and outside Europe was the subject of continual juggling, both in fact and on paper. The constant chop and change makes it impossible to find statistics at the dates which would best illustrate our summary. But some which fall within its period cast some light. During September German casualties in Russia were about 126,000 and in southern Italy about 8,560, or a proportion of 14 to 1. In early November the strength of Army Group 'B' and *AOK 10* was about 269,960. In contrast, at the same period *O.B. West* disposed of about 1,370,000 men (46 $\frac{2}{3}$ divisions) and there were about 2,850,000 men on the Eastern front (172 divisions). In early January 1944 there were nearly 22 German divisions in Italy.

On the other hand German Intelligence, on 30th November, believed that there were on Italian soil 21 Allied divisions, and parts of three airborne divisions, and that there were other battle-worthy formations ready elsewhere in the Mediterranean theatre. In January 1944 estimates of Allied divisions in Italy became variable and wild, from 24 to 33 $\frac{2}{3}$ with a mean of 25 $\frac{2}{3}$.

Each side exaggerated the other's strength and capabilities. The Allies overestimated the ease with which the Germans could reinforce Italy from other theatres, and relieve and rest their formations in Italy by local programmes. The Germans in particular did not realize that many of the uncommitted Allied divisions in the Mediterranean theatre were short of equipment or training or were even almost 'paper' formations.¹

To resume our summary. The deliberations at La Marsa resulted in Eisenhower issuing on 8th November a directive which set the

¹ A theoretical Allied calculation of the capacity of the German L. of C. found that it could maintain up to 60 divisions in Italy.

German Order-of-Battle work was not impressive. It was not until January that 'I' picked up, from a garrulous and too well-informed British prisoner, a reliable clue to the departure of 50th, 51st and 7th Armoured Divisions from the Mediterranean. Aberrant speculations were indulged, as when at the end of December Jodl put to Hitler the theory that the changes of high Allied commanders—Eisenhower to Overlord, to be replaced by Wilson and so on—were a gigantic hoax.

pattern of the Allied campaign in Italy during the next eight months. The relevant paragraphs read:

'1. In A.F.H.Q., Subject: "Operations on Italian Mainland", dated 25th September 1943 you were instructed to secure Rome and later to develop maximum pressure on the enemy. It has since become apparent that the enemy intends to resist our occupation of Southern Italy to a greater degree than hitherto contemplated. Moreover, he is systematically devastating the country by the destruction of communications and of all installations which might be of any use to us. We are, therefore, faced with a very heavy engineering commitment to restore communications. Initially, this must be on a minimum scale sufficient to enable our forces to advance as quickly as possible to secure Rome. Later it must be on a more comprehensive scale to enable us to maintain large forces sufficient to attack the enemy in North Italy and in Central Europe.

2. The first step is to secure Rome and during this phase of operations our limited resources will be allotted primarily to building up in Italy our land forces and such air forces as are specifically required to assist them in securing Rome. Priority in the build-up must be so arranged that 6 heavy bombardment groups of the Strategic Air Force will be in Italy and operable by 31.12.43. These heavy bomber groups are for use primarily in connection with "Pointblank" but may be diverted from that purpose should the situation in Italy so require.¹ Apart from these 6 heavy bombardment groups build up of air forces will be governed solely by the requirements of our immediate objective, a position covering Rome. A high priority must be given OSS/SOE for movement of personnel, vehicles and stores necessary for ops in the Balkans.

3. To secure Rome we must occupy a general line to include Civitavecchia and Terni. Sufficient depth will be required to assure the use of Civitavecchia as a port. Having occupied this general line, we will have to pause in order:

- (a) To reorganize and regroup our forces.
- (b) Thoroughly to repair communications and reserves in the forward area adequate for a further big advance.
- (c) To establish further heavy bomber forces in Italy for operations against Central Europe.'

Alexander had included in his paper of October a new plan of campaign which Eisenhower had approved. Alexander therefore was able, also on 8th November, to issue a directive for operations in three phases.

¹ 'Pointblank' was the code-name of the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany from the United Kingdom.

See Maps 20 and 27

First: 8th Army was to get astride the lateral road Pescara–Popoli–Collarmente, and then through Avezzano threaten the L. of C. of the enemy facing 5th Army.

Second: 5th Army was to attack up the valley of the Liri and Sacco rivers to reach Frosinone.

Third: When Frosinone had been reached a sea-borne landing would be made south of Rome, directed against the Alban hills.

A glance at the map will show that this plan committed 15th Army Group to what we have called mountain warfare. The earlier version of Alexander's plan included two sea-borne descents: by a brigade on the east coast and by a division on the west coast. But assault shipping was so scarce that it seemed that if there were to be two operations they would have to be successive, to enable the same assault craft to be used in both. And so there opened a great debate on the availability of assault shipping in the Mediterranean and other theatres. This requires a digression.

Since September landing-ships and craft had been in great demand both to supply and strengthen the forces in Italy. Moreover since the campaign in Italy aimed not only at containing German divisions but also at complementing the Combined Bomber Offensive, the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force was to be formed in Italy. Therefore it would be necessary to transfer to the airfields near Foggia no less than six groups of heavy bombers, consisting of some 290 aircraft. It was desired at first to complete this move by the end of October. Two long-range fighter escort groups and half an air reconnaissance group would also be required. And because the Foggia airfields were not all-weather, a great amount of bulky steel planking had to be brought in. As if the commitments for the new Air Force were not enough, the Americans decided to transfer numbers of their bombers, already operating from the United Kingdom, to Italy in the hope of reducing the rate of casualties incurred in the well-guarded approaches to Germany from the West. The new U.S. Fifteenth Air Force was to take over a strategic air role under Northwest African Air Forces.¹ It would absorb U.S. XII Bomber Command (the backbone of Northwest African Strategic Air Force) and be reinforced, until at the end of March 1944 it would consist of twenty-one heavy bomber groups, seven long-range fighter escort groups and an air reconnaissance group. A large part of these were to be in Italy by the end of December 1943. The shipping required for the twenty-one heavy bomber groups alone was rather more than the amount

¹ The U.S. Twelfth Air Force was to become a tactical air force.

required for two divisions of troops, while their maintenance demanded nearly as much as that of the 8th Army. The strategic advantage which would result from this gigantic transfer was weighed against its effects on the campaign in Italy. The decision was to make the transfer more slowly. Only the first six heavy bomber groups were to be brought into Italy by the end of 1943.

Besides all the transport needed to carry army and air requirements into Italy, ships and craft had to be found to withdraw seven divisions from the Mediterranean theatre by the end of November, as agreed at the Washington Conference. The provisions for Overlord made at Washington and at Quebec meant that in the third week of October the Mediterranean was to lose 80% of its L.S.T. and L.S.I., and two-thirds of its landing-craft, within the next six weeks. The programme for L.S.T. was as follows:

British: 12 to leave for the United Kingdom on 12th November.
 12 on 22nd November.
 16 on 2nd December.
 16 on 12th December.
 Total 56

American: 12 to leave for the United Kingdom on 2nd November.
 12 on 12th November.
 24 on 22nd November.
 Total 48

On 31st October, General Eisenhower summed up his views to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The critical consideration in Mediterranean plans was the fate of the assault ships and craft. These had three immediate tasks: the build-up of auxiliary units to complete formations already in Italy; an assault behind the enemy line, probably on the west coast, by at least one division; and meeting the demands of the existing Strategic Air Force and of the proposed increases in this Force. With the present numbers of L.S.T. in the Mediterranean, and if the programme for returning ships and craft to the United Kingdom was kept, the first of these tasks could be complete by 15th December, but there would remain only sufficient to mount an amphibious assault by one brigade. This was too weak. If, however, all the British L.S.T. and 12 of the American now due to return to the United Kingdom could be held until 15th December, the build-up, a divisional amphibious assault, and approximately one-third of the lift for the air forces could be completed. These L.S.T. could then reach the United Kingdom by the beginning of February. By holding them for an additional three weeks, that is until 5th January, all three tasks could be completed and all the

L.S.T. earmarked to return to the United Kingdom could arrive there between the last week in January and the end of February.¹

Eisenhower's views were sympathetically received in London. The Chiefs of Staff, mentioning no dates, urged their American colleagues to allow Eisenhower the free use of such assault shipping as he needed to carry on his operations vigorously. The Prime Minister backed up his Chiefs of Staff with a message to the President. The Americans, who were affected to the extent of 12 L.S.T., at once agreed that all 68 should stay, but only until 15th December. This date was not, however, taken by the Chiefs of Staff as their colleagues' last word and on 9th November Sir Alan Brooke instructed Alexander, privately, to plan on the assumption that the L.S.T. would remain in the Mediterranean until 15th January. This was the date, ten days later than that given by Eisenhower, which Alexander calculated was necessary if the whole programme was to be completed.

It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the landing-ships for months to come would be the first consideration in discussing whether a proposed operation was practicable. Moreover the Americans could never find in their hearts assurance that the British were really in earnest about Overlord almost until that operation began. Each demand from the Mediterranean for more landing-ships, or for a delay in releasing those already there, and the usual support for these requests in the highest British quarters, served to increase their doubts of British sincerity. And yet the confidence which each Ally had in the other, common sense, and painful accommodation to actualities, in the end resolved each problem.

By the end of 1943, as will appear from Chapters XIII and XIV, Alexander's forces were far from achieving the objectives set in his directive of 8th November. The 8th Army was nowhere near the Pescara-Collarmele road, and the 5th Army was nowhere near Frosinone. The Armies' short advances, coupled with the shortage of assault shipping, had made the proposed landing of a single division near Anzio seem too weak to be anything but a hazardous enterprise which would have little effect. The landing was therefore cancelled. Plans were in the melting pot once more although the general Allied object of advancing to Rome was unchanged. On Christmas Day 1943 Mr. Churchill presided at a conference in Carthage from which a new plan emerged. This was for a renewed

¹ The L.S.T.(2) although never able to meet all requirements, was the nearest approach to the perfect maid-of-all work among the numerous types of landing ship and craft. For maintenance in the Italian campaign it had the advantage over the regular merchant ship of requiring neither crane, derrick or even wharf and as a consequence its turn round was speedy. It was a sturdy vessel at sea, designed for an Atlantic crossing, and it could discharge on to a fairly wide range of beach gradients, though not on to flat beaches.

offensive by 5th Army towards Frosinone coupled with a landing by two divisions near Anzio. 8th Army was to press its opponents hard enough to prevent German troops being transferred from the east coast to reinforce those on the west coast. The great hope was that the force to be landed near Anzio, which was to be twice as strong as that in the landing which had been cancelled, would cut the communications of the German troops which faced 5th Army. This circumstance, with 5th Army's renewed offensive and 8th Army's containing pressure, would, it was hoped, bring the battle for Rome to a climax within about ten days.

(vi)

Mountain warfare faced the Allied and German forces in Italy with tactical and administrative problems which, in the winter of 1943-44, they were poorly qualified to overcome. It is platitudinous but necessary to say that most of the peculiar problems, difficulties and demands that mountain warfare presents arise from the obstacles which high and rugged mountains oppose to movement. Good roads which pass through a mountainous tract are usually few; side roads are as a rule scarce and poor or non-existent; and off the roads steep and rough ascents and descents, and broken and serrated ridges tax the physical strength and endurance of men to the limits.

The British, American, and German forces were large, plentifully supplied with heavy weapons and equipment, light automatic weapons and fighting vehicles. They were almost wholly dependent on motor transport. In short they were designed for warfare 'on the flat', and there was no reason why they should have been anything else in view of the ideas of warfare formed by the General Staffs of European, highly industrialized countries between the wars. Desert, jungle, and mountain warfare were then regarded as aberrations. An exception was formed by the Indian Army formations serving in Italy which included the 4th and 8th Indian Divisions and later the 10th Indian Division. These divisions were composed largely of countrymen from hill regions who were accustomed to terrain and conditions similar in many ways to the Apennines and they were commanded and officered by men whose training and experience had been patterned on the constantly recurring campaigns on the North West Frontier of India. But to the commanders and troops of the British Army mountain warfare was an aberration and there was no familiar animating and guiding doctrine on which to function. This applied particularly to war-raised units.¹ The pre-war American

¹ The official manual relating to mountain warfare operations compiled by the General Staff in India and named 'Frontier Warfare India (Army and Royal Air Force)' was almost unknown, and certainly unstudied, by officers of the British Service and although

army had little reason or occasion to study mountain warfare. The Germans had paid attention to Alpine warfare to the extent of having some mountain troops but these, in Italy, did little to deserve their title. The troops on both sides—we are not considering Indian and French North African units—were almost entirely men bred in cities and villages of the plain, and accustomed to the office and the factory or to farmlands where Nature had been tamed.

These very generally stated characteristics of the combatants had consequences, some of which may be stated as generally.

British and American commanders, from the highest down to brigade commanders, faced the perhaps insoluble problem of adapting their heavily equipped, highly mechanized, road-bound formations to the offensive in wild, lofty, and almost roadless mountains. The Germans, although no more suitably organized for mountain warfare than the Allies, enjoyed the advantages of the defensive which is in mountains a stronger (in the Clausewitzian sense of the adjective) and easier form of war than the offensive. The British and American commanders, oppressed by their problem, seem—if their plans truly reflect all their thoughts—not to have imaginatively considered how they could turn mountains to their advantage. As practical, busy men they looked upon mountains as total obstacles to be avoided, or as local tactical obstacles which must be overcome before their main tactical plans could proceed. These main plans were always for thrusts in great force along the 'good' passages, which were obvious to such admirable soldiers as were the Germans. As things turned out, these passages never afforded room to manoeuvre to the large forces committed to them, and were heavily defended. British and American commanders, it seems, did not share the beliefs of Juin, of whom it has been written that, during a visit to Italy in October ' . . . He then grasped that, in this rugged peninsula, the era of large tank-thrusts was over, and that the solution lay in the mountains . . .'¹

Mountain warfare makes, we have suggested, extreme demands upon the initiative, strength, endurance and 'know-how' of regimental officers and men. Some reasons for these demands lie in ground varying from rough to frightful, which yet offers great advantages to those who know how to use it; and the difficulties of directing and

mountain warfare was taken seriously at the Indian Staff College, at the Camberley Staff College it was not tackled except as a sideline.

¹ Colonel Goutard, *Le Corps Expéditionnaire Français dans la Campagne d'Italie*, Charles Lavauzelle et Cie, Paris 1947, p. 32. ' . . . Il avait alors compris que, dans cette péninsule tourmentée l'ère des grandes poussées de chars était close, et que la solution était dans la montagne.'

Juin advocated the very difficult approach via Atina and Arce to the rear of the Gustav Line. It is true that Juin had not the care of an army on his shoulders, and his solution may have been the easier to propose for this reason. Yet the commander and the staff of *AOK 10* believed an approach in strength from this direction to be sufficiently practicable to form a dangerous threat.

controlling small units by voice, by visual, line, or wireless signals. Higher commanders cannot control action in such circumstances. The soldiers, singly or in small parties, have continually to act for themselves. British and American troops had gained knowledge in Tunisia and Sicily and were gaining more in Italy, yet study of the fighting in Italy gives a clear impression that most were as yet novices in mountain warfare. These men from the cities and villages of the plain were suddenly obliged to live and fight in surroundings which were wholly unfamiliar and which seemed implacably hostile, the more so because of the dreadful weather of the winter of 1943-44. These soldiers were little prepared by upbringing or training to master the problems. They did not possess the born hillman's eye for the best way up, down, or across a mountain, nor had they the hillman's acquired knowledge of where the traps, hazards and impossibilities of the ground were likely to lie. They did not possess the hillman's activity upon a mountain born of his power to hasten slowly upwards and to bound downwards like a falling boulder. They had painfully to acquire physical endurance to match their harsh surroundings, and the power to be physically and mentally active on an allowance of food, water, shelter and warmth which was much shorter than that customary in their civilian and military lives. All this and much more besides could not be learned in a moment. For an example of the more, whatever the men had learned in theory or in practice, on flat training grounds, of fighting (an occupation which was in any case not normal among civilized men) had to be adapted to very different circumstances. Courses at Schools of Mountain Warfare were too short and artificial to help very much (and by no means all units passed through these schools), and may indeed have simply increased the students' natural dislike and suspicion of the heights.

The tactics of Italian mountain warfare during the winter of 1943/44 must be mentioned, however selectively and shortly.

The Allies and the Germans, to all intents equally matched in strength, fought on a front of about ninety miles. Both flanks of the German positions rested on the sea and could not be turned except by large sea-borne forces. At this stage assault shipping for these large forces was not to be had. German defences in depth covered the main routes through the mountains and elsewhere the mountains themselves formed natural, strong defences. And so the major tactics of the Allies became, willy-nilly, a head-on battering.

The mountainous terrain caused the battering to be mainly infantry work: long slogging on foot up slopes and crests and along ridges, and actions fought by small units spread over and among these features. All this occurred increasingly within a larger framework of set-piece attacks upon prepared positions. In these positions

the Germans made the best use of the deadly fire-power of light automatic weapons and mortars securely placed in good cover. The assaulting infantry suffered in being few in numbers in ground which demanded large numbers because it was so 'big' that it swallowed men, and because its irregularities paradoxically offered many opportunities to outflank, to infiltrate and to envelop to infantry numerous enough (and skilful enough) to take them. But as things were, for example, half the numbers of an infantry battalion on British establishments were 'specialists'—signallers, mortar-men, anti-tank gunners, carrier-crews, administrative—who normally did not assault.

The supporting arms therefore became ever more important in helping the infantry, thin on the ground, upwards and onwards. The Allies had plenty of guns and artillery support became lavish. Yet its effects were not in proportion because crests and ridges are not favourable targets for saturation, and because pin-point targets in good cover so often escape destruction or neutralization. Vast artillery programmes, moreover, consumed vast amounts of ammunition and to bring these quantities to the guns in mountainous country was a difficult business.¹ There were other disadvantages. Heavy artillery support required a long time to arrange and infantry readily became unwilling to try to advance without it. And so the tempo of attacks grew slower and momentum spasmodic. Tanks were of little help because the ground denied them their mobile role and forced upon them the role of self-propelled guns. When, later, they were used to attempt a break-through, want of space to deploy reduced them to an immobile, armoured mass. Direct support from the air suffered much the same disadvantages as the artillery.

Finally, deserving a singular, bad pre-eminence, there was the appalling weather. There is evidence that careful studies were made of the weather usual in central Italy during autumn and winter. But the results of the studies were presented in statistical tables which the meteorologists themselves warned might be misleading. It is probable that superior commanders and staffs, in planning, did not take sufficient account of the weather as a tactical factor.

This slight sketch of a large subject may do something to explain why Mr. Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff were, by December 1943, speaking of 'stagnation' in Italy. It was a natural, but too harsh and superficial, a word to describe a phase of slow, gruelling fighting which was almost unavoidable, given the contemporary military circumstances.

¹ Between October 1942 and May 1943 the British armies in Africa expended about 10,000 tons of artillery ammunition per month. In Italy the British armies expended 22,000 tons per month between October–December 1943.

Sorties flown by N.A.A.F., Malta Air Command and M.E.A.C. in searching for and attacking enemy ships (including submarines) at sea and against enemy ports during June-October 1943

Month	Target	N.A.A.F.		Malta	M.E.A.C.		Totals on targets on each month
		R.A.F., F.A.A. and U.S.A.A.F.	R.A.F., F.A.A. and U.S.A.A.F.	R.A.F., F.A.A. and U.S.A.A.F.	R.A.F., F.A.A. and U.S.A.A.F.		
June	Ships at sea	1,158	359		1,173		2,690
	Ports { Loading Unloading	235	11		268		514
July	Ships at sea	712	57		303		1,072
	Ports { Loading Unloading	2,015	661		1,241		3,917
August	Ships at sea	93	11		237		341
	Ports { Loading Unloading	831	4		333		1,168
September	Ships at sea	1,535*	353		1,184		3,072
	Ports { Loading Unloading	197	1		204		402
October	All Ports (from dusk 17th August)	563	—		13		576
	Ships at sea	437†	N/A		N/A		437
October	All Ports	1,141‡	385§		1,273		2,799
	Ships at sea	293†	—		36†		329
October	All Ports	1,222¶	353¶		1,099		2,674
	All Ports	194†	—		89†		283
Totals: June-October 1943							
Ships at sea		7,071	2,111		5,970		15,152
All Ports		3,555	84		1,483		5,122
Grand Totals		10,626	2,195		7,453		20,274

* Does not include 1,200 sorties flown against evacuation shipping. These are included in Table at end of Chapter V.
 † It is impossible to segregate attacks on loading and unloading ports by N.A.A.F. during dusk 17th-31st August and by N.A.A.F. and M.E.A.C. during September and October.

‡ Includes sea reconnaissance for 1st-11th September only—thereafter these sorties are unknown.

§ Includes sea reconnaissance for 1st-25th September only—thereafter these sorties are unknown.

¶ Sea reconnaissance sorties are unknown—most probably included in this total.

Note The sorties flown by N.A.A.F. from 11th/12th September onwards have been arrived at by deduction from a variety of sources, some contradictory, but they are considered reasonably accurate for our purpose.

CHAPTER XII
THE
BRITISH ADMINISTRATIVE
BACKGROUND IN ITALY
(September 1943 to April 1944)

(i)

IT is impossible for one chapter to contain a full account of the administration of the Allied forces in Italy during the period from September 1943 to about April 1944. The subject is too large, and is also too intricate for a summary. This chapter therefore attempts no more than to give a general account of some matters which will illustrate the Italian campaign's administrative side, and this side's growth from beginnings, through early troubles which were no fault of the administrative staffs and services, to the threshold of efficient maturity. We have no space to describe in detail the administrative systems of the various contingents of Allied troops.¹ The systems, for example, of the principal Allies, the Americans and British, differed irreconcilably in many matters, one reason being that many differences were rooted in each country's law. In general, separate but parallel American and British administrative staffs worked the separate national systems. British or American officers were appointed to certain positions to co-ordinate, and were assisted where possible by a combined administrative staff. A good example is the Chief Administrative Officer at Allied Force Headquarters. Major-General H. M. Gale (who became Lieutenant-General Sir Humfrey in 1943) was appointed to this office on 15th September 1942 in preparation for the Allied expedition to French North Africa, and continued to hold it. Our account therefore usually touches on American and British administration at points of co-ordination alone.

¹ The word 'troops' is here used to cover land, air and sea forces. Troops of the following main nationalities served ultimately in Italy:

- (i) *American.*
- (ii) *British:* United Kingdom; Australian; Canadian; New Zealand; South African; Indian; Ceylonese; Mauritian; West African; Cypriot.
- (iii) *Palestinian.*
- (iv) *French:* French; North African; Senegalese.
- (v) *Polish.*
- (vi) *Belgian; Brazilian; Greek; Yugoslavian; Italian (co-belligerent).*

Because this is a British history we restrict our account in general to the maintenance of British land forces because those were larger than British air or naval forces.¹ Moreover much ground in administration was common to the Army and the Royal Air Force, and because the Army was a 'land animal' it performed the greater share of the common administrative functions. Naval administration had almost no common ground with that of the land and air forces because, to give some of many reasons, warships were neat administrative units, not many in number or types; carried stores sufficient for long periods, and could be replenished from long-standing installations in long-standing naval bases. The Fleet-train had not yet returned to the Royal Navy.² Naval administration therefore finds no place in this chapter.

We consider therefore:

- The relation between operational and administrative plans.
- The development of administrative control in Italy.
- The place of the Middle East Base and of the North African Base in the administrative scene.
- The creation of the British Italy Base.
- Selected problems—sea-convoys, reinforcements, supply of ammunition and of vehicles.

These problems, and the matters touched upon in earlier sections of the chapter may illustrate the size and scope of administrative activities.

The administration of modern forces means nothing less than to supply all the needs of a military community. It resembles a vast business organization but differs from such a thing in the great scope and extreme variety of its interests. At one end of the scale it may be concerned with every detail of the lives of men and women who, during World War II amounted to at least a quarter of the United Kingdom's manpower, at the other with the rations of a guinea-pig in a hospital's laboratory. But always the chief purpose of administra-

¹ We understand 'maintenance' in its most general sense, that is of keeping a force in the field complete in personnel, material, and in animals when necessary. Terminology is one of the causes of the intricacy of administration as a subject of general description. 'Maintenance', in the Royal Air Force's terminology, meant the supply, servicing, repair, overhaul, holding, distribution, and salvage of aircraft and mechanical transport.

It is difficult for several reasons to compare numbers precisely. In March 1944 the ration strengths in Italy were:

British Army, including Commonwealth and Polish troops	559,899
Indian Army	50,842
Royal Navy	10,236
Royal Air Force	47,466

² While Alexandria, for example, cannot strictly be described as 'long-standing', it had a certain permanency which was wanting in the land forces' advanced and forward bases and maintenance areas. The Fleet-train in the Royal Navy may be said to have appeared in the support of the squadrons which blockaded the western coasts of France and Spain during 18th Century wars. The establishment of British naval bases in all parts of the globe shelved the Fleet-train until late in World War II.

tion, in whatever forms it may take, is to keep the fighting men in health and efficiency.

In theory a Supreme Commander or a Commander-in-Chief, when he had received from his superiors the directive for a campaign, might begin to plan in the following way. Helped by his operational and administrative staffs, he would make an outline plan which would state, amongst other matters, the objective of his forces, the size and composition of those forces, and the phases of the campaign and the timing of each. The staffs, guided and controlled from time to time by their commander's further decisions, would then plan in detail an operation or a series of operations to fulfil his intentions. As a result the operational and administrative plans would run abreast from the beginning, and the administrative staff would be in a position at any stage to produce, in good time, a reasonably cut-and-dried administrative counterpart of the operational plan. Planning the invasion of Italy could not conform to this ideal scheme.

As related in Chapter VI five main plans of operations in the Mediterranean emerged from the Washington conference in May, 1943, the Quebec conference in August, and from the ensuing and almost continuous deliberations at lower levels. In July Eisenhower and his subordinates were planning no less than seven operations. All the plans, on the administrative side, competed in one way or another for scarce resources. No one could decide which operational plan or combination of plans would be used because the problem of invading the Italian mainland or the Mediterranean islands bristled with unknowns to which on-going events alone could give values. It was not until 16th August that Eisenhower was able to decide to land in the 'Toe' of Italy and also in Salerno Bay during the first nine days of September. It was not until the last week of August that he was able to fix dates for the operations. Even then he did not know for certain upon what resources, other than his own, he could count. His superiors were unable until 17th August to point to Rome or perhaps an area north of it as possible objectives of the Allied forces. The first firm operational plan could not look further ahead than to an advance to the Catanzaro 'neck' in Calabria and to the capture of Naples.

Because a main concern of administration is to deliver particular men and material to particular places by certain dates, and because this business takes much time to arrange, the uncertainties which clouded the beginnings of the campaign in Italy set frightful problems for the administrative staffs. In mid-July the Mediterranean Joint Planning Staff wrote the first administrative appreciation. At this time operational thinking was of a force of about thirteen

divisions and one hundred and twenty squadrons of aircraft, a formidable administrative commitment.¹ The planning staffs soon concluded that if southern Italy was to be the scene of operations the land force could not exceed six divisions because there were only four ports in Italy's 'Toe', because roads there were poor, and because transport was not plentiful. If larger forces were desirable for operations in Italy, the capture of the ports in the 'Heel' and at Naples was prerequisite. Until these ports had been captured and were working, maintenance of the forces in Italy would have to be from North African and Middle East bases. Yet as regards the prerequisite it seemed that the use of the Heel ports was no more than a possibility, and so far as could be foreseen Naples would become the sole base in Italy of the Allied forces. As time went on, and the operational concept developed, so the proposed commitments increased while administrative resources remained much the same, and time in which to augment them grew less. In mid-August Eisenhower thought that he would have to use ten divisions in the invasion and then build up to a total of twenty in the spring of 1944. As regards air forces it was not until the third week in October that the programme became reasonably firm. Up to that point the plan had been to place 86½ squadrons (37 British, 49½ American) in Italy by 1st November, but now the total was increased to 145 squadrons by 1st December 1943.

These considerations of the broadest features of the campaign in Italy—the size of forces, the shape of the campaign, the time-factor—show that it was impossible to frame a cut-and-dried administrative plan before the invasion began. Indeed administrative plans could be only 'ad hoc' until October. A change to firmer plans became possible when on 21st September Alexander, with the successful battle at Salerno behind him, was able to forecast an advance in four phases to capture Leghorn, Florence, and Arezzo by 30th November 1943. But even then very important questions, such as which ports were to be base ports and where bases were to be, could not be settled. Meanwhile the want of firm plans had caused some very odd administrative situations. To give one only, Sir Brian Robertson, the head of 8th Army's administrative staffs, on 9th September, one week after the landings in Calabria, could not know what formations would be in what places by mid-October; and could specify the ports of destination for imminent sea-convoys

1 For maintenance:	<i>tons per day</i>
(i) A British Division required	650
(ii) An American Division required	760
(iii) A squadron of the air force	25
(iv) Reserves for (i) to (iii)	350
	<u>1,785</u>

of maintenance supplies and stores only as: a deep-water port which might be Taranto; another port in Apulia, or perhaps the port of Naples; a coaster-port which might be Reggio or Crotone; and Syracuse or Catania in Sicily.

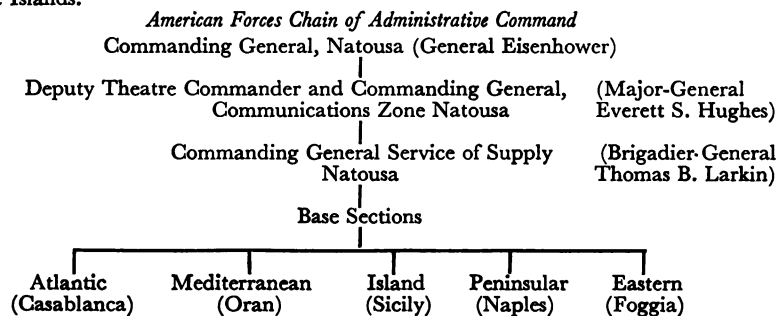
(ii)

When the operational plan is made in good time and is firm as regards imminent operations and reasonably firm as regards more remote operations, there is no difficulty in making that part of the parallel administrative plan which deals with administrative control. In British practice in 1943 this control was exercised by the highest commander through his administrative staffs and heads of services. Control then passed downwards through a chain of subordinate commanders and their administrative staffs which included representatives of services. Control took the visible shape of a number of areas and sub-areas, each equipped with suitable administrative units and installations, laid down between the base and the forward troops.¹ Well known general principles and methods for laying down the areas and sub-areas existed, and the task could be planned in advance and performed in tidy stages.

This desirable state of affairs did not exist before or during the invasion of Italy and during the early part of the campaign that followed. Among many reasons, one was that the Combined Chiefs of Staff had produced no general plan; another, that Eisenhower had been able to produce only plans for the very near future and these very late in the day; a third, that no G.H.Q., specific to operations in Italy, had been set up. There was the complication that British and American systems of administrative control differed.² Therefore

¹ Once again terminology is confusing. In 1942-43 the term 'District' began to replace 'Area'. Field Service Regulations defined 'Area' as a locality or district organized under one commander for the purposes of local administration.

² The North African Theatre of Operations United States Army came into being on 4th February 1943 with Eisenhower as Commanding General. Its boundaries embraced Sicily; Italy; Spain and Portugal; Tunisia; Algeria; Morocco; the whole bulge of Africa north of the Gulf of Guinea (excluding British territories); the Azores, Canary, and Cape Verde Islands.



MME—O

there was not, and could not have been, an overall administrative plan comprehending all peculiarities. There was unavoidably much administrative untidiness and improvisation to begin with, which continued in some matters until near the end of October. Meanwhile a proper organization to take over administrative control in Italy was being worked out and came into force on 24th October 1943. This was the advanced Administrative Echelon of A.F.H.Q., generally referred to by its telegraphic code-name Flambo. October 24th marks the end of the untidy phase. During the remainder of 1943 the highly competent administrative staffs and services consolidated and developed the administrative side of the campaign, working on considered estimates of future commitments as they arose from a now firm operational plan. During this period the administrative pattern of the remainder of the campaign in Italy was worked out.

Five large Headquarters were concerned in the administrative control of the Allied forces in Italy. They were:

Allied Force Headquarters.

H.Q. 15th Army Group.

H.Q. 8th Army in particular because this army's administrative organization, Fortbase, held a special position until the end of the phase of administrative improvisation.¹

G.H.Q. Middle East.

The War Office, which had a special interest in the broad principles and practice of the administration of British troops wherever they might be.

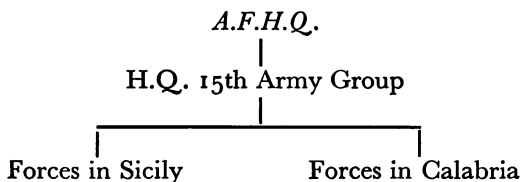
In what follows, however, the American side of administration will scarcely appear because of its difference from the British system. Yet it should be borne in mind that any superior administrative organization which might be set up in Italy might have to concern itself with the administration of forces of several nationalities.

Early in July 1943 the War Office declared a point of principle: 'The intention is to achieve one channel only to War Office on matters of administrative policy as operations are essentially based on and controlled by North Africa'. The explanation of this statement is that because no administrative master-plan existed for operations in Italy, and because operations in Italy appeared at first to be an extension of those in Sicily, the future administrative organization for Italy was rather vaguely thought of as an extension of the organization which was working in the yet unfinished Sicilian campaign. In broad terms A.F.H.Q. was responsible for the maintenance of forces mounted west of the boundary between Tunisia

¹ For Fortbase see Chapter IV, pp. 142-44 and Chapter VII, pp. 246-48; Chapter X, pp. 349-52.

and Tripolitania, and G.H.Q. Middle East was responsible for the maintenance of those mounted east of the same boundary for a period of thirty days after landing in the enemy's territory. Such central administrative control as existed resided in A.F.H.Q. The War Office foresaw that many problems of co-ordination were bound to arise, for example as regards sea-convoys which, after 26th August, were to sail from the 'producer' countries, the U.S.A. and the U.K., direct to ports in Sicily or Italy. The War Office therefore required that the large headquarters in the Mediterranean should reach agreement on all matters of maintenance, and that A.F.H.Q. should then be the sole channel of communication with the War Office.

A.F.H.Q. drew up, on 9th July, a scheme for administrative control in the operations which were in progress in Sicily and in those which, as foreseen at that time, might follow. In diagram this scheme was:



A.F.H.Q. consulted G.H.Q. Middle East, which agreed to the scheme, but forbore to trouble H.Q. 15th Army Group which was on the eve of invading Sicily. Then at the end of July A.F.H.Q. outlined its policy to H.Q. 15th Army Group in a memorandum. This declared that such future operations against Italy as were to be mounted in Sicily would be planned and mounted by H.Q. 8th Army, but that H.Q. 15th Army Group would be responsible for maintenance in these operations. A.F.H.Q. would be responsible for the planning, mounting, and maintenance of any other operations against Italy. A.F.H.Q. thus placed H.Q. 15th Army Group in the direct chain of administrative control as regards one set of operations against Italy. At this point the peculiar existing administrative organization which H.Q. 15th Army Group had devised for the campaign in Sicily became an obstacle to A.F.H.Q.'s plans. A brief recapitulation may not come amiss.¹

A.F.H.Q., in considering the campaign in Sicily, had intended that the administrative staff of H.Q. 15th Army Group should work in an orthodox way and control the general administration of all British and American forces under the Army Group's command. But Alexander and Miller, his Major-General, Administration, had chosen that the Army Group's administrative staff, reduced to a nucleus, should concern itself only with the policy, co-ordination,

¹ See also Chapter IV, pp. 132-33, 142-43.

and forward planning of administration. They had delegated every other administrative function of the Army Group H.Q. to 8th Army's Fortbase, and had dispersed most of their own administrative staff and representatives of services to other headquarters. Something like this arrangement had worked well in H.Q. 18th Army Group in Africa, and the arrangement worked well in Sicily.

H.Q. 15th Army Group (in the person of Miller) now proposed that the arrangement should continue in Italy. A.F.H.Q. (in the person of Gale, the Chief Administrative Officer), however, was determined that H.Q. 15th Army Group should exercise its full administrative functions in its proper position in the chain of administrative control, as the British Field Service Regulations defined these matters. The argument was very technical but the position was not one of pedantic orthodoxy at A.F.H.Q. versus clever and convenient improvisation at H.Q. 15th Army Group.

In the first place the comparison with the administrative functions of 18th Army Group in the African campaign was unsound. That headquarters had possessed, as regards 1st and 8th Armies, no functions connected with demand, holding, and detailed distribution. It had not concerned itself with shipping or railway problems except to distribute available capacity between two established Ls. of C. It was fairly clear that any administrative organization which might be set up in Italy would have far more executive functions in creating a L. of C. from scratch.

If H.Q. 15th Army Group's administrative role in Italy was to be no more than to devise policy, to plan and co-ordinate, it was clear that there would be some awkward consequences. 8th Army's administrative appendix, Fortbase, would in effect be carrying on the administrative business of two armies; and of their associated air forces in common-user services. It was inevitable therefore that Fortbase would have to communicate directly with all the superior headquarters on policy, plans, and practice. It was inevitable also that 15th Army Group would insist on a say in these matters. There were great possibilities of confusion.

In fact A.F.H.Q. addressed to H.Q. 15th Army Group, on 8th August, an instruction beginning 'You will assume full administrative functions in the normal chain of command of all forces under your command . . .' Because, however, H.Q. 15th Army Group's administrative staffs and service directorates had been dispersed the Army Group was incapable of carrying out the instruction, and for the next six weeks Fortbase had to shoulder responsibilities which were greater than its powers.

The next important development in administrative control came on 21st September when A.F.H.Q. issued 'Consolidated Instructions for the Organization and Military Administration of Italy'. This was

an intricate and ambiguous document and fairly extended quotation will best illustrate its purport. But it is fair to say that the document was written against a background of the thorny problems of administration that the campaign in progress since 3rd September was producing. Among them, for example, were: the choice of sites for advanced bases in Italy; the switch of 8th Army's advanced base ports from the Toe of Italy to the Heel; the stowage and destinations of sea-convoys; and the congestion of the North African ports.¹ The 'Consolidated Instructions' declared:

'3. . . . The L. of C. (Communication Zone) will be organized as provided by Field Service Regulations (British and United States).

(a) Naples will become a base port for both British and American (with attached French) forces, and as such will be laid out to provide two contiguous and distinct areas, one American Base Section and one British Base Area. From Naples northward, the L. of C. (CZ) will be divided along its length so that U.S. and British each have separate geographical areas . . .

6. To provide for administrative control . . . there will be three districts which cover one or more political areas of Italy:

No. 1 District—Sicily.

No. 2 District—Italy up to the northern boundary of Campania and Apulia.

No. 3 District—Italy from the northern boundary of No. 2 District northwards until it is necessary to introduce another district.

The headquarters of No. 1 and No. 2 District will be founded by the British. The nationality of the headquarters, No. 3 District will be decided later in the light of events but will probably be American.

7. . . . the area controlled by the invading forces will be divided by 15th Army Group, in consultation with No. 2 District and Commanding General (U.S.) C.Z. into the Army Areas (Combat Zone) and the Line of Communications (Communication Zone).

8. The co-ordination of the control of the area in rear of the Combat Zone (Army Areas) will be exercised by the District Headquarters under the direct command and administration of this headquarters [i.e. A.F.H.Q.] . . . the allotment of priorities for the movement of stores and personnel from the L. of C. (C.Z.) into these areas will be the responsibility of Headquarters 15th Army Group.

13. . . . No. 2 District, under policies laid down by this headquarters [i.e. A.F.H.Q.] will be responsible for the General and Local Administration (Br) of No. 2 District except that local and general administration in the geographical area rear [i.e.

¹ See Chapter VII, pp. 246-48; Chapter X, pp. 350-51.

behind] Fifth Army (U.S.) will be handled by the American Base Section, subject to co-ordination by Headquarters No. 2 District on matters of international concern . . .'

The immediate fruits of these instructions were that Fortbase assumed the functions of No. 2 District at Taranto on 29th September, and that H.Q. No. 57 Area (British) and the Peninsular Base Section (American) moved into Naples directly after its capture on 1st October to establish an advanced base there.¹ A newly constituted H.Q. No. 1 District replaced Fortbase in Sicily. Fortbase was able to change its role without extreme upheaval because it was in fact a complete Base and L. of C. Staff including sections of the three branches of the staff, 'G', 'A', and 'Q', and deputy-Directors of the main services.² The best fruit of the instructions perhaps was that they gave that prince among administrative officers, Sir Brian Robertson, greater scope and authority in using his immense talents. Yet it was evident that the control of administration in Italy could not continue to be extempore and short-term. H.Q. No. 2 District (Fortbase) could not continue to be, except in name, the administrative H.Q. of 15th Army Group and a kind of advanced H.Q. of A.F.H.Q. A.F.H.Q. and Robertson worked out a scheme to create in Italy an organization to be known as A.F.H.Q. Advanced Administrative Echelon (Flambo) under Robertson as Deputy Chief Administrative Officer A.F.H.Q., Italy.

Flambo was to co-ordinate all matters of general administration on the mainland of Italy in the name and with the authority of A.F.H.Q. On the British side, Flambo was to control and direct all British general administration on the mainland of Italy. On the American side, administration ran through the chain A.F.H.Q.—NATOUSA—SOS NATOUSA, subject to Flambo's co-ordination.³ The Deputy Chief Administrative Officer was the personal administrative adviser to the commander of 15th Army Group, and Flambo's relations with H.Q. 15th Army Group were to be those obtaining between the administrative and operational portions of a single headquarters. Yet Flambo was an administrative advanced A.F.H.Q. and in no sense a rear headquarters of 15th Army Group,

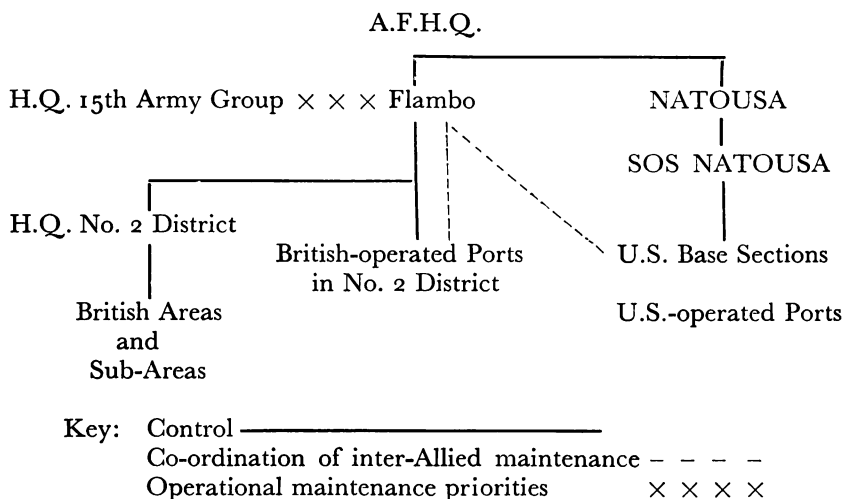
¹ H.Q. 57 Area had since 10th August been at Algiers for possible use in 'Avalanche'. Until the end of August it was known as H.Q. 7th Area.

² See *Mediterranean and Middle East*, Vol. IV, p. 316-17.

³ Flambo's main functions, in greater detail, were:

- (a) To co-ordinate, on the mainland of Italy, all matters of general administration in Italy, including 'through' movements, use of ports, acceptance of shipping, and allotment of tonnages between land and air forces.
- (b) To control all matters of British general administration.
- (c) To be responsible for all administrative arrangements to support the operations of 15th Army Group and Northwest African Air Forces; or if adequate arrangements could not be made, to inform A.F.H.Q. and the commanders concerned.
- (d) To represent A.F.H.Q. in dealing with the Italian government on military administrative matters.

very close though its relations with that H.Q. had to be.¹ A freshly constituted Headquarters No. 2 District was to replace H.Q. No. 2 District (Fortbase), which transferred en bloc to Flambo, in controlling British local administration up to the northern boundaries of Campania and Apulia. In diagrammatic form the new administrative organization was:



Flambo opened at Naples on 24th October, and H.Q. No. 2 District (Major-General A. Dowler) at Bari on the same day.² The setting up of Flambo meant that the organization and development of the L. of C., ports, and advanced bases in Italy became subject to central and workable control.

A summary of the developments in the domestic administration of the air forces, if it is to be short, can touch only the control of supply and maintenance. The three last words are best explained, in their air force senses, by reversing their order. Maintenance is everything that must be done to provide aircraft and mechanical transport, and to keep both fit for service in every particular, and to replace them. Supply is the business of providing everything that an air force requires except aircraft and mechanical transport. Together they must ensure that an air force has everything that it needs to be an

¹ For example H.Q. 15th Army Group would decide priorities as regards operational maintenance, and would be responsible for: priorities for shipment into Italy of personnel and vehicles; moves of units between Armies and Districts; the allotment of controlled stores; Orders of Battle; moves of administrative units as required by Flambo; and so on. The appointment of Major-General, Administration in H.Q. 15th Army Group lapsed, and Major-General C. H. Miller returned to England.

² H.Q. No 2 District was largely formed from H.Q. 53 Area in North Africa.

efficient weapon of war.¹ Supply and maintenance produced a host of problems because of the complexity of aircraft, and because of the very many types and marks of airframes, engines, airscrews, armament, instruments, radio equipment, and so on through a long list. Further, the summary must touch on the fundamental, constitutional difference between the American and British air forces. It must glance back as far as 1941 to see how things came to be as they were in 1943, and forward to December 1943–February 1944 to take account of a large reorganization of command.

The United States Army Air Force was part of the United States Army. The Royal Air Force was an independent Service. From this fundamental difference there followed differences in administrative practice. In American practice in the North African Theatre of Operations, H.Q. NATOUSA was responsible for providing items in common use by the army and air force. But in each formation known as a United States Air Force there was an organization known as an Air Force Service Command with its Commanding General. This officer was responsible for supply and maintenance and had disposal of all resources for these purposes, including technical administration, supply, movement, and works in the field. He could communicate directly with the highest Air Force Service Command at Patterson Field in the United States. In British practice administration was a function of all commanders in the Royal Air Force who exercised it through their administrative staffs. From headquarters of Command status the channel of supply and maintenance ran, in the upward direction, through Air Ministry to establishments situated in the United Kingdom. The difference between American and British practices made it impossible to combine the supply and maintenance of American and British air forces in the field although some measures towards this end were introduced from time to time.

In November 1942 the *United States Army Middle East Air Force* became the United States Ninth Air Force, and the United States IX Air Force Service Command came into being solely to supply and maintain it. In the same month American air forces arrived in North Africa as part of the Allied Expeditionary Force. They were the United States Twelfth Air Force which, for inter-Allied operational purposes was also Western Air Command. The United States XII

¹ The short definitions above can be objected to on every ground. Longer definitions will not escape the same fate.

Maintenance is the supply, servicing, repair, overhaul, holding and distribution, and salvage of aircraft and mechanical transport.

Supply is the provision of petrol, oil, food, medical requirements, in fact of any commodity that an air force needs in order to exist. Supply includes stocking depots, parks, and dumps with such requirements for Maintenance as spares and equipment for aircraft and mechanical transport, bombs and ammunition.

Air Force Service Command came into being to supply and maintain this air force.¹

In the Royal Air Force in Middle East an innovation was made at the headquarters of the Command in April and May 1941. Until that time supply and maintenance had been a direct responsibility of the Air Officer-in-Charge of Administration, but in April a Chief Maintenance Officer was appointed to be responsible for these matters to the A.O.A.² However, it was believed that supply and maintenance in the technically primitive Middle East must be classed, and therefore organized, as technical subjects of first and differentiated importance. And so in May a Chief Maintenance and Supply Officer was appointed who was directly responsible to the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief. This new technical staff officer was a principal staff officer, equal in standing to the Senior Air Staff Officer and the Air Officer-in-Charge of Administration. Under the C.M.S.O. supply and maintenance became subjects separate from, although closely linked with, the subjects which were the business of the Air Staff and of the Administrative Staff.³

When British air forces were being prepared for the Allied Expeditionary Force to North Africa much of the experience gained in Middle East was ignored. In the Eastern Air Command (the superior British air headquarters in North Africa, formed from No. 333 Group R.A.F.) the A.O.A. was responsible for supply and maintenance but delegated the co-ordination of engineering and equipment to a subordinate, the Chief Maintenance Officer. This was the same arrangement that had existed in the Middle East for only a few weeks in 1941.

In sum, at the end of 1942 four agencies, if one may so describe them, were responsible for the supply and maintenance of the Allied air forces in the Mediterranean and Middle East theatre. They were as shown overleaf.

¹ See, for details, *Mediterranean and Middle East*, Vol. III, p. 373-75, Vol. IV, p. 83, 113, 128.

² An Air Officer-in-Charge of Administration was responsible to his commander for all administrative matters, and therefore for the detailed policy and the direction of the administrative services. He was responsible for co-ordinating his business with that of the Senior Air Staff Officer who headed the Air Staff. The general distribution of subjects was:

<i>Air Staff</i>	<i>Administrative Staff</i>
Air plans, operations, intelligence	Organization
Training: Flying and operational	Personnel
Armament	Equipment
Signals	Engineering
Photography	Medical
Navigation	Accountancy

³ Several authorities were concerned in this reorganization, among them the Prime Minister and Air Ministry. Perhaps the most influential individual was Air Vice-Marshal G. G. Dawson of Air Ministry, who became the first C.M.S.O. See *Mediterranean and Middle East*, Vol. II, p. 235-37.

	<i>American</i>	<i>British</i>
Middle East	U.S. IX Air Force Service Command	C.M.S.O. at R.A.F. Middle East Command.
North Africa	U.S. XII Air Force Service Command	A.O.A. at Eastern Air Command.

In February 1943 Mediterranean Air Command was created to co-ordinate all operational air forces in the Mediterranean and Middle East theatre. Supply and maintenance was an obvious subject for co-ordination by this highest air headquarters and a Director of Maintenance and Supply was instituted for the task. The Director, Dawson, harnessed together the supply and maintenance agencies in North Africa, that is U.S. XII Air Force Service Command and the British equivalent at Eastern Air Command, to form Northwest African Air Service Command. In practice, however, the Director exercised little control through his double-harness, and supply and maintenance continued along the differing national lines. The American and British agencies in the Middle East were not harnessed together although the Director of Maintenance and Supply was empowered to exercise general control of them, and did give directions on policy.

Control of supply and maintenance during the campaign in Sicily was a short-term rule of thumb applied in varying circumstances by the various air forces based in the western, central, and eastern Mediterranean. It was intended that H.Q. Northwest African Air Forces would establish centralized control by D + 42 but the end of the campaign after thirty-eight days forestalled this development. Meanwhile it was foreseen that centralized arrangements would be required during the campaign in Italy because the greater part of the large air forces would be deployed there. The proposed arrangements, some of which became actual, contemplated combining the American and British systems but full combination was never achieved.

Circumstances actual and foreseen did not appear to warrant the continued existence of three air commands subordinate to Mediterranean Air Command, namely Northwest African Air Forces, Malta Air Command, Middle East Air Command. Moreover Mediterranean Air Command by its very title had seemed to the Americans to have disagreeable implications. The expression 'Command' suggested to American minds their own concept of direct, minute, all-pervading exercise of authority by a commander. They did not grasp the looser British concept of a commander who delegates much of his authority without abating his final powers and responsibilities. A Command, in American thinking, was not a very suitable organization for independent Allied air forces. And so the Combined Chiefs of Staff set up on 5th December 1943 a Head-

quarters styled Mediterranean Allied Air Forces under an Air Commander-in-Chief.¹ This officer was served on the administrative side by three administrative staffs, of which the third owed its existence to the peculiar circumstances of the Royal Air Force, Middle East. The American staff and one of the British staffs were each headed by a Deputy Air C.-in-C., and were established at H.Q. M.A.A.F. The second British staff, which was part of and cared for the units of Royal Air Force, Middle East, was headed by the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief there, who, because his office had acquired during four years of war a special political and military prestige, retained the status and style of Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief although he was no longer at the head of an autonomous air command.

To further the administration of the American and British elements of M.A.A.F. two parallel national organizations were established. The American was styled 'Army Air Forces, Mediterranean Theatre of Operations' and cared for all units of the United States Army Air Forces in the theatre. It was headed by Lieut.-General Ira C. Eaker, U.S.A.A.F., who was also the Air C.-in-C. of M.A.A.F.² The British was styled 'Royal Air Force, Mediterranean and Middle East' and cared for all R.A.F. units in the theatre. It was headed by Air Marshal Sir John Slessor who was also Eaker's Deputy Air C.-in-C., and additionally was responsible for R.A.F. operations in the Middle East beyond the limits of the Mediterranean area which he exercised through A.O.C.-in-C., Royal Air Force, Middle East.³ Northwest African Air Service Command disappeared, as did the Director of Maintenance and Supply at the defunct Mediterranean Air Command.⁴ There was a final reorganization of H.Q. M.A.A.F. in February 1944. The A.O.C.-in-C. Royal Air Force, Middle East, shed his functions as the head of the second British administrative

¹ Middle East Air Command became Headquarters, Royal Air Force, Middle East.

Malta Air Command became Air Headquarters, Malta and was placed under the operational control of Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force.

Northwest African Strategic Air Force became Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force (M.A.S.A.F.).

Northwest African Tactical Air Force became Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force (M.A.T.A.F.).

Northwest African Tactical Bomber Force became Mediterranean Allied Tactical Bomber Force (M.A.T.B.F.).

Northwest African Coastal Air Force became Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force (M.A.C.A.F.).

Northwest African Photographic Reconnaissance Wing became Mediterranean Allied Photographic Reconnaissance Wing (M.A.P.R.W.).

Northwest African Troop Carrier Command was disbanded.

² See pages 574-76 for changes among Mediterranean Commanders and Staff Officers during December 1943/January 1944.

³ The offspring of reorganization were two 'short' titles: 'A.A.F./M.T.O.' and 'R.A.F., M.E.D.M.E.'.

⁴ Air Vice-Marshal Dawson became Chief Maintenance and Supply Officer of R.A.F., M.E.D.M.E.

staff. The existing administrative Deputy Air C.-in-C. (U.S.) became the Deputy Commanding General of A.A.F./M.T.O., and the existing administrative Deputy Air C.-in-C. (British) the Deputy A.O.C.-in-C. of R.A.F., M.E.D.M.E. Administrative control at the highest air headquarters at last descended in two national channels from one American and one British principal, who were able not only to co-ordinate Allied administrative matters at that level but also national administrative policy with their own independent national administrative services, i.e. A.A.F./M.T.O. and R.A.F., M.E.D.M.E.¹

(iii)

A Base, however it may be described, has two distinguishing features. It contains two or more depots of men, material, and animals, and it occupies a geographical area which may be very large.² During the campaigns in Africa two principal Bases had been created. They were the Middle East Base in Egypt and the North African Base in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. The Middle East Base was a wholly British establishment; the North African Base had independent American and British constituent parts. In what follows we deal only with British Bases, but it should be remembered that in administration, as in other matters, British and Americans had 'to be somewhat mixed up together in some of their affairs for the mutual and general advantage'.³ When the campaign in Africa ended, these two great Bases continued to be pre-eminently important in the administrative side of the campaign in Sicily, and of the campaign in Italy for a time. As the campaign in Italy developed, new Bases were created in the Heel of Italy and at Naples, and these became the principal sources of maintenance for all the forces in Italy. The Middle East Base and the North African Base then became less important in the administration of the Italian campaign, but continued to bulk large in the general administrative picture in the Mediterranean theatre, and, as regards the Middle East Base, outside it. For these reasons some consideration of their fortunes is necessary.

In January 1940 the project for the Middle East Base was that it should maintain nine divisions and, in common-use material, twenty-seven air squadrons which might increase to thirty-nine. As the war went on the forces grew larger, and in the third quarter of 1943 the

¹ A diagrammatic chart of M.A.A.F. organization together with the administrative arrangements is at Appendix 5 at the end of the volume.

² These descriptions are given to convey the idea of a Base while avoiding technical descriptions required by administrative theory, e.g. 'Base', 'Main Base', 'Advanced Base', 'Forward Base' and so on.

³ To borrow words spoken by Mr. Churchill in the House of Commons on 20th August 1940.

Base was maintaining some twenty-two divisions and forty-two squadrons. In terms of mouths this worked out, very approximately, at a military population of 550,000, plus a civilian population of 120,000 which included prisoners of war, refugees, and indigenous workers. Of the men in uniform some 160,000, the element dubbed 'Tail', manned and worked the immense collection of depots, workshops and so forth. Besides its more obvious functions the Base acted as a holding area for Commonwealth troops—Australian, New Zealand, South African, Indian—coming from or returning to their homelands. The variety of activities in a great base was extraordinary.

As soon as it was decided to carry the war into Italy the long-term future of the Middle East Base came in question, and in September 1943 the Commanders-in-Chief in Middle East, in conference with the Deputy C.I.G.S. and the Quarter-Master-General from the War Office, suggested a policy. A group of armies was being built up for operations in Italy which would have bases there. These new bases should be reinforced by the Middle East with every administrative resource that was not essential to its own probable long-term commitments. These commitments were internal security and exploitation of operations in the Aegean, and for them, as regards land forces, the equivalent of six divisions should suffice. Therefore, in the long term, the responsibilities of the Middle East Base would be as follows. To maintain the land forces which commitments in the Middle East appeared to require (six divisions), and to provide such administrative services as might be needed by the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force employed in the Middle East. To arrange the transit of stores issuing from the Eastern Group to any part of the Mediterranean theatre.¹ To provide locally-produced material for the Mediterranean theatre. However, until proposed administrative policies for the forces in Italy were transformed into fact the Middle East Base would have a share in maintaining them. In sum, the Middle East Base should be 'run down' gradually and this process might begin almost at once.

At this point Admiral Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia, and General Auchinleck, Commander-in-Chief in India, intervened. Briefly, they doubted India's capacity to become a base adequate for the needs of the forces in South-East Asia, and they recommended that the future of the Middle East Base should

¹ The Eastern Supply Group Council was formed in February 1941 although its origins lay in proposals made by the Viceroy of India, Lord Linlithgow, in June 1940. Its chairman was a civilian appointed by H.M.G. in the United Kingdom, and its members were drawn from Australia, India, New Zealand, South Africa, the Netherlands East Indies, and the United Kingdom. Headquarters were in New Delhi. The Council's function, generally speaking, was to co-ordinate provision of war stores and supplies by the so-called eastern countries in the Group.

not be decided until its usefulness in the South East Asian scheme of things had been examined. The Chiefs of Staff took up the matter, and before the end of 1943 adopted the conclusions of the Principal Administrative Officers Committee which they had instructed to report. These conclusions were the following. The first function of the Middle East Base must continue to be to support operations in the Mediterranean theatre. Administrative units and personnel which were not required for this function but which could be used in Overlord must be released to that operation. The Middle East Base would be used as a supplementary base in maintaining forces in South-East Asia which were operating outside India, and it should help India in mounting operations and by holding reserve stocks which were not currently required in India. Administrative resources which were surplus to the foregoing functions should be 'run down', yet surplus installations should not be abolished but reduced to a footing of care and maintenance. The future requirements of the Royal Air Force and of the Royal and Merchant Navies should not be prejudiced. When the Chiefs of Staff had accepted these conclusions the question of the Middle East Base rested for the time being, although it continued to be a subject of thought and discussion.

At the end of the campaign in Africa the British part of the North African Base had been developed in the neighbourhoods of the port of Algiers, and of six other Algerian and Tunisian ports of which Bizerta was becoming the most important.¹ The Base was maintaining some eight divisions and forty-one air squadrons, and during May 1943 its principal ports handled about 12,000 tons of cargo a day.² As with the Middle East Base, so with the North African Base the future came into question as soon as the invasion of Sicily and a campaign on the mainland of Italy were decided upon. A large consideration was the obvious suitability of the North African base ports in connexion with operations which might occur in the central and western Mediterranean. And so the long-term commitments of the North African Base came to be seen as three. The first was to maintain the forces of internal security, for which land forces equivalent to two divisions were estimated to be necessary. The second was a share in mounting whatever British forces might be required for operations in the central and western Mediterranean. This was a difficult commitment to assess because of the many plans that were afoot, and a firm assessment must await decisions on what plans were to be adopted. The third was a share in the maintenance of the forces

¹ Bougie, Philippeville, Bône, Bizerta, Sousse, Sfax.

² In January 1943 British 'mouths' numbered 193,000. British forces which later arrived from the Middle East were maintained by the Middle East.

in Sicily, and in Italy until bases were created in those countries. In sum, the North African Base should be run down gradually.

By December 1943 some decisions had been made and some measures had been taken. A North Africa District with three Sub-Districts was formed to control all base activities. This District was subordinate to A.F.H.Q.¹ Algiers and Bône were earmarked as the main ports for the use of British forces; Oran, Algiers, and Bizerta for the Americans. A programme for closing lesser ports was drawn up: Bougie, Sousse, and Sfax during December 1943; Tunis and its harbour at any time; Philippeville by the end of January 1944 for handling stores, and by the end of February for handling men. Nevertheless the North African Base remained very important in the affairs of the Italian campaign.

(iv)

The corner-stone of the administrative side of the campaign in Italy was the establishment of long-term bases in that country. This expression 'long-term' is used in the meanings of permanency and large size. In technical language the bases in Italy were classed as advanced Bases until the middle of 1944 when the whole complex was tacitly regarded as a Main Base.² The sites of the bases in Italy were not settled for some time. A.F.H.Q. held at first that, for operations until the capture of Rome, Naples should be the principal base, and that bases near the ports in the Heel of Italy should not be much developed. On the other hand H.Q. 15th Army Group held that bases should be developed both at Naples and in the Heel. The main task of Naples would be to maintain 5th Army and its associated air forces, and its secondary task to help to maintain 8th Army and its associated air forces. 8th Army and its associated air forces would be maintained, principally, by bases in the Heel. The development of the campaign after the phase of invasion settled the matter. It became evident that the greater part of the Allied forces would be employed on the western side of Italy. Therefore Naples was confirmed as a long-term base. But it was a fact that 8th Army and the Desert Air Force were deployed on the east coast and were likely to remain there for some time. Moreover in October came the decision to place a large strategic air force at Foggia. In consequence the long-term development of Brindisi, Bari, and Barletta, the main ports

¹ H.Q. 1st Army was disbanded on 31st May 1943 and its administrative responsibilities passed to Tunisia District, predecessor of North Africa District.

² Strictly speaking, when an expeditionary force is partly maintained from outside the theatre of operations, that part of the base which is outside the theatre is called the 'main base', and that part which is within the theatre is called the 'advanced base'. The true distinction however lies in the number, size, and type of the administrative installations which are placed in a given geographical area.

in the Heel, was accepted. As regards British forces it might be argued that to create simultaneously bases on both sides of Italy was a waste of administrative resources. But Robertson early laid down the principle that imports into Italy were for the service of British forces in general and not for this force or that. In practice it proved possible, during the early stages of the campaign, to make maximum use of the Heel ports, and so to reduce the demands on Naples while that port was being restored from wreckage to efficiency. Then when Alexander, in January 1944, began to transfer formations from the east coast to the west, a base at Naples had reached a sufficiently advanced state to be able to meet all demands.

It was not until 17th November 1943 that A.F.H.Q. was able to give a sound estimate of the forces which were to be built up in Italy during the next six or seven months. This was

Land Forces

Date	Total Divs.	Total Strength			
		British	U.S.A.	French	Poles
End November 1943	14	351,000	365,000	23,000	—
End of December	16	391,000	276,000	23,000	15,000
End of January 1944	18	406,000	304,000	50,000	30,000

After January, so far as could be foreseen, the total of the land forces in terms of divisions would be of the order of:

End of February 1944	20
March	21½
April	23
May	24

Air Forces

End of October 1943	86 squadrons
May 1944	195 squadrons.

In December 1943 and in January 1944 A.F.H.Q. prepared estimates to show that from March 1944 it would be necessary to import supplies and stores into Italy at a daily rate of about 32,180 tons in order to sustain the campaign in Italy.¹ This very large figure worried the

¹ On a footing of 22 divisions and associated air forces. Very roughly a figure of 11½ million tons in a year, which may be compared with the 27 million tons which in January 1943 were calculated as the U.K.'s minimum requirements of imports for that year.

British Chiefs of Staff on account of the demand which it would make upon shipping, since Overlord also was in prospect. An examination however showed the figure to be reasonable. It is indeed a remarkable witness to the ever-growing impedimenta of modern war. Some random but illuminating examples of the administrative load in Italy are as follows. Since 1940 the British 'divisional slice' had grown from 25,000 to 40,000.¹ By the end of 1943 the campaign in Italy had become an 'ammunition' rather than a 'petrol' war, and the British forces were expending shells at the rate of 22,000 tons a month as compared with 10,000 tons a month during the campaign in Africa from Alamein onwards. There was a demand for engineer stores of over 1,000 tons a day, largely for building bridges and airfields. 315 bridges of Bailey type alone were built between September 1943 and January 1944; a new airfield might consume 5,000 tons of pierced steel plank and 71,800 tons of this store passed through the east coast ports between October 1943 and March 1944. The air forces' 'domestic' stores increased from a rate of 2,700 tons daily at the end of October 1943 to 6,300 tons daily at the end of April 1944. Stores for the civilian population were reckoned at 2,800 tons a day, and between September 1943 and September 1945 2,464,000 tons of food and 3,291,000 tons of coal were imported into Italy.

A main function of the bases was to receive, hold, and distribute the vast quantities of material.² It will be well therefore to summarize the main policies which governed their development. There was a general working agreement that the Americans would handle the ports of entry on the west coast, the British those on the east coast. As regards the size of the forces to be maintained and the stocks to be held, British policy was formed in relation to A.F.H.Q.'s forecasts. In October the plan for the base on the east coast, served by the ports of Brindisi, Bari, and Barletta, was that it should suffice for a force of nine British divisions and twenty-three air squadrons. (By coincidence almost exactly the size of the whole Middle East Base as foreseen in 1940. The scale of the war had grown.) Holdings were to be 30 days' reserve and 30 days' working margin.³ As regards the Naples base, served by the ports of Naples, Torre Annunziata, Castellammare, and Salerno, the policy was at first 'ad hoc': to introduce all

¹ The 'divisional slice' was a planning figure which allowed for overheads, i.e. the units, combatant or not, which did not normally belong to a division but which were necessary components of a larger balanced force.

² Bases, of course, had also many functions as regards men: holding and training reinforcements; medical care of casualties; rest and entertainment, and so forth.

³ A working margin is in effect a quantity of supplies and stores provided against contingencies which might interrupt the building up of reserves or cause them to be nibbled at.

the tonnage that the ports could receive in their damaged or undeveloped states. On 4th December the British part of the Naples base was placed on the footing of maintaining in the future seven divisions and nine and a half air squadrons. Holdings were to be 23 days' reserves and 27 days' working margin and, in a forward area, 7 days' reserves and 3 days' working margin. Calabria was now out of the picture; as a transit area it had been handed over to 31st Italian Corps on 30th October.

Day-to-day experience, however, gave grounds for believing that the administrative build-up might not be as smooth as was hoped. It was likely that by the end of February 1944 the improvement of the various ports might not be complete and that their capacity might be less than was required for the projected build-up of the forces. It seemed possible that there might be delays in reconstructing the trans-peninsular rail routes Naples-Foggia, Potenza-Foggia, and others, and that therefore the power to switch stores from side to side of Italy might be restricted. Because sea-convoys would be delivering stores in bulk instead of in balanced shipments it was improbable that current needs could be exactly and quickly satisfied and therefore larger reserves must be held in Italy. Finally there was the grievous loss of 39,000 tons of stores in the air attack on Bari on 2nd December.¹ As things turned out none of these rather dismal possibilities was fulfilled. Nevertheless on 15th December it seemed prudent to revise plans. The *immediate* aim was then declared to be to provide for twelve divisions in all Italy, instead of sixteen, with holdings of 30 days' reserves and 30 days' working margin. Yet ultimate requirements were to be planned for seventeen or eighteen divisions at the same scale. This directive was realistic as regards the near future and did not restrict whatever expansion might be practicable.

The capacity of the east coast ports had to be raised to 11,000 tons per day, and of Naples to 15,000 tons per day, of which the British share was 5,000 tons daily.² Brindisi, Bari, and Barletta were almost undamaged and the main task was to build extra deep-water berths and rail-served lighter quays. By the end of December these ports were discharging between 10-11,000 tons daily. It was not all plain sailing. To take but two examples, Italian workers, military or civilian, were thoroughly idle and unwilling; and at Bari a delay of six hours in unloading one ship in a deep-water berth might lead to a delay of five days in discharging the next.³

¹ See Chapter XV.

² In tons per day for east-coast ports: Brindisi 3,500; Bari 6,000; Barletta 1,500. Taranto was earmarked as primarily a naval port.

³ It happened thus. To speed the work a large ship was allowed five days in a deep-

At Naples the Germans had devastated the port. Large ships had been sunk alongside nearly every quay and large numbers of craft had been sunk inside the moles. All harbour-craft such as tugs and lighters had been sunk, and quay-side equipment such as cranes had been destroyed. Mines and booby-traps were everywhere, and coal dumps had been set on fire.¹

The Americans undertook almost the whole task of bringing order out of chaos and tackled it with their usual enviable wealth of resources, using over 5,000 engineer troops and plentiful mechanical equipment. By the end of October thirteen deep-draught berths were in use, landing-craft and a fleet of up to 600 DUKWs were at work, and the port was discharging some 7,000 tons a day. By the middle of December the figure was 14,700 tons a day, and rising.

In spite of all hindrances therefore the working of the ports was a success, as the figures for the first third of 1944 show:

	<i>East Coast Ports</i> (General cargo, tons)	<i>West Coast Ports</i> (British cargo only, tons)
January	346,494	98,378
February	318,757	144,178
March	324,054	194,399
April	315,682	170,799
Daily Average	10,785	5,022

At Naples in 1939, a prosperous year, the port handled 2,540,000 tons in twelve months; in the six months October 1943 to the end of March 1944 2,375,297 tons were handled, another measure of the load and effort of war.

Besides the development of the ports there was the large question of establishing the appropriate base installations. Robertson very soon instituted central control in settling such matters as types and construction, and priorities in reorganizing railways. The policy was that installations should be appropriate for an advanced base with the exception that Base Workshops R.E.M.E. for the heavy repair of vehicles were set up at Naples, because, difficult though it was to

draught berth and then, much lightened, was moved to a shallow-draught berth. Five days were required to call a ship forward to Bari from Sicily because of time-lag in signals and voyage-time. A ship therefore had to be called forward five days before it was known certainly that a berth would be vacant. There was no sheltered anchorage off Bari and in winter a ship which could find no berth had to be sent back to Taranto.

¹ About 100 ships had been sunk. 73 cranes had been blown into the water; quay walls were smashed and the quays loaded with debris; warehouses and rail tracks had been demolished.

set them up, it was clearly impracticable, if only because of the time-lag, to send vehicles to Egypt and North Africa for heavy repairs. The commitment for building covered storage for the various installations was heavy, amounting to about four and a half million square feet for the phase of the campaign up to the fall of Rome. Ingenuity, however, was applied to the problem, for example a locally-made living hut was designed which used half a ton of imported material compared with two tons required by the familiar 'Nissen', and a locally made storage shed was designed also. Many miles of hard standings and of internal roads in depots had to be laid down. As regards the reorganization and repair of the railways it proved possible to complete all necessary work by the end of 1943.¹ Very soon after the capture of Naples it was decided to build a petrol pipe-line to follow the advancing 5th Army. By the end of December 1943 American engineers had laid a line to a point ten miles north of Capua and it was delivering 260,000 gallons daily. This pipe-line and its extensions proved to be invaluable.

For aircraft and engine repair and major overhauls the R.A.F. at first used whatever hangars and workshops might be found on captured airfields. As with the Army, it was impracticable to perform these tasks in Egypt or North Africa, and every effort was made to establish repair and overhaul on a permanent footing in Italy. Ultimately in eastern Italy, the S.A.C.A. factory in the Brindisi area came into use for the general repair of all types of aircraft. In western Italy, by May, the facilities at Capodichino airfield near Naples became available for aircraft repair, and in Naples, and in Castellammare close by, considerable workshop resources had been in use for engine repair and overhaul since October 1943. By the end of January the first of the overhauled engines was coming off the line. As regards storage the R.A.F. found itself badly provided. The first planning figures for storage area were 150,000 square feet covered and 300,000 square feet open. By December the covered storage had risen to 500,000 square feet. S. Rocco caves in Naples provided the only immediately available accommodation, and when they were cleared of demolition rubble, some 250,000 square feet of storage space was recovered. The balance was found by the unsatisfactory means of dispersal over several new sites.

¹ The Railway troops were:

<i>U.K.</i> Railway Construction and Maintenance Group H.Q.	2
Railway Construction Companies	5
Mechanical Equipment Company	1
Railway Survey Company	1
Railway Bridging Sections	2
<i>South African</i>	
Railway Construction Group H.Q.	1
Railway Construction Companies	3
Tunnelling Group	1

By the end of March 1944 the state of British base installations was very satisfactory for there were 22 on the east coast and 25 on the west, representing the bigger services.¹ All this was the solid foundation of the British Italy Base, and the process of extending, expanding, and contracting individual types of installation was of course continuous throughout the campaign. The remaining sections of this chapter discuss some particular problems.

(v)

Of the four methods of administrative movement—water, rail, road, and air—the sea and sea convoys were fundamental because without them war could not have been waged at all. The heart of the Allied systems, as concerned the Mediterranean theatre after the opening of the Mediterranean Sea in May 1943, lay in the ocean convoys from the United Kingdom and the United States. These countries were styled ‘producer’ to mark a broad distinction between them and, say, Middle East and North Africa where huge supplies, which yet were thought to be insufficient for the needs of 1943–44, had been accumulated in bases. The ocean convoys included the ships which maintained the Mediterranean theatre, and many which before May 1943 had sailed round the Cape in order to reach the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf.²

The most frequent and regular of the convoys from or to the producer countries were the ‘slow’ ocean convoys. These were composed almost entirely of cargo-carrying vessels which, in the case of American convoys, included tankers. The convoys sailed at intervals of nine or ten days. The voyage from the United Kingdom to Gibraltar occupied fourteen days, to the Middle East ten more, twenty-four days in all; from the United States it was a twenty-day voyage to Gibraltar and thirty days to the Middle East. As the convoys passed from Gibraltar to Port Said they shed or picked up ships bound for other destinations: North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Malta, Turkey. Not every ship which passed into the Mediterranean returned at once to the home country after ending her outward voyage. By agreement between the Allies a ship might be retained for services within the Mediterranean which might keep her there for weeks or months. The number of ships in an east-bound convoy was limited to 80, and in a west-bound convoy 100. In the six months from the

¹ R.E., R.A.S.C., R.A.O.C., R.E.M.E., R.A.M.C., Transportation, and a number of ‘A’ Branch installations such as Reinforcement and Training Depots, Transit Camps, etc.

² In May 1943 the Combined Chiefs of Staff estimated that 442 sailings of cargo-ships to the Mediterranean would be required between July and December, and 530 between January–June 1944.

beginning of October 1943 to the end of March 1944 nineteen 'slow' ocean convoys ran from and to the United Kingdom, and nineteen from and to the United States. There was also a series of 'fast' ocean convoys from and to the United Kingdom and the United States. These convoys were composed of liners, carrying men, and they sailed much less often and more irregularly than 'slow' convoys; for example six 'fast' convoys sailed from the United Kingdom to the Mediterranean in the six months October to March. 'Fast' convoys from the United States usually sailed to Casablanca.

Tankers were special vessels and deserve a separate word. It was believed in 1943 that there existed enough large tankers to meet the year's demands, and that new construction, begun in 1942, would meet the extra demands of 1944. Some 75 large tankers were employed in the Mediterranean service. The Americans, as we have noticed, included tankers in 'slow' convoys but at need also arranged convoys of fast tankers; ships for either kind of convoy began their voyages usually in the Caribbean and the Mexican Gulf although more northerly ports came into use as the pipe-lines in the United States extended. In the Middle Eastern area after May 1943 increasing supplies of oil came from the Persian Gulf through the Red Sea, and from the pipe-line terminals at Haifa and Tripoli. But oil was not a simple traffic; for example Abadan is further by sea from Algiers than is New York. Consumption of oil products was large, and between July 1943 and June 1944 about $6\frac{1}{2}$ million tons in bulk and 350,000 packaged tons were shipped to the Mediterranean theatre. Besides the ocean tankers in convoys, numbers of the vessels, amounting in August 1943 to 15, were required within the Mediterranean for local services.

In addition to the great ocean convoys, there were a number of regular local convoy services within the Mediterranean, which changed with changing needs. In late 1943 and early 1944 these services included convoys between Alexandria and Italy, which called as a rule at Augusta, the assembly port for ships bound in convoy for Naples and the Heel ports; between Alexandria, Tripoli, and Gibraltar; between Naples and North African ports; and between Algiers and Corsica. In each case there were convoys in the reverse direction. Nor must the considerable service by L.S.T. and by landing-craft be left unmentioned, in particular that between North Africa and Naples. These landing-ships and craft flew, of course, the white ensign.

The above is a general sketch of the admirable system of sea-convoys to, from, and within the Mediterranean. But if the system worked smoothly in general, there were many difficulties in detailed

working, principally in the stowage of convoys and in the congestion of the North African ports.

On 24th August the Deputy Chief of Staff at A.F.H.Q. wrote to the British Chiefs of Staff:

‘ . . . We are faced with a very difficult movement and maintenance problem in the Mediterranean. For several months we will have to be manning ports in North Africa and in Italy. Moreover, the North African ports will be working at extreme pressure. They will not only have to accept United States and United Kingdom convoys, discharge these cargoes and re-load them for Italian destinations; but will also be loading divisions for Italy at top pressure. Moreover, owing to poor communications in North Africa, we cannot always move divisions to the most desirable ports of embarkation . . . ’

This utterance was based on recent experience, and upon a shrewd glance into the future.

Before the campaign in Sicily began, the maintenance base of the forces to be employed there was divided between North Africa and the Middle East. But it was assumed that the North African Base and the Middle East Base would be unable to supply, during an indefinite future, all the needs of all the forces which might be employed in Sicily, Italy, or elsewhere in the central or western Mediterranean. Therefore the policy was that after 26th August 1943 the greater part of the stores and supplies for maintenance should come in sea convoys which sailed from the producer countries, the United States and the United Kingdom, direct to final ports of destination, wherever these might be. It was calculated, and ordered, that the authorities in the producer countries must be given details of what was to be loaded in the convoys ten weeks before the dates of sailing.

Robertson, from the wealth of his experience in the African campaigns, pointed out on 4th August that the scheme was unworkable because no one could estimate in advance what the total needs of a force and the detailed items to meet these needs might be, unless he knew the size of the force, where it would be, what operations it would be carrying out, and what ‘overseas’ ports would be serving it. But, as we have seen, all these matters were more or less undefined until towards the end of September. Robertson pointed out that unless demands could be prepared rather accurately, the contents of a convoy would never match the user’s needs, there would be too much of one thing, too little of another, things that were needed would be wanting and things that were unwanted would be plentiful. In the case of a campaign in Italy there existed no buffer stocks to call upon in Sicily, because policy had decreed that full base depots should not be placed there, and scales of reserves held there had been

reduced.¹ Robertson's belief was that 'direct' convoys should be loaded with things which were in common and constant demand, and that all else should be consigned to North Africa, and sent on from there in coasters in answer to demands at thirty days' notice. There was another obstacle to the smooth working of 'direct' convoys, and indeed of any convoys within the Mediterranean. Smooth working postulated an authority competent to control the movements of ships, particularly at the receiver's end. For example, in Italy an authority to inform, ultimately, the naval authorities and others concerned with ships' movements, of what convoys or parts of convoys were to be sailed to what ports. As matters stood, the Movements Staff at the War Office dealt with their opposite numbers at A.F.H.Q. who co-ordinated the work with G.H.Q. Middle East and with the Americans. But in Italy, owing to H.Q. 15th Army Group's abdication of executive administrative functions, the unfortunate Fortbase had to accept responsibilities which it was not equipped to bear. Yet H.Q. 15th Army Group kept a finger in the pie. Trans-Mediterranean movement was a sort of No Man's Land between uneasily co-operating authorities: at A.F.H.Q. the North African Shipping Board and the Priorities of Movement Committee; G.H.Q. Middle East; H.Q. 15th Army Group; H.Q. 8th Army; and Fortbase.

On 27th August A.F.H.Q. suggested a solution based on Robertson's views although his scheme for the greater part of maintenance supplies and stores to be transhipped in North Africa could not be wholly adopted because of the congestion in North African ports. A.F.H.Q. proposed that small 'direct' convoys should sail, loaded with Corps 'packs' sufficient to cover fifteen days' maintenance. The remainder of maintenance supplies and stores, at thirty days' notice by H.Q. 15th Army Group, should be shipped to North Africa for onward dispatch. This proposal was generally agreed to, and promised to be more workable than anything so far proposed. But it did nothing to clear the No Man's Land to which we have referred. What was required was centralized control, and this was not obtained until Flambo was established.

Congestion in the North African ports had occurred and was prevailing because these ports were attempting to perform simultaneously two large tasks which together were too much for them. Up to the end of August (for after the 26th, in theory, 'direct' convoys sailed from the producer countries) they were receiving large convoys. Some part of the cargoes had to be unloaded and transferred to depots and the remainder had to be transhipped to coasters and other vessels for onward dispatch to Sicily and elsewhere. The volume of work was large and required much space in docks, wharves, and other transit areas, and much equipment such as cranes, tugs, and

¹ See Chapter IV, pp. 135-36.

lighters.¹ But from June onwards the ports were occupied also in mounting forces for Sicily and Italy. The result was delays, confusion, mistakes, and an uneconomical use of shipping which caused shortages of certain important types, for example coaster and cased petrol carriers.

By April 1944 a smoothly-working system had been created but we have said enough to show how difficult it is to transform into administrative fact Bacon's undoubtedly true dictum: 'Thus much is certain; that he that commands the sea is at great liberty, and may take as much and as little of the war as he will.'

(vi)

A problem which showed itself to be intractable during the first six months of the Italian campaign, and which proved in the end to have no satisfactory solution was the supply of reinforcements for the British armies. The problem occurred in its sharpest form amongst the British infantry which by the nature of things suffered greater continuous loss than did the other arms.² At the root of the problem was the question of man-power in the United Kingdom as a whole, and here in September 1943 mobilization had touched high-water mark. The armed forces had reached a total of four and a half million men and women, and industry a total of twenty-two millions. 'The Minister of Labour advised his colleagues that the total intake from all sources in 1944 would not suffice to replace ordinary wastage and, even if no men or women were called up for the Forces, there would still be a deficit of 150,000. As it was, the Services were asking for 776,000 more men and women; the supply departments for a net increase in the munitions industries of 174,000 while the demands of the basic industries, such as coal and agriculture, represented a new expansion of 240,000'. 'These demands cannot be met . . .'³ The consequences of this scarceness were felt even among the Italian mountain-sides.

Shortage of man-power was not a new problem in war, but in the British Army it was complicated by the strong personal ties between the soldier and his Regiment or Corps. Since the culmination of the Cardwell reforms in 1881 when the numbered regiments of infantry had been linked for the most part in pairs under territorial

¹ A transit area is really an unloading point for cargoes in bulk. These cargoes must be cleared rapidly if others are to be received because it is obvious that if a quay has a mountain of stores lying on it, the next ship to come alongside cannot discharge. On one quay in Algiers at the end of July, for example, 12,000 tons of stores were stacked.

² From 3rd September 1943 to 31st March 1944 the British armies in Italy suffered about 46,000 battle-casualties. Of this total about 26,500 fell on the Infantry. There were a large number of casualties from illnesses, e.g. 20,748 from malaria between July 1943 and June 1944.

³ *Manpower*, H. M. D. Parker. H.M.S.O. 1957, p. 210-11.

designations, regimental spirit and loyalties had been fostered by every possible means. These emotions, for better or worse, had become part of the mystique of the Regular and of the Territorial Army. Morale entered deeply into reinforcement which was not just a callous process of filling the gaps in a war-torn unit with a quantity of cannon-fodder.¹ If through harsh necessity or carelessness, random reinforcement occurred there could be deplorable consequences, as when in September 1943 a large number of men were collected from units in North Africa and were pitchforked on to the beaches at Salerno in the middle of battle. Many of these bewildered men refused to join units which they did not know and were sent back to Africa to face disciplinary action. Men were ready as a rule to fight and even to die in their own 'Duke of Avalon's Own, the Old Foremosts' but not in the 'Blank Dog-Stealers'.²

Having made the point concerning men we must turn to figures. The base of calculating the number of reinforcements to be held available was an estimate of the wastage which would occur at variously estimated rates during a fortnight or a month or more according to various circumstances. Before the campaign in Italy began, A.F.H.Q. fixed a figure of 14,300 reinforcements to see 8th Army through the landings in Italy and the operations immediately following; and for 10th Corps a figure of 9,200. Even at this stage men were so scarce that to approach the total of 23,500 it was necessary to reduce the battalions of 4th Division, in North Africa, to a strength of about 300 each by transfers and to be ready to make demands upon 1st Division. The result was to make one division operationally inefficient for the time being and to put a second in jeopardy. 8th Army forecast its demand for reinforcements at 5,000 each fortnight; 10th Corps at 2,000 each fortnight. In fact by early October casualties amounted to 6,388, and yet already the reinforcement machine was beginning to creak, so far had actual numbers available fallen, for one reason or another, below the planned figures. There was in particular a disturbing shortage of officers, 440 all told by November 1943.

In November 1943 the War Office, whose duty was to consider Army manpower as a whole, fixed the total holding of reinforcements in the Mediterranean, excluding Middle East, at 20,000. This figure was based upon the numbers estimated as necessary to replace one month's wastage at 'extreme' rates plus one month's wastage at 'normal' rates for the total number of formations in the theatre. Very

¹ 'The Cardwell system has failed the test of two world wars, since in neither was it possible to keep infantry battalions on active service reinforced with drafts from their own regiments.' *Lindsell's Military Organization and Administration*, 27th Ed. 1948, J. F. Benoy, p. 217. The organization of the Army and of the reinforcement system *inter alia* has of course been greatly changed since World War II.

² Names fictitious.

unfortunately, events upset calculations. By 1st January 1944 casualties amounted to 23,316. Then during the fighting at Anzio wastage exceeded estimates by more than 100%. Moreover many new units were being legitimately formed in the theatre for this or that purpose, and reinforcements for these had not been allowed for. In short reinforcements were not keeping up with wastage and the results for units which were fighting the battles were bad. In February 1944, for example, in the Anzio bridgehead, the average posted strength of other ranks of the battalions of 1st Division was 590 against an establishment of 809, and of 56th Division 554. Clark informed Alexander officially of his deep concern at this state of affairs.

In March 1944 the expedient was adopted of reducing the establishments of infantry battalions in the Mediterranean theatre from 844 all ranks to 726. It was agreed also to regard all infantry drafts from the United Kingdom as available to reinforce any battalion. This was to break the valued principle that a soldier should serve in his own corps. The War Office, gripped in the vice of a general shortage of manpower, could give little help. It sent 9,250 infantry reinforcements in an April convoy and hoped to send 4,000 more in the next convoy, but said also that after this no more could be expected until September 1944. A.F.H.Q. in consultation with H.Q. 15th Army Group, and with the sanction of the War Office, had to scrape its own barrel. It did so in two ways, chiefly. The first was to disband certain types of unit, for example Anti-Aircraft, for which no definite operational role could be foreseen. By this means some 21,477 men were gradually found to retrain as infantry. The second means was an organized attempt to raise men of low medical grades to fitness for combatant duties. There were serious drawbacks to every expedient and the problem was never finally solved, although the most urgent requirements were roughly matched.

Another disturbing problem, at least for those at the higher posts of command, was that of the supply of artillery ammunition. It is a fact that the armies in Italy came to rely upon a very high degree of artillery support and not in vain. There was nothing amiss in the aspiration to save casualties by expending shells, provided that the infantryman in particular did not become incapable of fighting with his own weapons, but the expenditure of artillery ammunition grew and grew. There was a local crisis of scarcity in 8th Army in October, met by transferring 20,000 rounds of 25-pdr ammunition from 5th Army, and another in November met by sending 4,000 tons urgently from the Middle East Base. Towards the end of December Robertson had to point out to 8th Army that while there was no shortage of stocks with troops, general reserves of ammunition were very low.

He hoped to transfer a quarter-million rounds of 25-pdr ammunition from Sicily but sea and land transport was not sufficient to satisfy unlimited demands and to build up proper reserves. In general, we may say, matters were the same in 5th Army. As 1944 came in there were signs that a serious crisis might be approaching. It was necessary to ship to Italy every ton that could be scraped up in the Middle East, North Africa, and Sicily (where after all the forces could not be stripped of ammunition) in addition to the quantities that were being sent to Italy from the United Kingdom. In February Alexander, during a visit to England, tried to obtain from the War Office immediate extra shipments and an increase in the amount of ammunition allotted to the British forces in Italy.

Discussions between Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, Sir Alan Brooke and Alexander, which included the state of production in the United Kingdom, showed that ammunition was not unlimited. It is convenient to express the results for the Mediterranean theatre in terms of rounds available per gun per day, if it is also understood that not every gun fires every day.¹ Soldiers eat food whether they are fighting or not but guns consume ammunition only during operations and then at varying rates.

Wilson told Alexander that he was ready to give him all the ammunition which might become available except for part of the reserves. Wilson required Alexander to give any necessary orders to

¹ *Estimated total of the ammunition for field and medium guns available in 1944*
British Forces. Mediterranean Theatre

Field Artillery

25 pdr H.E.	Total rounds	Rounds per gun	Rounds per gun per day
(a) Estimated rounds available from 1st Jan. to 31st July 1944 including the year's expenditure up to date	8,125,000	7,203	33·8
(b) Estimated rounds available from 1st Aug. 1944 to Jan. 1945 presuming full expenditure under (a) above	3,000,000	2,659	17·4
(c) Proportion of G.S. reserve which must not be expended without reference to A.F.H.Q. (Not included in (a) or (b) above)	1,125,000		

[Footnote continued opposite

restrict expenditure to the amount available for 1944, but declared himself willing to accept whatever risks might arise during the second half of the year from ungrudging artillery support during the first half.

Alexander could not feel content with Wilson's ruling and wrote:

'Battles cannot be fought successfully in this theatre without heavy ammunition expenditure. Conditions have changed from those with which we were faced in North Africa. The front is more densely held, the terrain is difficult, and we cannot afford the casualties which we should incur if we were to attack without adequate artillery support . . . I find it difficult to believe that at this stage of the war the Empire is unable to find sufficient ammunition to give, to the relatively few troops which she has committed to the battle, the full artillery support which they need and should have . . .'

Harsh facts, however, could not be escaped. On 21st March Alexander had to order his commanders to reduce expenditure on the whole front to 15 rounds of 25-pdr ammunition and 10 rounds of medium ammunition per gun per day except to repel attack or to support offensive operations which he had ordered or approved. It must be understood that these orders did not mean daily cheese-paring, but were a method of setting limits to total expenditure within which there was freedom to allot ammunition as required.

By the end of December 1943 the forces, other than American, to be built up in Italy would require at least some 99,700 transport vehicles if their establishments were to be complete.¹ The forces

Medium Artillery

4.5 inch and 5.5 inch H.E.			
(a) Estimated rounds available from 1st Jan. to 31st July 1944, including the year's expenditure up to date	2,046,500	5,329	25
(b) Estimated rounds from 1st August to 1st Jan. 1945 presuming full expenditure under (a) above	1,000,000	2,604	17
(c) Proportion of G.S. reserve which must not be expended without reference to A.F.H.Q. (Not included in (a) or (b) above)	246,500		

¹ An arbitrary figure based on 16 divisions at a 'slice' of 6,000 vehicles, and 37 air squadrons at a 'slice' of 100.

which had invaded Italy in September came in on 'light scales', which in an infantry division meant some 2,000 vehicles as opposed to 3,500. There was therefore a very large number of vehicles to be moved somehow to Italy at the rate of about 1,300 a day. Owing to scarceness of shipping and the limited capacities of the ports deliveries fell very far short of this figure. A plan to help matters by bringing 30,000 vehicles from Sicily by road through Calabria fell far behind schedule because of poor roads and the great difficulties in arranging supplies of petrol. In November Alexander estimated that he would be short of 10,000 vehicles on 1st January 1944.

There was a further cause of shortage in the poor mechanical condition of the many well-worn vehicles. In 8th Army alone 360 vehicles were off the road in early October for want of replacement of engines, and replacement of engines in general was 40% less than demand. To satisfy all the needs of 8th Army and 10th Corps some 5,700 engines per month were required for the near future. But until January 1944 all engines which required reconditioning had to be sent to the heavy workshops in Middle East because there was as yet none in Italy. Every engine therefore had to make a round journey of 4,000 miles, time was wasted, and scarce shipping-space was occupied.

Remedies for these and kindred ills were devised with speed. Robertson, on his appointment as head of Flambo, placed all British transport which was not a permanent part of formations in a general pool. He also declared five priorities of use for pooled transport.¹ In October 5,000 engines were shipped to Italy from the producer countries, and in November it was decided to open heavy workshops in Italy, and by April three of various types were in place. These included vehicle-assembly workshops which dealt with crated vehicles which arrived by sea. By the spring of 1944 therefore the supply, maintenance and repair of vehicles had passed out of the hand-to-mouth state of the early days.

The foregoing pages have erred if they have given the impression that the administrative staffs and services allowed the forces in Italy to begin and continue, like runagates, in scarceness. The contrary, rather, is the truth. Administration began its work of planning, preparation, and execution in a maze of operational uncertainties. Therefore until the end of 1943 the administrative foundation was shaky and the machine at times faltered under its enormous load.

i Essential maintenance of troops.
 ii Clearance of docks and railheads.
 iii Work within depots.
 iv Royal Engineer works services.
 v Miscellaneous.

But there was no break-down, and operations were never hamstrung by administrative failure or difficulties. By the end of March 1944 the British Italy Base was firmly established and working to the full capabilities of its installations. This was a most distinguished achievement.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ADVANCE TO THE WINTER LINE

(1st October to 15th November 1943)

(i)

THIS chapter is concerned with two sets of operations between 1st October and 15th November. The first set is the forcing by 8th and 5th Armies of the delaying positions which *AOK 10* had taken up in front of its main defensive zone, the so-called Winter Line, to which we shall be referring below. The second set is the attempt by both Armies to penetrate the Winter Line itself. The operations of the Armies, one on either side of the spine of Italy, were to all intents separate and they are therefore separately described. The series of German delaying and defensive 'lines' and positions which came into being as the result of the changing policies summarized in Chapter XI can be bewildering.¹ The terrain of 5th Army's operations on the west side of Italy is confusing because it is a tangle of rivers which in some instances change their names at certain points, of river valleys, and of mountains in some instances similarly named. It will help if we begin first by tracing the more important of the several German 'lines', and next by trying to present a simplified account of the lie of the land to complement Map 20. It is useful in orienting oneself to notice that the Italian peninsula runs north-westerly from its foot towards the Alps and that consequently German positions faced east rather than south.

The main delaying lines were known to *AOK 10* as Viktor, Barbara, and Bernhardt.² The Viktor line followed generally the Volturno, Calore, and Biferno rivers, and ran across the peninsula between Castel Volturno on the west coast and Termoli on the east coast. The Barbara line ran from Mondragone on the west coast towards Pietravairano, to Colli a Volturno and Sessano, and from there followed the Trigno river to S. Salvo on the east coast. Both these

¹ The expression 'Line' is misleading because in the contemporary documents it is used indifferently as a title, or to describe a series of topographical points, or a chain of light field works, or an organized system of defences. We try to use the word as a title, or as designating a series of easily recognizable places and features which indicate the run of important tactical ground.

² The Germans continually altered the titles of their lines or of parts of them to match alterations in their tactical ideas. We, in desperation, have chosen titles in common and general use, sacrificing precision to simplicity.

lines consisted of light field works and were intended to sustain rearguard action for a short time.

The Bernhardt line ran from near Minturno along the Garigliano river and through the high mountains north-west of the lower Volturno river's plain to Venafro and Castel di Sangro. Thence, crossing the Maiella range, it ran three miles or so north of the Sangro river to the east coast at Fossacesia. The Bernhardt was at first intended to be simply a delaying line and therefore began as a system of light field works. But when Hitler ordered Kesselring to stand on the line Gaeta-Ortona, the Bernhardt seemed to be the position on which to give battle. The Germans therefore began to fortify it, and to gain time to do so, offered stubborn delaying action on the Viktor and Barbara lines. Savage fighting occurred on the Bernhardt during October, November, and December, and, as the forward bastions fell to Allied attacks the Bernhardt was constantly strengthened and deepened by fresh positions. The whole system became known to the Allies as the Winter Line.

The most important of the switch positions became known as the Gustav line. The Gustav took final shape early in 1944 after continual alterations. It broke off from the Bernhardt line at the 'Garigliano sluice' near Mt. Valle Martina (Pt. 321), and then ran west of the Garigliano, Gari and Rapido rivers.¹ It incorporated the Cassino massif including the town of Cassino, and ran on across Mt. Belvedere (Pt. 721) and east of S. Biagio to Alfedena. Here it merged again in the Bernhardt line.

In mid-November 1943 Hitler ordered another switch position to the Gustav to be laid out in depth. This was named at first the Hitler line and was intended to block the Liri valley behind the Gustav defences and to shut in any penetration of the Bernhardt positions on the Garigliano. The Hitler line, when completed, ran from Terracina on the west coast to Fondi, Mt. Faggeto (Pt. 1259), Pontecorvo, Aquino, Piedimonte, and Mt. Cairo. Its name was changed to the Senger line when in January 1944 the Allies seemed to threaten its safety and thus the prestige of the Führer's name.

On the Adriatic flank, 8th Army's penetration of the Bernhardt positions north of the Sangro during November and December caused the German Staff to plan and develop a position which became known as the Foro line, but was not used until May 1944. It followed the course of the Foro river from Torre di Foro on the coast through Villamagna and Pretoro.²

We now take the rivers and their valleys and, in describing them,

¹ These rivers are defined below, p. 431.

² See Map 29.

move upstream at the risk of a reader supposing that the rivers have reversed the natural direction of their flow.

The four rivers which flow into the Adriatic, that is the Fortore, Biferno, Trigno, and Sangro, need no special remarks because their courses lie directly between the sea and their head waters in the mountain-masses of Daunia, Matese, and Molise.

The rivers which flow into the Tyrrhenian Sea have more complicated courses than those on the Adriatic side.

The lower Volturno's course is from the Gulf of Gaeta at Castel Volturno through the Campanian plain in an easterly direction to Cancellò and Capua, where it becomes confined between mountains until it reaches Castel Campagnano. Here the Calore takes off and runs in an easterly curve to Benevento and beyond. The Volturno turns north-west at Castel Campagnano, and from here to le Tavernole is termed the Middle Volturno. At le Tavernole the river becomes the Upper Volturno until it disappears in the mountains south of Alfedena. The Middle and Upper Volturno flow in mountain-walled valleys which become ever more narrow as the river approaches its head waters.

The Garigliano's course leaves the Gulf of Gaeta south of Minturno and passes through a marshy plain which becomes a gorge between Mt. Valle Martina and Mt. S. Croce. The river leaves the gorge near S. Ambrogio and north-east of S. Ambrogio meets the Liri river from the west and the Gari river from the north, and loses its name at the meeting point. The Liri lies in a cultivated valley which points north-west and near Isoletta loses its identity in the Sacco, which continues north-westwards in a narrower valley. The valleys of the Liri and Sacco point at the Alban Hills and Rome. The river Rapido's course is northward, leaving Mt. Cassino on its west, to its head waters on Mt. Rotolo (Pt. 1120). The Gari rises in the hills close to Cassino town, circles the town's southern outskirts, and flows south-eastward to join the Rapido. The Volturno, Garigliano, Liri, Gari and Rapido were important features of the western and central parts of the Winter Line and its outworks.

We turn next to mountains. On the eastern side of Italy the 8th Army had on its left the Molise and Matese massifs, and in front of it, beyond the Sangro, the Maiella mountains. On the western side of Italy the plain of the Lower Volturno is overlooked from its northern side by a semi-circle of mountains, of which we may name Mt. Massico (Pt. 812) nearest the sea, then Mt. S. Croce (Pt. 1006), then Mt. Maggiore (Pt. 1037). The Middle Volturno has on its north-eastern side the western wall of the Matese massif which runs towards Venafro and Isernia. Beyond the barrier formed by the

mountains which overlook the Lower Volturno plain there is a second barrier. This is formed by the Aurunci Mountains, near the sea and north of the Garigliano, then Mt. Valle Martina (Pt. 321), and then south of the Garigliano, Mt. Camino (Pt. 963), and then the peaks (e.g. Pt. 1170) overlooking Mignano. 5th Army therefore had a mountain mass on its right hand, and two barriers in its face. The principal gaps in the barriers were situated: on the sea-shore; at Cascano near Sessa Aurunca; and at Mignano.

Alexander's immediate object was to capture the general line Termoli-Biferno river-Isernia-Venafro-Sessa Aurunca because by doing this he would secure the port of Naples and the airfields near Naples and Foggia against a German counter-offensive. The Germans in fact were turning to the defensive in the Bernhardt positions, and on 2nd October Kesselring, with foreknowledge of Hitler's directive of 4th October, directed that 'every inch forward of Bernhardt' was to be contested in the interests of defensive preparations and of the war in the whole Mediterranean theatre.¹ von Vietinghoff, who had returned to *AOK 10* on 28th September after a week's deputizing for Rommel, forthwith addressed himself to occupying the Viktor line and to trying to collect a central reserve. Herr's 76th Panzer Corps (26th Panzer, 29th Panzer Grenadier, and 1st Parachute Divisions) was to take up the line of the Biferno, and Hube's 14th Panzer Corps (Hermann Göring Panzer, 16th Panzer, 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions) was to take up the line of the Lower Volturno. The reserve, for the time being no more than a reconnaissance battalion and a few tanks, was at Caiazzo, west of the meeting of the Volturno and Calore. As decreed by Hitler on 4th October, *AOK 10* was, however, to receive two divisions from northern Italy, and despite initial reluctance Kesselring had by this time agreed to call forward the units of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division which had been retained near Rome.² There were to be no withdrawals from the Viktor line except by von Vietinghoff's orders.

The Allied air forces require a general word before we begin to describe the advance to the Winter Line. Northwest African Air Forces were to have a gruelling time during the period October-

¹ Alexander's policy has been described in Chapter X, p. 332. The German change of plan also has been noticed in Chapter XI.

² On 1st October the fighting troops of *AOK 10* numbered 60,443, a figure which included men who were temporarily absent. By mid-month 305th Infantry Division and 65th Infantry Division, in transfer from northern Italy, were assembling, the first near Cassino, the second near Pescara. The front-line Orders of Battle of the two Corps were to undergo constant changes, as will appear in the narrative. Hube resumed command of 14th Panzer Corps from Balck at the beginning of October.

8th ARMY: FOGGIA TO THE SANGRO

October - November 1943



November because air operations were so widespread: over Italy, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece, with extensions to France, Germany, and Austria; and over the Mediterranean and Aegean seas. The weather for flying was at best patchy, at worst very bad, yet the air forces persisted doggedly in their tasks though with many interruptions. Many of a multitude of operations took place far out of sight and hearing of the forces on land and sea yet were an indispensable condition of those forces' accomplishments.

(ii)

See Map 23

Montgomery had decided to use Dempsey's 13th Corps for the advance to Termoli and Vinchiaturò, and this Corps was already deployed with 78th Division on the right, 1st Canadian Division on the left, and part of 4th Armoured Brigade patrolling beyond Foggia. The Special Service Brigade was to come under command of 13th Corps at Manfredonia on 30th September. 5th Corps was to protect the left flank of 13th Corps and 8th Army's L. of C. Its 5th Division was to move from Potenza to Foggia on 4th October, 1st Airborne Division was protecting the airfields at Foggia, and 8th Indian Division was disembarking at Brindisi.

Between the 8th Army and the Biferno lay the narrow coastal plain, rising on the westward side to the foothills of the Matese mountains, which towered up from the foothills. The plain was cultivated, well wooded, and 'blind'. There were two good roads leading north, forty miles apart: the coast road through Termoli and Vasto (Highway 16) and a mountain road through Vinchiaturò and Isernia (Highway 17). There were a number of lesser north-south roads, fit only for small forces. Rainfall might be as much as five inches a month during the autumn, and snow could be expected to descend to the 2,000-foot line in December.

Dempsey's plan was that 1st Canadian division, on the left, should advance on Vinchiaturò and Campobasso by the axis of Highway 17. On the right the Special Service Brigade was to seize Termoli by an amphibious assault, and to be followed there by the 36th and 38th Brigades of 78th Division, seaborne. 78th Division's remaining brigade, the 11th, and 4th Armoured Brigade were to move on Termoli through Serracapriola.¹ The advance by land began on 1st

¹ (a) An Order of Battle of 78th Division (Major-General V. Eveleigh) is at p. 152, Chapter V. For convenience of reference its brigades were:

11th (Brigadier R. K. Arbuthnott, from 29th September).
 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, 1st Surreys, 5th Northampton.
 36th (Brigadier B. Howlett): 6th Royal West Kent,
 5th The Buffs, 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.
 38th (Brigadier N. Russell): 6th Inniskillings,
 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers, 2nd London Irish Rifles.

[Footnote continued on p. 434.]

October, and 1st S.S. Brigade sailed on 2nd October. Preparatory air operations had been frustrated by a week of bad flying weather. The light bombers indeed were grounded, but British and American Kittyhawk fighter-bombers of the Desert Air Force, and Marauders of the Strategic Air Force were able on occasion to interfere with German troop moves on the Campobasso–Isernia roads. In fact the air forces intervened effectively in the battle which developed at Termoli.

von Vietinghoff, for his part, believed that the 8th Army would advance slowly because it seemed to be no stronger than four divisions, to be without strong naval support, and to be in administrative difficulties. This side of Italy, too, offered some good defensive positions in rear of the Bernhardt line. And so 76th Panzer Corps' front between the Adriatic and the mountains was held only by Heidrich's 1st Parachute Division, disposed for the most part astride Highway 17 in the Canadians' path. The Schulz Battle Group (1st Parachute Regiment) lay south-west of Termoli at Larino with its 2nd Parachute Battalion about five miles from the town. The non-descript Rau Battle Group, 400 strong, was in Termoli. As the result of an appeal for reinforcements from 76th Panzer Corps parts of 16th Panzer Division were, however, ordered to move eastwards on the evening of 1st October, and the next day Kesselring ordered von Vietinghoff to move the whole Division to Campobasso, from 14th Panzer Corps. This division therefore was on its way to an area some 40 miles from Termoli just as the British were about to land.¹

The Special Service Brigade arrived off Termoli before dawn on 3rd October, scattered the Rau Battle Group, and formed a close

(b) The Special Service Brigade (Lieut.-Colonel Durnford Slater): 3rd Commando, 40th R.M. Commando, 1st Special Raiding Squadron.

(c) 4th Armoured Brigade (Brigadier J. C. Currie): 3rd County of London Yeomanry; 56th Reconnaissance Regiment.

¹ 16th Panzer Division's Battle Groups were:

Battle Group Stenckhoff
2nd Panzer Regiment
2/16th Artillery Regiment
One company Engineers.

Battle Group von Doering
79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (two battalions)
3/16th Artillery Regiment
Company Engineers

Battle Group Stempel
1/64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment
1/16th Artillery Regiment
Company Engineers
16th Reconnaissance Battalion arrived at Campobasso ahead of the division and 2/64th Panzer Grenadiers were to join Stempel later.

perimeter round the town. Its patrols made touch during the morning on the Biferno with the Lancashire Fusiliers leading the overland force. This had suffered delays from cratered roads and demolished bridges and had had brushes with German detachments. Heavy rain began on 3rd October and continued for eighteen hours. As a result the soaked ground off the roads became almost impassable to vehicles, and field and anti-tank guns constantly stuck in the mire. There was a small, weak boat-bridge over the Biferno, and Bailey bridging equipment, hurriedly transferred from railway-repair far behind, did not arrive until the 4th October. By noon on 3rd October Stempel's and von Doering's Battle Groups, of 16th Panzer Division, were moving towards Termoli. The Division as a whole, suddenly uprooted from the Volturno and suffering from interruptions of its fuel-supplies caused by air attacks, was having a rough passage. Schulz meanwhile drew in his left-hand troops to the north side of the Biferno where the ridge of the Mt. di Coccia looked over Termoli.

11th Brigade spent 3rd October in crossing the Biferno in penny packets of men, wading or using the boat-bridge and local boats. 36th Brigade disembarked during the night 3rd/4th, and the plan for 4th October was that 11th Brigade and the S.S. Brigade would hold the bridgehead at Termoli while 36th Brigade cleared the Coccia ridge and then advanced towards Guglionesi, seven miles to the south-west. The British knew nothing of the approach of 16th Panzer Division, and the prospects of striking out from a secure bridgehead seemed good. But when, on the 4th October, 36th Brigade began to probe the Coccia ridge and cross the Sinarca stream north-west of Termoli, Stempel's Battle Group was arriving at Petacciato on the north, and von Doering's at S. Giacomo, west of the Coccia ridge. These groups together at first amounted to three battalions and five troops of artillery. The day's fighting gave no particular gain to either side, but the British deduced that a large enemy force, probably armoured, was entering the battle, while their own tanks and all but a few anti-tank guns were on the wrong side of the Biferno. However by evening the engineers were working on a tank-ford and a Bailey bridge, and Brigadier Howlett ordered his 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders to renew, during the night 4th/5th, an attack on S. Giacomo which had been begun on the 4th but had been checked. He was, however, very anxious to have some tanks in support since these could probably move on the higher, drier ground. Six Shermans of 3rd C.L.Y. crossed early on the 5th October by the new ford. They churned this into a morass and no others could cross.

The Argylls, early on the morning of the 5th, found themselves, with very few anti-tank guns, in a dangerous position near the Valentino brick-works outside Termoli. And on this morning, too,

three companies of Stenckhoff's 2nd Panzer Regiment with about 20 Pzkw Mark IV began to reach the battlefield. Stempel and von Doering, supported by these tanks, attacked towards S. Valentino and the Coccia ridge, and as the result 36th Brigade was in great danger. Four Shermans were knocked out and the Argylls, who had 162 casualties, were pressed slowly back towards Termoli. On the Argylls' left six German tanks, on the Coccia ridge, overran part of 6th Royal West Kents, penetrated between them and the Buffs, and with von Doering's infantry forced both battalions back. Stempel, on the German left, closed in on Termoli. However at 3 p.m. 214th Field Company completed their Bailey bridge and 3rd C.L.Y. quickly crossed. General Evelegh, forward with 36th Brigade, ordered a counter-attack, and 3rd C.L.Y., with the Buffs, again established positions on the Coccia ridge. 11th Brigade and the S.S. Brigade held strongly in the bridgehead north-west of Termoli. German spirits were in fact beginning to sink, unknown to the British, because they had gained little more than three thousand yards in two days of punishing fighting—in 16th Panzer Division there were 126 casualties and 108 sick. On the 5th reinforcements reached the British: in the afternoon two squadrons of Shermans of the Canadian Three Rivers Regiment by forced marches, and in the evening 38th Brigade by sea. On the 5th, too, the fighter-bombers of U.S. XII Air Support Command were diverted to 8th Army's front to help the Desert Air Force.¹ Evelegh ordered a general counter-attack on the 6th and this began to turn the tables by noon on that day. At 4.35 p.m. Herr sanctioned a withdrawal north-westward. On 7th and 8th October 78th Division pushed forward to Larino on the south and towards Petacciato on the coast. Termoli had been a hard-fought, stubborn battle with well over five hundred casualties on either side. The British force thoroughly earned the laurels signified by possession of the field.²

1st Canadian Division's advance to Campobasso and Vinchiatturo, respectively attained on 14th and 15th October, passed through the mountainous tracts named Daunia and Sannio.³ The advance took

¹ On 5th October British and American fighter-bombers flew 418 sorties; on the 6th the fighter-bombers of the Desert Air Force flew over 400.

² British statistics are incomplete and only 435 casualties can be accounted for. 16th Panzer Division had 573 casualties.

³ An Order of Battle of 1st Canadian Division is at p. 117, Chapter IV. Major-General G. G. Simonds was sick from 29th September to 15th October, and was replaced by Brigadier C. Vokes. For convenience of reference, the Canadian Infantry Brigades were: 1st (Brigadier H. D. Graham): The Royal Canadian Regiment, The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, 48th Highlanders of Canada. 2nd (Lieut.-Colonel B. M. Hoffmeister): Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, The Loyal Edmonton Regiment. 3rd (Brigadier M. H. S. Penhale): Royal 22e Regiment, The Carleton and York Regiment, The West Nova Scotia Regiment.

1st Canadian Brigade from Motta to the upper waters of the Fortore near Gambatesa between 2nd and 6th October; saw 3rd Brigade's capture of Gambatesa on 7th and 8th October; and 2nd Brigade's progress, on the division's left flank, cross-country and by minor roads, from S. Bartolomeo in Galdo to Vinchiaturò. The German defence was conducted at first by the Heilmann Battle Group, composed mainly of 3rd Parachute Regiment plus a battalion of the 1st, and later 2nd/67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. Then, as the Canadians progressed, 4th Parachute Regiment and part of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division became engaged. The Canadians remarked, as a new type of German tactics constantly repeated, the savage defence of a feature and then sudden withdrawal, delaying and vexing because on each occasion the attacker had to deploy most, or all, of his force.

1st Canadian Brigade, setting out from Lucera on 1st October, in four days of persistent effort cleared the enemy from the hills at Motta, from Mt. Sambuco (Pt. 985) and Volturara, Mt. Miano (Pt. 787) and S. Marco, and pushed them west of the Fortore on 6th October. 2nd Canadian Brigade, south or on the left of the 1st, was in S. Bartolomeo in Galdo and across the river at Foiano on 4th October. 3rd Canadian Brigade relieved the 1st on 6th October, and advancing through driving rain and mud, took Gambatesa on the 8th in two days' fighting. The next delaying position on Highway 17 was at Jelsi behind the Carapello stream but 3rd Brigade captured this and Gildone beyond it on 11th October. The Germans now were on the brink of withdrawing west of Campobasso, a move partly enforced by 2nd Brigade's operations which had cleared Decorata on 8th October. In the event the Canadian Division occupied Campobasso and Vinchiaturò without resistance at either place.

13th Corps had thus completed its part of Montgomery's plan with some interesting effects on German thinking. The higher commanders from *OKW* downwards suspected that the Adriatic flank might be the scene of an Allied *Schwerpunkt*, and *OKW* found further evidence for the theory that the Allies were looking for a jumping-off place for operations against the Balkans. Fresh apprehension, too, was excited of landings on either coast of Italy, and on the 7th *OKW* passed on to Kesselring and the naval and air Cs.-in-C. the Führer's order that coast defences must be strengthened up to 60 miles in rear of the Bernhardt Line. More particularly, four formations were moved or ordered to move to the Adriatic side during October and early November.¹ 13th Corps' advance caused 76th Panzer Corps to

¹ 16th Panzer Division, as we have seen; 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, north of Ravenna; Sturmbrigade Reichsführer S.S., Teramo; 65th Division, Pescara area.

shorten its front and to speed up its preliminary moves to the Barbara Line. Yet on the whole the effects of 13th Corps' advance were soon set in the background by events on and north of the Volturno.

(iii)

See Maps 20 and 24

On 5th October Clark ordered 5th Army to cross the Lower Volturno and capture the general line Isernia–Venafro–Sessa Aurunca. Isernia was a focal point of several trans-peninsular roads and an avenue to the north; the Venafro area included the Mignano gap and the entrance to the Liri valley; Sessa Aurunca included the Cascano gap into the Garigliano plain.¹ 6th U.S. Corps (Major-General John P. Lucas) was on the right and McCreery's 10th Corps was on the left. The German force, immediately opposed, was 14th Panzer Corps, from west to east 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, Hermann Göring Panzer Division, 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, and the Viebig Battle Group, from 26th Panzer Division of 76th Panzer Corps, on the extreme left or eastern flank. 14th Panzer Corps had begun to move into the Viktor line on the night 3rd/4th October protected by strong rearguards further south. These were quickly driven in by the Allies and by 8th October the Germans held, south of the Volturno, only Castel Volturno. von Vietinghoff did not intend to defend the lower Volturno à outrance.

By the 11th October the general layout of 10th and 6th U.S. Corps, from the sea inland along the lower Volturno, was:

10th Corps

46th Division:	128th and 139th Brigades, Castel Volturno–Arnone; 138th Brigade, north of Naples.
7th Armoured Division	131st Lorried Infantry Brigade, Grazzanise; 22nd Armoured Brigade, south of Capua; 23rd Armoured Brigade, in rear of 22nd.
56th Division:	201st Guards Brigade, Capua; remainder between Capua and Caserta.

6th U.S. Corps

3rd U.S. Division:	facing Triflisco.
34th U.S. Division:	Limatola to the Calore confluence.
45th U.S. Division:	in movement on roads Benevento–Telese and Benevento–Pontelandolfo.
36th U.S. Division:	Nola area.
82nd U.S. Airborne Division:	Naples.

¹ 'Mignano Gap' was the useful contemporary name for what rather was a long defile through which Highway 6 ran.



On 9th October General Clark directed that the Volturno was to be crossed on the night 12th/13th October, and both Corps faced an opposed river-crossing.

An opposed river crossing requires special equipment and methods and in 1943 the following were typical in a British Corps.¹ The equipment included assault boats, rafts of various kinds, and bridges of folding-boat, pontoon, and Bailey types. All were carried in vehicles and were cumbersome and awkward to handle. Assault boats were collapsible, not bullet-proof, and held from seven to nine men. Paddles propelled the boats but, in unskilled hands, as like as not in circles and zig-zags. Therefore it was preferable to pass a cable to the far bank and haul boats and rafts along it, to and fro. Boating and light rafting were tasks for all arms, but the engineers were responsible for bridging and heavy rafting.

A retreating enemy almost always destroys bridges, and therefore a principal object in an opposed crossing is to build bridges, first and quickly those strong enough to carry the lighter guns and fighting and administrative vehicles, later those fit for heavier loads.² It follows that it is essential to reconnoitre in detail: the approaches to the near bank of a river and the exits from the far one; the height, gradient, and composition of both banks; and the river's breadth, depth, current, and bottom. Such reconnaissances are laborious, dangerous, and often tell-tale to the enemy. Suitable sites for crossings and bridges are as a rule few and obvious, and the work requires quantities of equipment in large vehicles to be assembled at or near the crossing-places. In consequence there is little hope of tactical surprise and the first crossings by assault boat and raft are almost always under fire. The later stages of the crossing, in particular the bridging, must be protected from direct small-arms fire and, ideally, from observed artillery and mortar fire as well. For every reason a successful opposed river crossing demands courage, skill, careful preparation, and good luck.

¹ American equipment and methods were different in several ways, and are not discussed.

² The British classification of bridges in terms of loads in tons was:

Class	Tracked Vehicles	Wheeled Vehicles, axle load
5	5.5	4.4
9	7.5	7
30	30	20
40	40	25
70	70	40

As a pure rule of thumb some weights are:

25-pdr gun	1.75 tons
5.5-in. gun	5.7 "
3-ton lorry, loaded	5.7 "
Sherman tank, Mark III	31 "

On the front of 10th Corps the Lower Volturno was 100 yards wide, six feet deep, flowed with a 4-knot current, and was passable only by bridging. Above Triflisco, on the front of 6th U.S. Corps, the river was fordable in places. East of the lower reaches rain had made a quagmire of the country and so the only possible crossing-places were where good metalled roads approached the river, that is at Castel Volturno, Canello, Grazzanise, and Capua. The bridges at these places had been wholly or partly destroyed, and the Germans were able to cover the sites and approaches with observed artillery and mortar fire. It was possible to use landing-craft at the river's mouth, but the Germans had foreseen the possibility and had mined the beaches. 10th Corps had bridging equipment to build one Class 30 or 40 bridge and one Class 9, but no more, and had 288 assault boats.¹

Allied air operations during 5th Army's advance to the Volturno, preparatory to the crossings, and also during the corresponding operations of the 8th Army, were dogged by bad weather. Each type of aircraft, except perhaps the fighters, was at some time or other grounded and the number of sorties fell. For example less than 100 bomber and fighter-bomber sorties were flown in support of 5th Army during each twenty-four hours between 2nd and 7th October, and in support of 8th Army between 7th and 14th October. On several days tactical air reconnaissance was either prevented or handicapped, and consequently effective sorties by other aircraft were hindered. The pattern of the desultory air operations was to attack and impede German movements by road and rail mainly south of a line which we can draw, arbitrarily, from Pescara on the east coast to Terracina on the west coast. Operations were so far successful that on 3rd October Marauders of the Strategic Air Force destroyed the bridge at Triflisco, and on the 16th October the Germans recorded that rail movement on the east coast line south of Ancona was stopped owing to damage to the tracks.² There were several reports of interruptions to road traffic.

Although the weather greatly reduced the operations of the Bostons and Baltimores against targets in, and immediately in rear of, the German lines, the Mitchells of N.A.T.B.F. and the Wellingtons of

¹ Bridging equipment was scarce because of the enormous demand. British engineers built 446 bridges in Italy between September 1943 and April 1944.

² The destruction of the bridge at Triflisco calls attention to an interesting point. When a land force is advancing, the choice of targets that the air force is to destroy in its path has to be jointly considered by the land and air commanders. Wrecked towns or villages may easily become awkward obstacles to an advancing force. It is seldom worthwhile to spare the enemy a difficulty by abstaining from attacking bridges because one hopes to use them later oneself. The enemy will demolish them unless prevented by ground troops.

N.A.S.A.F. were able to direct much of their combined actions against these targets, the Mitchells by day and night, the Wellingtons by night.

When the airfields at Pomigliano and Capodichino near Naples, and at Capua, were taken, 164 German and 101 Italian aircraft in various states of repair fell into Allied hands. These bags brought the total of aircraft captured in Italy between 3rd September and mid-October to 574 German and 523 Italian.¹

On 10th October control of all tactical bombers, which so far during the invasion of Italy had been delegated in part to Desert Air Force and to U.S. XII Air Support Command, was restored to the A.O.C. Northwest African Tactical Bomber Force.² But because of unreliable telephonic communications a rough standing allotment of squadrons of light bombers was made, five to U.S. XII A.S.C., three to D.A.F., while Northwest African Tactical Air Force was allotted three squadrons of medium bombers. Notwithstanding these arrangements N.A.T.B.F. kept the power to use all its strength in support of either Army if need be.

German dispositions on the Lower Volturno are shown in the diagram on page 442. Kesselring and von Vietinghoff were uneasy about the flanks of 14th Panzer Corps because the Canadians advancing towards Vinchiaturro, and 45th U.S. Division advancing towards Pontelandolfo and Telesse, threatened the eastern flank, while German Intelligence suspected that the Allies intended to land on the sea flank, north of the Volturno. The upshot was that the Corps commander, Hube, pulled back his left behind the Titerno stream while holding Mt. Acero as a strong outpost, and on his right committed four battalions to coastal defence.

Clark had hoped at first that his two Corps would be able to take the Lower Volturno in their stride, as it were, on the night 9th/10th October. But the vile weather and German demolitions along the roads delayed Allied movements, particularly of bridging equipment, and Clark had to accept a slower pace and plan a crossing by both Corps on the night 12th/13th October. On the right, 6th U.S. Corps was to cross on a two divisional front, 34th U.S. Division seizing the high ground north of Squille-Caiazzo, 3rd U.S. Division seizing the

¹ Casualties in aircraft are constantly noticed in a volume such as this, but the death of an individual airman can seldom be recorded. An exception must be Group Captain J. Darwen, commanding No. 239 Wing R.A.F., who was killed during an attack at Palata on 7th October. This officer had peculiarly distinguished himself in Africa by an exceptional exploit when from L.G. 125 deep in the 'enemy's desert', a force of Hurricanes under his command had harried Rommel's retreating forces. He had also taken a leading part in the famous feat of army-air co-operation at the forcing of the Tebaga Gap in March 1943. See Vol. IV, pp. 99-101; 347-49.

² For the delegation see Chapter VII.

German Dispositions (14th Panzer Corps) facing the 5th Army on the Volturno

15th Panzer Grenadier Division (Col. Baade, acting) Coast to incl. Brezza	Hermann Göring Panzer Division (General Conrath) excl. Brezza to Piana di Caiazzo	3rd Panzer Grenadier Division (General Gräser) Caiazzo to Amorosi	26 Panzer Division Mt. Acero area
	Battle Group von Corvin	Battle Group Möller	Battle Group Viebig
	Battle Group Maucke	Battle Group Haen	
129 Pz Grenadier Regt (3 Bns) 33 Arty Regt (less one Bty)	115 Pz Gren Regt (2 bns) Reggio Bn Part of 2 Pz Regt (10-12 tanks) 2nd/71st Werfer Regt	29 Pz Gren Regt Recco Bn Assault Gun Bn	2/9 Pz Gren Regt 26 Div Recco Bn 1/93 Arty Regt
	The divisional Arty comprising some 43 pieces of various calibres was under Divisional control	Two batteries of Divisional Artillery Regiment	
<i>Divisional Reserve</i> 1/104 Pz Gren Regt 2/33 Arty Regt 215 Pz Abteilung— 24 tanks 21 assault guns 32 Pak 75-cm guns Engineer Bn One Flak Bty	<i>Divisional Reserve</i> 2/1 Pz Gren Regt H.G. Flak Bn One company 2 Pz Regt (10-12 tanks)		
[Note 104 Pz Gren Regt (less its 1st Bn) was watching the Gulf of Gaeta.]			
10th British Corps	Capua incl. to 10th Corps		6th U.S. Corps

high ground north of Piana di Caiazzo-Trifisco. On the left, 10th Corps was to cross on a three divisional front; 56th Division at Capua; 7th Armoured Division at Grazzanise; and 46th Division at Canello and Castel Volturno. 10th Corps' crossings were regarded as the main thrust and were to be helped by a small landing north of the Volturno: two squadrons of 40th R.T.R. in L.C.T.s, supported by the destroyers *Laforey* and *Lookout* and the Dutch gunboat *Flores*.

The assaults by 34th and 3rd U.S. Divisions, which began at 2 a.m. on 13th October, were highly successful, and were greatly helped by 45th U.S. Division which began to clear Mt. Acero on the 13th and then pushing across the Titerno, stood ready on the 14th to attack Faicchio. The other two divisions forded the Volturno fairly easily and took all their objectives during the 13th. German artillery fire, however, interfered with bridge-building and it was not until the 14th that two Class 30 bridges were in place behind 34th and 3rd U.S. Divisions.

On 10th Corps' front the German strength was estimated at five battalions, a regiment of artillery, and a battery of nebelwerfer, with as much again and the tanks of the Hermann Göring Division in reserve. The nature of the Volturno's banks, the metalled roads across the soggy plain, and the fact that each British Division was to make a bridge in effect dictated the crossing-points. These considerations were not lost on the Germans. In 56th Division's sector, on the right, the only suitable place for a bridge and for launching assault boats was a little south of the demolished railway bridge at Capua. In 7th Armoured Division's sector, in the centre, a partly demolished bridge north of Grazzanise was a site too good to disregard. In 46th Division's sector, on the left, the road to Canello was the best approach. McCreery, faced with the fact that surprise was unobtainable because of the circumstances, decided to attack at intervals on the 12th in the hope of confusing the Germans: 7th Armoured Division at 8.25 p.m., 56th Division at 8.50 p.m., and 46th Division at 9 p.m. Four hundred rounds per gun were dumped for artillery support, and twenty-four DUKWs were given to 46th Division and two each to the other two. Formations, obviously, were without recent training in boating and rafting and some practice had been arranged on the stagnant waters of canals and of the ornamental lake of the palace at Caserta.

In the event, 10th Corps' operation was disappointing, and might have miscarried but for the effect which the success of 6th U.S. Corps produced upon German commanders. Of this effect more will be said. 7th Armoured Division, whose attack was intended mainly to draw and distract the enemy's attention, put one battalion, 1/7th Queen's, into the assault crossing. This battalion won a small bridge-head with difficulty, and the operation was continued by infiltration

and patrols because it was diversionary. Bridging was continually harassed by the accurate fire of German guns and mortars, and it was not until 16th October that Brezza was occupied and the bridge there rebuilt. By contrast the Corps' main thrust, 46th Division's crossing by two brigades which placed three battalions in the actual assault, was almost unopposed except near Cancellò. Here 5th Sherwood Foresters of 139th Brigade lost over 200 men in a long fight. The reason why the other crossings were little disputed was that the Germans chose to place outposts on the river, and to defend the broader obstacle formed by the flat morass of fields, scattered with mines, which lay between the river and the Agnena canals. Therefore although 128th and 139th Brigades had established bridgeheads by the close of 13th October, the subsequent advance was slow against 15th Panzer Grenadier Division's obstinate resistance. A squadron of 40th R.T.R. which had landed from the sea helped the infantry very little because the tanks were hemmed in by mines and mud.

Capua, however, in 56th Division's sector, was the scene of events which best demonstrate the perilous chances of an opposed river crossing. Here 167th Brigade was to make the main crossing but the small number of sites suitable for launching assault boats limited the assault force to one battalion, 7th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. This battalion spent the day of 12th October concealed in the ruins of a factory near the river bank, into which it had stealthily moved during the previous night.¹

The plan of assault was that 'C' Company should act as boat-carriers and paddlers for assaulting parties of 'A' and 'D' Companies. At the exact moment on the evening of 12th October at which the men were forming up in the factory the Germans opened fire upon it with artillery, mortars, and nebelwerfer. Casualties were soon more than eighty and rose to some 140, and so many assault boats were smashed on the bank or in the water that only two remained. Brigadiers Lyne and Firth later took the only possible decision: to postpone the whole operation.² And so it was that 56th Division was unable to cross the river until on 16th October the enemy withdrew.

It was undoubtedly the success of the American attacks between Teleso and Triflisco which decided the Germans that the defence of the lower Volturno could not be prolonged. On the 14th Hube

¹ Precautions to preserve secrecy were very thorough. Thus when three officers were required to leave the factory for a brigade conference, they did so disguised as Italian civilians.

² Major-General D. A. H. Graham, 56th Division's commander, had been disabled in a road-accident, and Brigadier L. O. Lyne replaced him until Major-General G. W. R. Templer arrived on 15th October. Brigadier C. E. A. Firth commanded 167th Brigade.

22. River Trigno. Pack mules pick a crossing.



23. Upper Sangro. View, looking north-west.





24. R.A.F. Baltimore at time of bomb-release. Sulmona area.

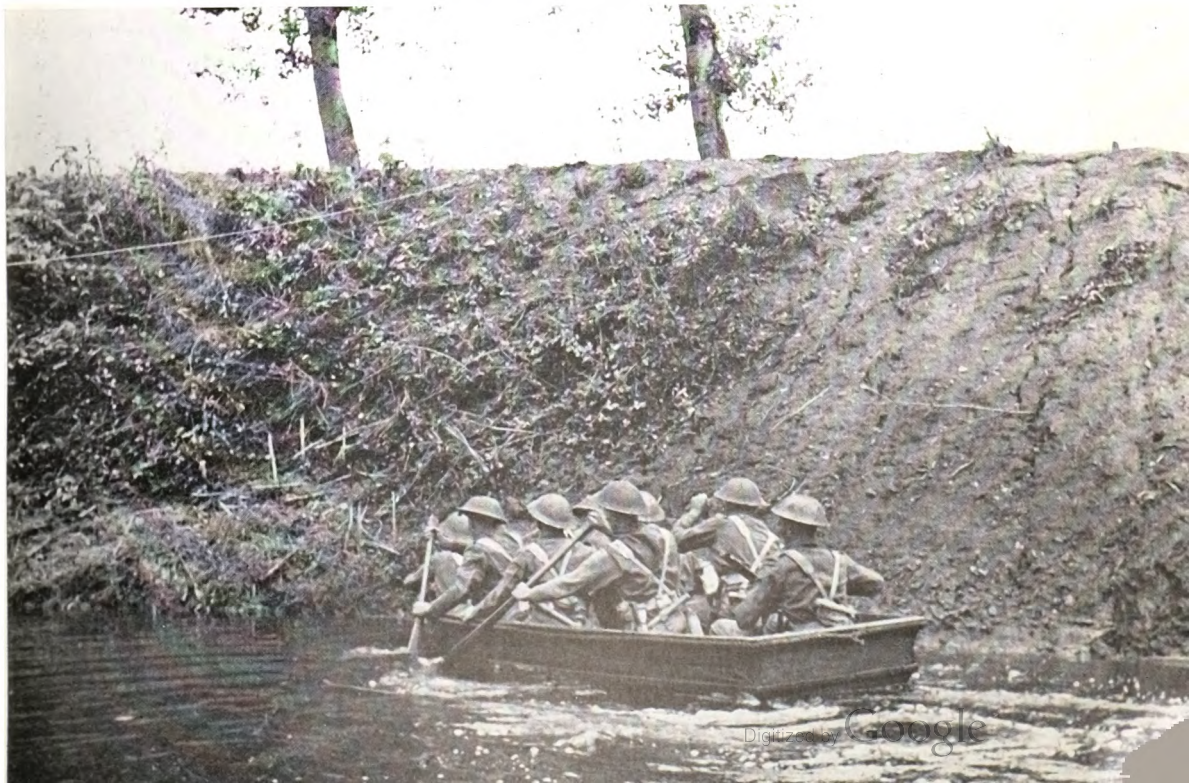
25. Orsogna. The difficult approaches from the south-west.

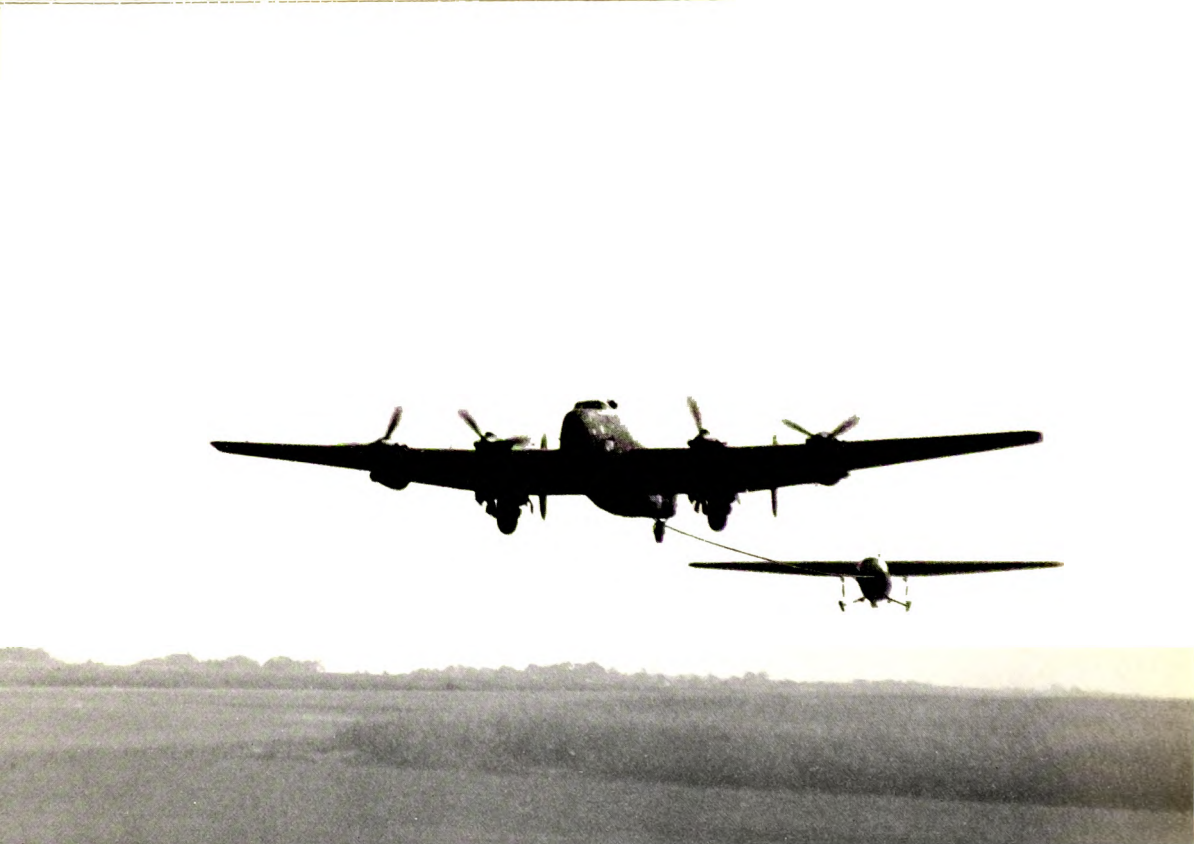




26. Ortona. Street fighting.

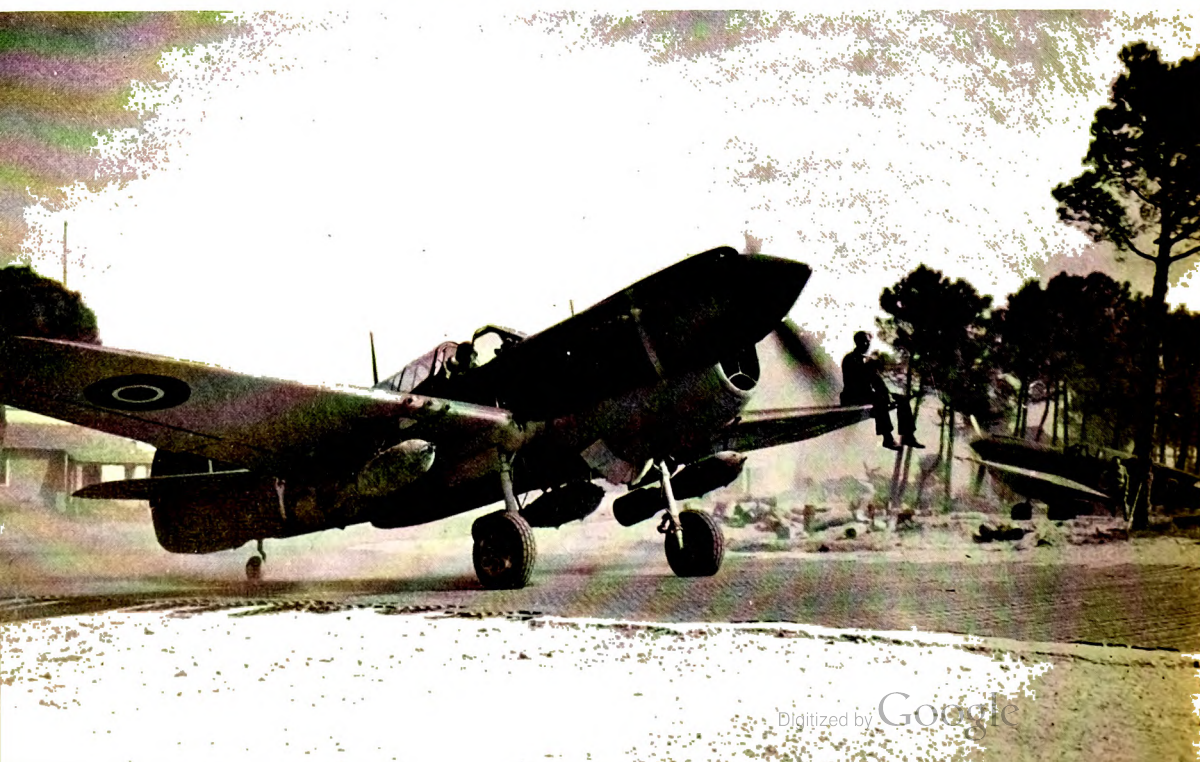
27. Training for river crossing. Infantry in assault boat.





28. R.A.F. Halifax of No. 295 Squadron R.A.F. towing Horsa glider (in England). This Squadron took part in invasion of Sicily.

29. R.A.F. Kittyhawk fighter-bomber about to taxi out. Note 500-lb. bombs.



described the situation at the points where the Hermann Göring Division and 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division met as very precarious. He assessed the danger of a break-through which might cut off his Corps' western wing and asked von Vietinghoff's permission for a general withdrawal. von Vietinghoff gave permission for withdrawal where necessary, and later discussed matters with Kesselring. The outcome was permission for a step by step withdrawal which, beginning late on 14th October, by 24th October carried 14th Panzer Corps back to the general line Raviscanina at the head of the valley of the middle Volturno to Mondragone.

Lucas therefore set his divisions to move: 45th U.S. Division on Piedimonte d'Alife, there to come into reserve; 34th U.S. Division first up the west side of the Volturno, then across to the east side near Alvignano, and then towards Alife and Raviscanina; 3rd U.S. Division towards Roccaromana by the mountain road through Liberi and Dragoni. McCreery decided to make Highway 6 his main axis, and a Class 30 bridge was erected at Capua by 17th October instead of at Cancellò. 56th Division, on the right, was to make for the high ground athwart Highway 6 on the line Rochetta-Calvi Risorta-Motanaro. 7th Armoured Division in the centre, and 46th Division on the left were to cross the Volturno plain towards the barrier marked by Mt. Massico.

On 20th October Clark re-defined the lines which he intended to reach. The first began at Isernia and followed the Garigliano to the sea, the second was from Arce to Fondi. He charged 6th U.S. Corps with the main thrust, north-westwards up the valley of the Middle Volturno.

6th U.S. Corps toiled forward along three poor roads and against German rearguards until by 25th October it was on the line Raviscanina-Mt. Monaco-Pietramelara. The troops were very tired and had suffered: in 3rd U.S. Division, for example, there were 500 casualties between 14th and 18th October. The British advance was as toilsome. 56th Division's troops on the right moved along and up and down mountainous slopes—'the men desperately tired towards the end, and having to be kept awake with benzedrine tablets'—and on the left through broken hills. The other two divisions struggled through gluey mud in the plain. By 25th October, to date approximately, 56th Division reached Rochetta and Motanaro, 7th Armoured Division Francolise, and 46th Division was bridging the Agnena canals. McCreery now decided that 46th Division should change places with 7th Armoured Division because the muddy plain seemed to offer a poor field for the armour, and it seemed advantageous to put both infantry divisions side by side. By 27th October

10th Corps was re-grouped on the line Rochetta–Francolise–S. Andrea. 7th Armoured Division was to protect the left flank and to advance to Mondragone if opportunity offered. Clark's orders of 20th October re-defined the boundary between the American and British Corps, giving Highway 6 in the Mignano gap to Lucas. This meant that in the next phase Lucas would be responsible for forcing the heights which lay immediately west of the road and on its north-east; McCreery for clearing Mt. Maggiore, Mt. Camino, and the Cascano Gap.

The Allied air forces supporting 5th Army continued to be handicapped by bad weather during the period 15th to 25th October, and the number of sorties fluctuated with the weather: on the 17th October, for example, the fighter-bombers flew 32 sorties but on the 23rd 154. In sum, to take but two types of aircraft, the fighter-bombers flew 949 sorties in these eleven days and the light bombers 429. The area of air operations directly connected with the battle-field can be defined on the north by Venafro, Cassino, and Gaeta; and on the south by the fronts of the advancing Allied troops.¹ The targets were, as was usual, the main road and rail routes and their bridges, marshalling-yards, road transport; bodies of troops and gun positions. It is impossible to say what were the precise effects of the air operations except that Allied troops were on occasion heartened by the sight of the fighter-bombers in action; a stimulant which should not be undervalued.

On the German side there were complaints of the ineffectiveness of the *Luftwaffe*, yet on 15th October the German air effort suddenly rose, and Allied reports told of the unaccustomed sight of some 60 German fighters during the day, and 64 fighter-bombers in action against various targets near Capua and in the valley of the middle Volturno. Up to October 18th the German fighters flew as many as 100–120 sorties daily and the fighter-bombers 30 sorties daily. After that date the effort subsided; the effects had been negligible.²

¹ Some places which particularly attracted the Allied airmen's attention were (from the coast inland): Gaeta, Formia, Minturno, Aquino (airfield), Teano and a rail junction north of Venafro.

² There was some reorganization and there were some changes of location within *Luftflotte 2* during these eleven days. On the 15th *Fliegerkorps II* was ordered to move its H.Q. to Monza, eight kilometres north-east of Milan (this put it outside *O.B. Süd's* area of command). *Fliegerkorps II's* previous H.Q. accommodation at Viterbo was to be taken over by *Fliegerführer Luftflotte 2* (Colonel Hirschhold), directly subordinate to *Fliegerkorps II*. Hirschhold was to assume command of all the bomber, fighter and close-range air reconnaissance units operating in support of *AOK 10*, and his H.Q. was to absorb the Staff of *Fernkampfliedigerführer Luftflotte 2*, now disbanded, which meant that there would no longer be a separate bomber command.

(iv)

The next phase of operations brought 5th Army into contact with the western part of the Bernhardt line during the period 25th October–5th November. There followed then an attempt to breach this part of the line, which ended in temporary stalemate from about 13th November until 1st December, resulting from the exhaustion of the Allied troops by continual fighting in cruel terrain and in frightful weather. The Germans were in no better case.

The positions held by 14th Panzer Corps included the following sectors from east (left) to west (right) from a German view-point:

Left. From near Castel di Sangro through Montaquila to Roccaravindola.

Left-Centre. From Pozzilli along a chain of heights running southwards towards Mignano, to be recognized by the names Mts S. Croce and Corno—Ceppagna—Mts Cannavinelle, Rotondo, and Lungo—and, south-east of this trio, Mt. Cesima.

Right-Centre. From the area of Mignano to that of Castelforte, including the high and long massif formed by Mts Maggiore, Camino, la Difensa, and Fuga.

Right. From Castelforte through Minturno to the coast.

The left and left-centre sectors lay on the threshold of a wilderness of mountains, crossed by the roughest roads and tracks, and likely to be snow-covered in winter. The valley of the Upper Volturno, fronting these sectors, offered an approach to Venafro and Isernia, but west of the river the heights rose like a forbidding wall. Highway 6 penetrated the left-centre and right-centre sectors but was dominated by heights on both sides. There were no roads across the Mt. Maggiore–Fuga massif though the Allies could approach its base by a road through Teano and Roccamonfina. In the right sector Mt. Massico could be got round only through the Cascano gap or along the coast road.

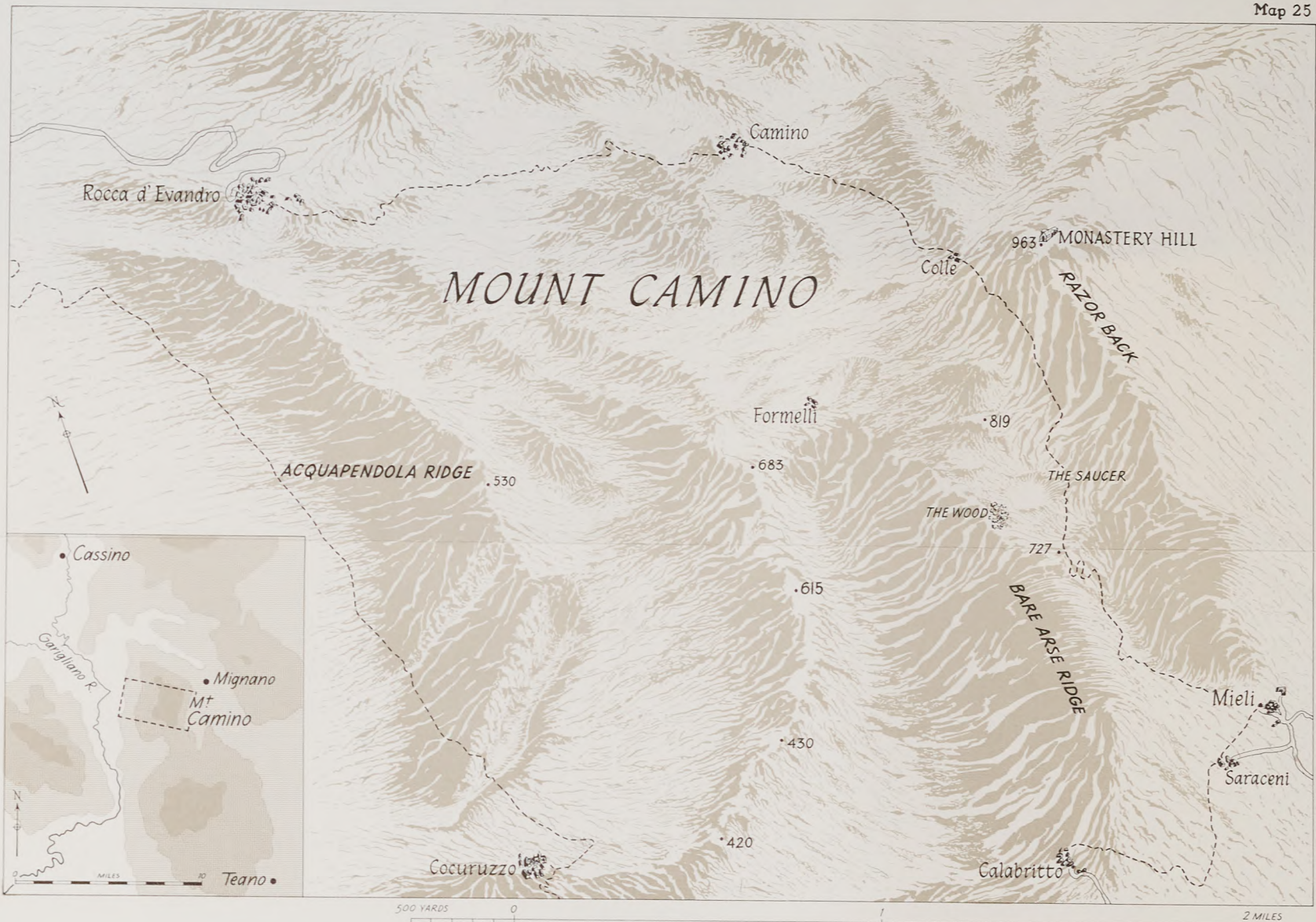
14th Panzer Corps was unable to occupy the positions, sketched above, smoothly under rearguards' protection as it had planned, for it had many troubles. In the eyes of the higher commanders, 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division had not distinguished itself during the retreat, and troops and staffs generally were tired and harassed. The Corps had sustained over 3,500 casualties, including 914 sick, during the last three weeks of October, and in mid-month its three divisions averaged about 2,100 front-line infantry apiece. 15th Panzer Grenadier and Hermann Göring Panzer Divisions had known nothing but dispiriting retreat since action was joined in Sicily. Moreover Hube, highly regarded by his Corps, departed to a command in

Russia and was replaced on 28th October by Lieutenant-General von Senger, able but a newcomer.¹

305th Infantry Division (Major-General Hauck) and 94th Infantry Division (Lieutenant-General Pfeiffer) joined 14th Panzer Corps from Army Group B during October. Kesselring wished to put these divisions in the line, and to withdraw 15th Panzer Grenadier and Hermann Göring Panzer Divisions for re-fit, and subsequent employment as Army Group reserve together with 29th Panzer Grenadier Division from 76th Panzer Corps. von Vietinghoff, however, was perturbed at the prospect of losing these proved divisions, all the more because he held no high opinion of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division. Despite his protests, the 5th Army's advance compelled 14th Panzer Corps willy-nilly to occupy the Bernhardt Line with the troops on the spot, and thus by early November neither 3rd nor 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions had been relieved, although parts of 29th Panzer Grenadier and the Hermann Göring Panzer Divisions were out of the line. 14th Panzer Corps therefore had to suffer a confusing reshuffle of formations including a decision to bring 26th Panzer Division temporarily over from 76th Panzer Corps to bolster the front between 305th Infantry Division and the unhappy 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division. The actual Bernhardt positions were far from complete. Kesselring did not spare criticism, and there were constant tactical disputes between *AOK 10* and 14th Panzer Corps. von Vietinghoff summed up all aspects in remarking on 1st November '... One cannot fight and build defences at the same time; they don't fully understand that at the top.' von Vietinghoff went sick on 4th November and was replaced until 28th December by General Joachim Lemelsen who had fought in Russia.

14th Panzer Corps' occupation of its positions was not a neat process, and it is desirable to avoid confusing details by looking at the somewhat ragged dispositions which had been made by about 5th November. 305th Infantry Division held the left sector with three regimental areas centred on Alfedena, Cerasuolo, and Filignano-Montaquila. 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division held the left-centre sector, in German eyes vital to the defence, in contact with the right of 305th Infantry Division but disposed mainly in the triangle Mt. Rotondo-Mt. Cesima-Mignano. Special reinforcements gradually bolstered this division: 3rd Battalion of 6th Parachute Regiment; 1st Battalion of 2nd Hermann Göring Panzer Grenadier Regiment; 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (26th Panzer Division) on 6th November, and almost the whole of 26th Panzer Division on 8th November.

¹ Lieutenant-General von Senger und Etterlin had commanded 17th Panzer Division in Russia, next was Liaison Officer with Guzzoni's 6th Army in Sicily, and then commanded the German forces in Corsica.



15th Panzer Grenadier Division held the right-centre sector with 129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment in the line.¹ 94th Infantry Division held the right sector. On 2nd November 14th Panzer Corps had 173 field guns, 48 assault guns, and four batteries of nebelwerfer, and also 134 7.5-cm anti-tank guns.²

The next phase, as regards 6th U.S. Corps, began on 25th October, reached its mid-point about 5th November, and closed on about 13th November. At the outset, on the extreme right (east) 504th Parachute Infantry, a reinforcement from 82nd U.S. Airborne Division, was directed northwards across the mountains from Valle Agricola towards Isernia. 34th U.S. Division was to cross the Volturno east of Venafro and to move towards Colli a Volturno, and 45th U.S. Division was to cross the river south of Venafro and to seize the heights east of S. Pietro Infine. 3rd U.S. Division was directed on Presenzano as a step towards Mt. Cesima.

10th Corps was to secure the general line Mt. S. Croce (Pt. 1006)—Mt. Massico (Pt. 812)—Mondragone.

The Americans pressed their opponents relentlessly, 'boring and tweaking' at weak spots as Wentzell, *AOK 10*'s Chief of Staff, vividly described their tactics. The weather denied them the full support of the tactical air forces, but on 26th October and 1st November the fighter-bombers of U.S. XII A.S.C. managed to exceed 200 sorties in support of 5th Army—the only occasions on which this figure was reached in the six weeks of air operations surveyed in this chapter. 34th U.S. Division reached Capriati on 1st November, and on the night 3rd/4th forded the icy Volturno and went on to seize Roccaravindola. 45th U.S. Division began to cross the river near Sesto Campano, five miles south of Venafro, on the night 2nd/3rd November; then broadened its front, crossing at several places, and by 5th November was nearing Pozzilli, Ceppagna, and Mt. Cannavinelle. 3rd U.S. Division took Pietravairano on 3rd November and moved towards Mts Rotondo, Lungo, and la Difensa. On the extreme right the Corps' flankguard, the Parachute Infantry, advanced towards Isernia through Gallo. The Germans everywhere gave ground slowly but not slowly enough to satisfy Kesselring who expressed strictures which were very sharply repudiated by von Senger.

¹ 15th Panzer Grenadier Division's other regiment, the 104th, was in Corps' reserve at Pontecorvo and Pignataro in the Liri valley. Hermann Göring Panzer Division was re-fitting at Frosinone, except for 2/1st Hermann Göring Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 1/2nd Hermann Göring Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and the divisional artillery, all engaged in action.

² Howitzers: 75 light; 62 medium; 1 21-cm. Guns: 23 10-cm; 8 17-cm; 4 Italian. Nebelwerfer: 53 15-cm; 32 21-cm.

In 10th Corps 56th Division had brisk engagements at Teano and Tranzi and then occupied Mt. S. Croce (Pt. 1006), Mt. Mattone, and Ponte. 46th Division cleared the Cascano gap and reached Sessa Aurunca by 2nd November. 7th Armoured Division, on the night 1st/2nd November, debouched through Mondragone into the plain of the Garigliano.

6th U.S. Corps now continued, on its right and in the centre, to struggle into the wilderness of mountains. On the American Corps' left 3rd U.S. Division, and on the British Corps' right 56th Division, began an attempt to force the Mignano gap. 3rd U.S. Division was to clear Mts Cesima, Rotondo, and Lungo. 56th Division was to take Mt. Camino. A United Kingdom history need not apologize for focusing its attention on the British share of the pitched battle which followed.

See Map 25

The great mass of Mt. Camino and outlying features fill the six-mile span between Mignano and the Garigliano. The mountain has three principal summits which define a flattish triangle of ground facing south.¹ The eastern summit is Point 963 called Monastery Hill, the western summit is Point 615, and the southern summit is Point 819. From each of these summits a rocky ridge falls steeply southwards. The ridge descending from Monastery Hill was named as a whole Razor Back, and its lower part was called Spandau Post Ridge. On the left of Razor Back, across an intervening corrie, Bare Arse Ridge descends from Point 819, bumps up again to Point 727 so that between Point 819 and Point 727 lies The Saucer and a little wood, and falls from Point 727 to the village of Calabritto. From Point 615 a smaller ridge runs down to Cocuruzzo. The climb to Point 819 from the valley below was two thousand feet which gives an impression of the scale. The surface of the mountain was a mixture of shale, stones, and great sharp boulders, coarse grass and scrub. The sole mule-track ran up the corrie. Tactically, Point 819 commanded Point 727, Point 727 commanded the corrie, and Monastery Hill commanded everything except the corrie.

Because the eastern face of Mt. Camino was impossibly steep, 56th Division attacked from the south. 201st Guards Brigade (Brigadier J. A. Gascoigne) had the task of capturing the summit via Bare Arse Ridge, and 168th Brigade (Brigadier K. C. Davidson)

¹ We are indebted for the description of Mt. Camino in the main to *The Scots Guards 1919-1955*, David Erskine, London 1956. There are valuable descriptions also in *The Grenadier Guards in the War of 1939-45*, Vol. II, Nigel Nicolson, Aldershot 1949, and *The Coldstream Guards 1920-1946*, Michael Howard and John Sparrow, O.U.P. 1951.

was to capture Cocuruzzo and Point 530 north-west of it. 167th Brigade (Brigadier C. E. A. Firth), in reserve, was to form a firm base and to patrol towards the Garigliano. The plan was influenced by the belief that it was impossible to maintain more than a brigade in attacking or occupying Mt. Camino proper by the mountain roads from Teano through Roccamonfina and the mule track. 56th Division possessed a mule-train of 100 Italian mules, and was allotted a Pioneer Battalion to act as porters.

The plan for the Guards Brigade was that 3rd Coldstream Guards would capture Calabritto to secure a jumping-off point, and a 'firm base' on the administratively vital mule-track. 6th Grenadier Guards would attack up Bare Arse Ridge to capture Points 727, 819, and 615. The 2nd Scots Guards were in reserve. When the Grenadiers had captured their objectives, the next step would probably be that both or part of the other two battalions would strike over the western shoulder of the mountain, to cut what appeared to be the German supply-route to the massif, and so cut off any troops who remained on it. The attack of the Guards Brigade was to be supported by five field, two medium, and one heavy regiment of the Royal Artillery, and 59th Battalion U.S. Artillery.¹ A programme of barrage and concentrations was arranged, but it was clear that problems of crest-clearance might lessen the effect of the fire.

After nightfall on 6th November the Coldstream, despite scattered minefields, took Calabritto by the throat and dislodged 3rd/129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment by dawn on the 7th. Meanwhile, just before midnight, 6th Grenadier Guards, 483 strong, began to climb Bare Arse Ridge. The hill-side was lit up by fires because the scrub, though rain soaked, had in places caught fire from smoke shells. There was the usual German firework display of coloured tracer but not many casualties occurred. The men's physical endurance, however, was sorely tested as they scabbled among the boulders, and false crest maddeningly followed false crest. At daylight on the 7th Nos. 2 and 3 Companies assaulted across four hundred yards and took Point 819. Nos. 1 and 4 Companies secured Point 727. The enemy, however, did not withdraw very far, Point 615 was not yet captured, and Monastery Hill had of course not been attacked. The feature was too big for four rifle companies to subdue, and the Grenadier Guards set-to to build sangars and to hold fast. The enemy plastered them throughout the day with machine-gun and mortar

¹ 56th Divisional Artillery: 64th, 65th, 113th Field Regiments R.A. and 51st Medium Regiment R.A.

² A.G.R.A.: 23rd and 146th Field Regiments, 74th Medium Regiment, 56th Heavy Regiment R.A.

On 26th November 1942 the Army Group Royal Artillery, hitherto improvised, was officially sanctioned. It consisted of a commander and staff to command non-divisional artillery units.

fire and, as the light failed, began to send in fighting-patrols from many directions. Some of these worked into the Saucer, bisecting the battalion; others virtually dominated the upper part of the mule-track.

On 8th November the Coldstream, in spite of persistent enemy infiltration at Calabritto, were set to reconnoitre an attack by the western side of Bare Arse Ridge to take Point 615. This plan turned out not to be practicable. Meanwhile on the 7th 2/104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment had reinforced the mountain, and on the 8th November German counter-attacks began in earnest. On the 8th F Company of the Scots Guards joined the Grenadier Guards, and during the 8th, 9th and 10th the fighting broke like waves and their backwash all over the mountain-top. On the 9th 1st/104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment reinforced the enemy. Nos. 2 and 3 Companies of the Grenadier Guards, in their isolated positions, faced probably the grimmest of the trials and on the 10th, it seemed, the end. The Grenadiers stood sternly and magnificently in defence. The dead stood with the living for, propped up with steel helmets and rifles, they remained at their posts. The defence could not be broken, but at length the position became untenable, and the companies were withdrawn some distance.

During all this time conditions for all on the mountain were harsh to extremity. There was a tearing wind with showers of rain or sleet, and cold, driven, mist. Food, water, and sleep were measured in mouthfuls, dribbles, and snatches. Some of the wounded died of exposure; others were carried down the hill, eight toiling bearers to each stretcher.

On 10th November 168th Brigade took over the area of Calabritto and it became possible to reinforce Mt. Camino a little. During the evenings and the night 10th/11th the Coldstream climbed Bare Arse Ridge to give some depth to the Grenadier Guards' positions, and two companies of the Scots Guards climbed the mule track and cleared the enemy from its head. Their object was to gain a starting-point from which 7th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, detached from 167th Brigade, could attack Point 819.

7th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry with three weak rifle companies and a fourth formed from the anti-tank platoon and H.Q. Company, attacked at 3 a.m. on 11th November at the end of their climb from the valley.¹ 'A' Company took its objective on the west slope of Point 819 and was joined by 'B' Company which had found its line of advance on the right flank swept by unsubdued

¹ The point has been made in Chapter X that casualties in infantry battalions very quickly reduced the number of riflemen available to assault. Between 9th September and 31st October 1943 the average casualties in each of ten infantry battalions of 10th Corps amounted to 409. The total strength of a battalion may be taken as 844.

machine-gun posts, since they had escaped artillery fire, on Monastery Hill. 'C' Company reached a point abreast of the forward companies of the Grenadiers. But when daylight came it was soon clear that the enemy still held higher ground on three sides. The attack could go no further, and the situation had not greatly changed. On the 11th General Templar decided to prepare an attack by 167th Brigade on Monastery Hill, but to withdraw the Grenadier Guards and 'F' Company Scots Guards during the night 11th/12th. These men had done all that men could do: 263 Grenadier Guards out of 483 came down the hill and of 'F' Company Scots Guards 57 out of 108. Before 167th Brigade could complete its preparations General Clark decided that he must temporarily suspend the offensive, and Mt. Camino was abandoned on 14th November. No interpretative comment on this hard battle seems necessary except perhaps that four battalions, in the face of modern weapons and on a huge mountain, were not enough to overcome five brave and hard-fighting battalions of the enemy.

Meanwhile 3rd U.S. Division attacked persistently on 56th Division's right hand. By 8th November it took Mts Cesima and Cannavinelle, Mt. Rotondo, and the south-eastern spur of Mt. Lungo, but it could not take the forbidding cliffs of Mt. la Difensa. Elsewhere 6th U.S. Corps continued its thrusts into the mountains with much success. By 13th November 45th U.S. Division is in possession of Mt. Corno, Mt. S. Croce (Pt. 1025), Pozzilli, and the high ground north-east of Filignano. 34th U.S. Division took Mt. Alto (Pt. 1036) and Montaquila, and 504th Parachute Infantry entered Colli a Volturmo.

The effect of the events of the period 25th October–13th November upon the commanders in 14th Panzer Corps was anxiety which was felt also at *AOK 10*. There were several causes for anxiety. The Allies seemed to be reinforcing steadily and to have large numbers of infantry; the German troops were suffering constant attrition; and the Allied attacks and infiltration occurred persistently at the weak junction between 305th Infantry Division and 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division. The arrival of most of the infantry of 26th Panzer Division at this point did not mend matters much. Moreover by 8th November the American advances across the heights east and north-east of Mignano bore ever more hardly upon the right of the battered 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division. By 8th November Lemelsen was advocating withdrawal from the 'Montaquila bulge'. When Kesselring and Lemelsen visited 14th Panzer Corps on 10th November von Senger gave a depressing account of its present state and of its future prospects.¹ The three commanders agreed to confirm a partly

¹ On 10th November 14th Panzer Corps reported its 'fighting strength' of infantry to be 6,354.

accomplished fact and to withdraw the left of 14th Panzer Corps to the line (south to north) Colle Rotondo (St. 705)—Lagone—Cerasuolo—Mt. La Rocca. On 11th November Kesselring ordered 29th Panzer Grenadier Division to move at once to 14th Panzer Corps from south of Rome to relieve 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division. The 29th's two leading battalions went straight into counter-attack near Vallecupa on 13th November, but failed.

On the 13th there occurred a remarkable contrast. On that day 14th Panzer Corps noted in its diary: 'The enemy has won the battle for the Mignano Gap', whereas on the same day Clark told Alexander, who agreed, that he must suspend his offensive for a time if the troops were not to become dangerously exhausted. Kesselring for his part referred to *OKW* Lemelsen's proposal that the left-centre sector should be now defended on the line (south to north) Mt. Lungo—S. Pietro Infine—east slopes of Mt. Sambucaro (Pt. 1205).¹ The Führer, who had been displeased by the course of events since 5th November, informed his commanders, rather misleadingly as it turned out, that they had 'a free hand'.

All this fighting had been most arduous for both sides. Against the bare story of this or that peak, or place taken or retaken, and of advances and withdrawals there is a harsh background of continual toil among precipitous ridges and deep gorges, in rain and cold, by often hungry, ill-clothed, alternately sweating and shivering men. The wounded suffered pitifully. Casualties are unreliable witnesses to the rigours of operations, but so far as can be discovered, they were: between 7th October and 15th November 7,000 American and 3,000 British; in 14th Panzer Corps between 11th October and 10th November, 6,500, including 1,886 sick.

(v)

See Maps 17 and 23

We left 8th Army on the line of the Biferno river between Termoli and Vinchiatiuro. On 9th October Montgomery ordered his army to re-group for the next phase, and it took the shape, given here in outline, of:

<i>5th Corps</i>	<i>13th Corps</i>
78th Division	5th Division
8th Indian Division ²	1st Canadian Division
4th Armoured Brigade	1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade
1st Army Group R.A.	6th Army Group R.A.

¹ The name *Sambucaro* is that given in modern maps. The form *Sammucro* is generally used in the documents of 1943 and 1944.

² (a) *8th Indian Division* (Major-General D. Russell)
Main formations and units.

17th Indian Infantry Brigade (Brigadier H. L. Wyndham):

[Footnote continued opposite

On 11th October 5th Corps took command of the right sector between the coast and Larino, and 13th Corps of the left sector from Larino to the Matese range.

Montgomery intended to cross the Trigno river and to gain the road from Vasto on the coast to Isernia, using 5th Corps on his right and 13th Corps on his left. But first he continued to put his administration on what he called a 'sound wicket', for which purpose Alexander had granted a pause of up to fourteen days (see pp. 347, 349-52). The Germans had not damaged very much the railway system in Apulia, and by the middle of October the east-coast route had been restored as far as S. Severo, mainly by 160th Railway Construction Company R.E. which had restored most of the east-coast route from Reggio to Taranto. It was possible from early October to send pack trains from base to railhead and therefore to turn road transport to other uses. A railhead for 13th Corps was opened at Barletta, and one at Trani for 5th Corps. On 6th October Barletta became an Army railhead but served 13th Corps until 20th October, when Foggia became an Army railhead and roadhead, and railheads were opened at S. Severo for 5th Corps and at Lucera for 13th Corps. 3rd Line road transport was reallocated; three G.T. companies to 5th Corps and five and threequarter companies to 13th Corps.¹ The difficult and obstructed roads impeded movement although transport convoys were soon regulated by block timings, fixed speeds and densities, and one-way running at need. Animal transport was recognized

1st Royal Fusiliers, 1/12th Frontier Force Regiment,
1/5th Royal Gurkha Rifles, Frontier Force
19th Indian Infantry Brigade (Brigadier T. A. Dobree):
5th Essex, 3/8th Punjab Regiment, 6/13th Frontier Force Rifles
21st Indian Infantry Brigade (Brigadier B. S. Mould):
5th R.W.K., 1/5th Mahratta Light Infantry, 3/15th Punjab Regiment
6th Lancers (I.A.); 3rd, 52nd, 53rd Field Regiments R.A.;
26th L.A.A. Regiment R.A.; 4th Mahratta A/Tk Regiment;
7th, 66th, 69th Fd Coys, 47th Fd Park Coy I.E.; 5th Royal Mahratta M.G. Battalion
(b) 8th Army's 50th and 51st Highland Divisions were in Sicily, earmarked for Overlord.
(c) On 1st November Major-General G. G. Simonds left 1st Canadian Division to take command of 5th Canadian Armoured Division which was due to arrive at Naples from England 8th-10th November. Major-General C. Vokes succeeded Simonds. The Brigade commands were 1st—Brigadier H. D. Graham; 2nd—Brigadier B. M. Hoffmeister; 3rd—Brigadier T. G. Gibson.

1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade was re-designated 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade on 26th August 1943 but the new title was not adopted in the field until November.

¹ F.M.C.s.

<i>13th Corps</i>		<i>5th Corps</i>	
No. 110	Foggia	No. 200	Trani
No. 111	Lucera	No. 201	Termoli
No. 112	Campobasso	No. 202	Larino

Approximate holdings at end October (principal items):

	<i>No. 112</i>	<i>No. 202</i>
Rations	8 days'	7 days'
Ammunition	10 days' 25-pdr 20 days' med.	500 r.p.g. 25-pdr/475 r.p.g. med.
P.O.L.	200 miles	300 miles

to be very necessary and there was hope of providing five Pack Transport Companies against an estimated demand for seven. But to begin with only two companies could be given to 5th Corps and one to 13th Corps.¹ Between 1st and 24th October the network of administrative command for some time to come was laid out.²

Between 15th and 22nd October light forces of 5th Corps cleared the approaches to the Trigno near the coast while 13th Corps, echeloned slightly in rear on the left, approached the Biferno. Montgomery believed that three German divisions lay on and south of the Trigno, and that he faced a big operation. He placed his main effort in the coast sector, and decided to use there the experienced 78th Division in ground which suited it. The good road and railway moreover could sustain a large administrative load. He decided to use the mountain-trained 8th Indian Division in the rugged country between Guardialfiera and Palmoli.

Before 5th Corps began the main effort, 13th Corps was to make diversionary attacks on the axis Vinchiaturò–Isernia, to be complete by 29th October. Then on the night 29th/30th October 5th Corps would attack: 78th Division to capture Vasto and the high ground immediately north of it; 8th Indian Division to cut the Vasto–Isernia road at Liscia and Carunchio. Montgomery hoped then to press on to the Sangro river where a pause would be necessary. With this plan in mind, we must glance at the enemy and the terrain.

Herr's 76th Panzer Corps was undergoing a shuffle of formations in order to provide reinforcements for 14th Panzer Corps and to create reserves.³ Because so many formations were moving or under

¹ To 5th Corps, Nos. 13 and 34 Pack Transport Companies R.I.A.S.C.; to 13th Corps No. 573 Pack Transport Company R.A.S.C. By the end of 1943 there were in Italy three British, eight Indian, four Cypriot, and six Italian Pack Transport Companies.

² In outline and in terms of Headquarters:

No. 2 District	Bari	103 Sub-Area	Bari
86 Area	Foggia	71 Sub-Area	Brindisi
151 Sub-Area	Barletta	6 Base Sub-Area	Taranto

H.Q. 15th Army Group was at S. Spirito near Bari; Main H.Q. 8th Army near Lucera; Rear H.Q. 8th Army at Mottola near Taranto.

³ A synoptic table of the divisions under command of 76th Panzer Corps is:

During October

- 16th Panzer Division (Sieckenius).
- 26th Panzer Division (von Lüttwitz) (to 14th Panzer Corps beginning c. 3rd November).
- 29th Panzer Grenadier Division (Fries) (to 14th Panzer Corps, beginning c. 31st October).
- 65th Infantry Division (von Ziehlberg) (arriving).
- 1st Parachute Division (Heidrich).

During November

- 16th Panzer Division (under orders for Russia).
- 26th Panzer Division (about to leave).
- 1st Parachute Division.
- 65th Infantry Division.
- 90th Panzer Grenadier Division (Lungershausen) (a late arrival).

orders to move, the only divisions which remained steadily under Herr's command throughout November were 1st Parachute Division, and 65th Infantry Division. He had to consider four sets of positions. There was his portion of the Barbara line to which von Vietinghoff, on 11th October, sanctioned withdrawal. This can be indicated by a line from S. Salvo, near Vasto, to Lentella, Celenza, and Colli a Volturmo. The eastern part of this line rested on the Trigno, and gained depth from temporary positions on the line Vasto-Cupello-Furci-Carunchio-Forli. Next, to the north, came another delaying line known as the Advanced Sangro line. This began near Mozzagrogna and ran inland via Tornareccio-Roccascalegna-Torricella-Gamberale to Castel di Sangro. Finally there were the positions, known to the British as the Sangro Line and to 76th Panzer Corps as Siegfried, which formed the forward edge of the Bernhardt line. These ran north of the Sangro river from the sea to the neighbourhoods of Pescocostanzo, Alfedena, and Castelnuovo a Volturmo.

Herr's general lay-out at the beginning of November was:

16th Panzer Division: nearest the coast, withdrawing on the axis S. Salvo-Cupello-Scerni.

1st Parachute Division: in the centre, greatly extended between Tuffillo and Castiglione. 3rd Parachute Regiment (Heilmann) area Tuffillo; remainder of division withdrawing to Advanced Sangro line, and to Bernhardt Line.

26th Panzer Division: withdrawing on axis Vinchiaturò-Isernia.

65th Infantry Division: coastal sector of Bernhardt Line, parts forward to Advanced Sangro Line, Casoli-Fossacesia.¹

Herr intended to make a fighting withdrawal to the Advanced Sangro Line. He had shrewdly deduced how 8th Army would act and he intended to force it to deploy prematurely. He also intended to disguise the whereabouts of his true main positions in order to lead Montgomery to waste effort on subsidiaries.

The 8th Army now faced some tactically ugly country. The Trigno river is normally about one hundred feet wide and two feet

¹ There were 2,884 casualties in 76th Panzer Corps during October. On 4th November some 'fighting strengths' were:

16th Panzer Division	4,598
1st Parachute Division	4,424
26th Panzer Division	5,390
65th Infantry Division	6,552

The Corps held 98 light field howitzers, 35 medium field howitzers, 18 10-cm guns and 110 anti-tank guns. On 4th November the strength of 'fit' fighting vehicles was:

16th Panzer Division	6 Pzkw IV, 5 Command tanks, 9 assault guns.
26th Panzer Division	28 Pzkw III (7.5-cm guns), 42 Pzkw IV, 8 Command tanks, 12 flame-throwers, 21 assault guns.

deep but spates can increase the width four-fold and the depth to five or six feet of rushing water. Near the sea the Trigno runs through a plain studded with trees, orchards, and olive groves but further inland the bed is in a deep, narrow valley, full of scrub, difficult of access. Before 8th Army's crossing, rain had swelled the river. Near the sea, the ground north of the river rises two hundred feet to a ridge on which S. Salvo stands, and then another five hundred feet to the ridge of Cupello. Westwards, up to the Trigno's head waters, stretched a tract of rugged hills. Inland, as far as the Vinchiaturò-Isernia highway, the south to north roads were bad, often mere winding cart-tracks across the ridges. The Vinchiaturò-Isernia highway ran north-westwards through a strip of plain flanked on the west by the huge Matese wall. The Germans had made many and clever demolitions on all likely approaches.¹

We must pass rapidly over 13th Corps' diversionary operations, important and successful as these were. On 24th October 2nd Canadian Brigade finally cleared the enemy from Colle d'Anchise, a feature just north of the Biferno on the right of the Vinchiaturò-Isernia road, and from Boiano on the road. On 2nd Canadian Brigade's right the 1st Canadian Brigade cleared the heights between Molise and Torella by 27th October. 5th Division advanced through 2nd Canadian Brigade on 28th October with a brigade on each side of the Isernia road and, after a two-day battle for a height guarding Isernia, entered that place on 4th November. All these gains were bought by feats of minor mountaineering, and toilsome slogging up long ridges, to dislodge an enemy who fought resolutely. The engineers were always at work clearing road-blocks, bridging craters, and shoring up hillsides to enable the hard-worked administrative units to perform their never-ending tasks.

Turning to 5th Corps, we find that by 27th October 78th Division (11th Brigade near the coast, 38th Brigade on its left further inland) had gained a narrow bridgehead across the Trigno, almost unopposed. 38th Brigade tried to improve the bridgehead during the night 27th/28th October by attacking S. Salvo, but this time 64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (16th Panzer Division) resisted strongly and the attack was called off. Sieckenius, the division's commander, now guessed that the British would pause in this sector to replenish fuel and ammunition. Further inland 19th Indian Infantry Brigade closed up to the Trigno at Montemitro and Montefalcone, and 21st Indian Infantry Brigade moved towards Roccavivara. Some brisk advanced-guard actions occurred, but the principal opposition came from vile

¹ A 'clever' demolition, besides its awkward site, should force one to destroy further before one can begin to repair.

weather and the heavily obstructed, very bad road. One set of Bailey bridging could be spared for this route, and the Indian Division had to make many by-passes for its transport and to enforce one-way working.

5th Corps was ready to attack by 29th October but the almost unceasing rain and a spreading sea of mud led General Allfrey to postpone operations until the night 2nd/3rd November. The weather bedevilled all preparations. For example engineers, toiling to make an all-weather crossing at a ford over the Trigno east of the coast road, found that the surrounding morass engulfed stabilizing material, while downpours of rain dissolved their work as soon as done. This in addition to the enemy so close that work had to be done at night, and mostly by hand because noisy mechanical equipment drew too much fire.

5th Corps' plan provided that 8th Indian Division would cross the Trigno, ten miles upstream from 78th Division, on the night 1st/2nd November, twenty-four hours earlier than 78th Division's main attack. 19th Brigade was to take the high wooded hills at Tuffillo and Mt. Farano, and to exploit along the mountain road to Palmoli and Carunchio. 21st Brigade was to cross on the left and make for Celenza and Torrebruna. The lateral Vasto-Isernia road would thus be cut. The available pack-transport made it impossible to use more than two brigades. Four field and one medium regiments of artillery were to support the attack. In the small hours of 2nd November a small and savage battle began which centred on Tuffillo, held by the greater part of Heilmann's 3rd Parachute Regiment. These parachutists gave ground only by yards, and 2nd November passed in repeated attempts by the Frontier Force Rifles to work up the lofty wooded spur and break into Tuffillo. Heilmann's troops counter-attacked three times and the day ended in stalemate because 5th Essex also, far on the left, had been halted, after some early success, by the fire of many machine guns tucked into the broken and scrub-covered river bank. At 3 a.m. on 3rd November 3rd/8th Punjab Regiment began to cross the Trigno to support the Frontier Force Rifles. The enemy's mortar fire was intense, and at first light half of the 3rd/8th was across the river and half was uneasily concealed in the river bed. From the ridge above the Germans sent down random showers of mortar bombs and snipers' bullets.¹ Brigadier Dobree

¹ The best air support 8th Army enjoyed throughout the period of this chapter was given by the Desert Air Force and N.A.T.B.F. during daylight on 2nd and 3rd November. The sorties were:

		<i>2nd Nov.</i>	<i>3rd Nov.</i>
<i>D.A.F.</i>	Fighters	129	209
	Fighter-bombers	339	239
<i>N.A.T.B.F.</i>	Light bombers	117	132
	Medium bombers	—	36
		585	616

now prepared an attack for the night 3rd/4th November to capture Mt. Farano from a flanking direction and pinch out Tuffillo. This attack was delivered by the Frontier Force Rifles and 3rd/8th Punjab Regiment, the battalions taking in their stride a German counter-attack which was blown to pieces by the divisional artillery. There followed a confused and vicious struggle in darkness somewhat lightened by blazing scrub and haystacks. At dawn on the 4th the Frontier Force Rifles, with many casualties and little ammunition, were back more or less at starting point. 3rd/8th Punjab, on the right, were half-way up the hill, under heavy fire. The Germans, however, were thinning out and early on the 5th the two Indian battalions occupied Mt. Farano and Tuffillo. The German withdrawal occurred because 1st Parachute Division was still further extending its front to replace 26th Panzer Division which was moving to join 14th Panzer Corps. 8th Indian Division's 21st Brigade reached Celenza with very slight opposition.

In 78th Division the main attack to capture Vasto was to be delivered by 36th Brigade reinforced by 6th Inniskilling Fusiliers (38th Brigade). The objectives were S. Salvo and the Buonotte canal north of it, and exploitation towards Cupello was to follow. The destroyers *Queenborough* and *Raider* and some light craft were to simulate a landing by bombarding Vasto and other targets. 11th Brigade, on 36th Brigade's right, was to attack S. Salvo railway station, four miles east of S. Salvo. In a final phase either 11th or 36th Brigade would capture Cupello. The advance towards the Sangro would then continue via Vasto and Monteodorisio. Three extra field regiments and three medium regiments of artillery were given to 78th Division.¹ S. Salvo was defended by 64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment's two battalions and 2nd/2nd Panzer Regiment in mobile reserve. 79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was on the west flank behind the Treste stream, and 3rd/2nd Panzer Regiment's assault guns and other mobile troops protected the coast from Vasto northwards.

By 4 a.m. on 3rd November 16th Panzer Division's headquarters were in a flurry owing to the naval demonstrations and consequent reports of threatened landings. The coast defence group was therefore diverted from the main battle which otherwise it might have entered. At 4.30 a.m. 5th The Buffs and 6th Inniskillings, helped by a barrage and concentrations, and after a time by two squadrons of 46th R.T.R., began to climb the slope towards S. Salvo. The advances seemed slow but in fact the attack penetrated the junction of the two German battalions, while the British tanks pinned down 2nd/2nd Panzer Regiment. Moreover Allied aircraft were strafing the battle area and

¹ Ammunition was provided at 500 r.p.g. for field, and 475 r.p.g. for medium guns. DUKWs, swimming from Termoli, brought replenishments.

disrupting German communications. 36th Brigade gained S. Salvo and the bank of the Buonotte canal beyond by mid-day but 11th Brigade was making little headway at S. Salvo railway station.

During the afternoon Sieckenius attempted a counter-attack with his tanks and the assault guns of the 3rd Battalion 2nd Panzer Regiment. This attempt was strongly parried by 46th R.T.R. and flailed by the British artillery. It was sometimes hard to say who held S. Salvo and who did not, but between 5 and 6 p.m. Sieckenius decided that he must begin a prearranged fighting withdrawal to the Advanced Sangro Line via Scerni on his left and Atessa on his right. He intended to move during the night 3rd/4th November, but to hold the British off from Vasto for as long as possible. On the British side Eveleigh ordered 36th Brigade to take the high ground between S. Salvo and Vasto known as Vineyard Hill (Pt. 168). Then 11th Brigade would pass through. 36th Brigade began to advance at 8 p.m., the Royal West Kents leading on the left. This battalion ran into a mixed group of the enemy and was checked, but the Argylls on the right, starting much later, drove back the same enemy in so confused an encounter that the battalion at length halted to sort out the confusion. At dawn on the 4th it became clear that the enemy was steadily withdrawing, and Eveleigh ordered a general advance. 17th Indian Infantry Brigade (8th Indian Division) was moving towards Gissi, on 78th Division's left. Although German rearguards at times sought to delay, by 9th November 78th Division had reached the Sangro between Paglieta and Mt. Calvo and was preparing to patrol across the river on the 10th. In 8th Indian Division 19th Brigade was south-west of Atessa, 17th at Gissi, and 21st in the area Torrebruna-Castiglione, protecting the left flank.

In a sense both sides could be content. Herr had compelled 8th Army to undertake a major operation to cross the Trigno, and had then withdrawn to the Sangro in good order. 78th Division had reaped the rewards of careful preparations by accomplishing its opposed river crossing quite easily. 8th Indian Division had found its feet in battle with enemy troops of the first quality. 13th Corps had done all that was required of it.

(vi)

During October and early November many Allied air headquarters, groups, and wings moved to, and within, Italy. On 10th October, for example, Advanced H.Q. N.A.T.B.F. moved from Sicily to Brindisi and on the 11th Advanced H.Q. Desert Air Force moved forward in Italy from Minervino to Lucera. On the 1st October administrative control of the Desert Air Force had passed from M.E.A.C. to N.A.A.F., and thus D.A.F.'s last link with the

Middle East was broken. The Bostons of No. 326 Wing R.A.F., the Mitchells of the U.S. 321st and 340th Medium Bombardment Groups and the Kittyhawks of the U.S. 324th Fighter Group moved to Italy, so that by 4th November N.A.T.A.F.'s Order of Battle was as shown in Table on opposite page.

For a general picture of the air operations which accompanied operations on land it seems best to take the period from dawn on 1st October to dusk on 19th November. In this period the aircraft of Mediterranean Air Command flew a total of 45,959 sorties, excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports.¹ This means that on average 919 sorties were flown every 24 hours, and provides some indication of the great effort achieved despite the flying conditions which were so erratic, at least for the tactical air forces, that on some days very few sorties, on others a great number, were flown. The weather was not at once good or bad or indifferent over every airfield and every target area. And so on any day some types of aircraft, somewhere, could fly and other types, elsewhere, could not. We can say fairly confidently, as regards the tactical air force, that flying was greatly restricted for some aircraft and was impossible for others on about nineteen days in October, and on at least eight between 1st and 19th November. The irregularity of the flying makes impractical any attempt to link particular operations in the air with particular actions on the ground.

During our chosen period the Allies lost 326 aircraft and the Germans 166 aircraft in the air and on the ground by Allied action, while 101 others are listed as missing on operational flights. The totals 326 and 267 do not indicate an equal proportion of loss. The Allies had very many aircraft at risk during a continuous offensive and lost the larger number. The Germans had far fewer aircraft, and far fewer at risk during a generally stagnant defensive, and their proportion of loss was therefore much the higher.²

The Allies' mastery of the air had important results on the ground.³ The faith of German land commanders in the German Air Force's support dwindled. von Vietinghoff writing of this period after the war, perhaps with bias, remarks the absence of German aircraft over the battlefield except at night or in low visibility. He asserts that troop movements in or near the area of battle were impossible by

¹ A table of sorties in detail is at the end of this chapter.

² Interesting figures compiled by H.Q. U.S. Twelfth Air Force show that the total sorties flown by all the Allied air forces in the Mediterranean area in the twelve months since the landings in North Africa on 8th November 1942 amounted to 350,147 (U.S.A.A.F. 150,202; R.A.F. 199,945); the total weight of bombs dropped came to 101,669 tons (U.S.A.A.F. 72,594; R.A.F. 29,075); and total Allied aircraft lost on operations amounted to 2,246 (U.S.A.A.F. 1,248; R.A.F. 998).

³ The results of the 'interdiction' of the Italian railways are referred to later, when we turn to the strategic air forces.

D.A.F. Adv. & Rear H.Q. Lucera area
 No. 239 Wing—MILENI
 (6 sqdns Kittyhawks)
 No. 244 Wing—TRIOLO
 (4 sqdns Spitfires)
 U.S. 57th Group—AMENDOLA
 (3 sqdns Kittyhawks)
 U.S. 79th Group
 (3 sqdns Kittyhawks) }
 U.S. 99th Squadron } —SALSOLA
 (Kittyhawks) } (Foggia 3)
 No. 7 (S.A.A.F.) Wing—PALATA
 (3 sqdns Spitfires)
 No. 285 Wing—CAPPELLI
 (Foggia I)
 (½ sqdn of No. 225 and ½ sqdn
 of No. 40 (S.A.A.F.), both
 Tac. R., and ½ sqdn of No. 682
 P.R.—all Spitfires).

N.A.T.B.F. Adv. H.Q. Segezia
 U.S. 47th Group—VINCENZO
 (4 sqdns Bostons)
 No. 3 (S.A.A.F.) Wing—
 TORTORELLA
 (2 sqdns Bostons and one of
 Baltimores)
 No. 232 Wing—CELONE (Foggia
 area)
 (2 sqdns Baltimores and 2 of
 Bostons)
 *U.S. 12th Group—FOGGIA MAIN
 (4 sqdns Mitchells)
 U.S. 340th Group—
 s. PANGRAZIO (Taranto area)
 (4 sqdns Mitchells)
 U.S. 321st Group—GROTTAGLIE
 area
 (4 sqdns Mitchells)

* Moving in on 5th November

NOTES

(a) On 17th October the Spitfires of No. 323 Wing R.A.F. of N.A.C.A.F. began to arrive at Montecorvino, and on the 19th the C.O. of the Wing became responsible for the fighter defence of the Salerno area.

(b) On 1st November No. 232 Wing R.A.F. absorbed No. 326 Wing R.A.F.

(c) On 4th November the U.S. 321st Medium Bombardment Group was transferred to N.A.T.B.F. from N.A.S.A.F., bringing N.A.T.B.F.'s strength to 23 squadrons.

U.S. XII A.S.C. Adv. H.Q. Caserta.
 (Rear H.Q. Naples)
U.S. 64th Fighter Wing
 FRATTAMAGGIORE (Naples)
 U.S. 31st Group—POMIGLIANO
 (3 sqdns Spitfires)
 U.S. 33rd Group—PAESTUM
 (3 sqdns Kittyhawks)
 U.S. 27th Group—CAPACCIO
 (3 sqdns Mustangs)
 U.S. 86th Group
 (1 sqdn Mustangs)—SERRETELLE
 (2 sqdns Mustangs)—POMIGLIANO
 No. 324 Wing (R.A.F.)—
 CAPODICHINO
 (5 sqdns Spitfires)
 U.S. 111th Squadron—POMIG-
 LIANO (Mustangs Tac. R.)
 No. 600 Squadron (R.A.F.)—
 MONTECORVINO
 (Beaufighters N.F.)
 No. 225 Squadron (R.A.F.)—
 CAPODICHINO
 (½ sqdn Spitfires Tac. R.)
 U.S. 324th Group—CERCOLA
 (3 sqdns Kittyhawks)
Reserve Units
 No. 40 (S.A.A.F.)—
 PHILIPPEVILLE
 (½ sqdn Spitfires Tac. R.)
 No. 241 Squadron—
 PHILIPPEVILLE
 (Hurricane F.B.s and Spitfires)

*Under Temporary Operational
 Control of N.A.C.A.F.*

No. 322 Wing—GIOIA DEL COLLE
 (3 sqdns Spitfires)

day, and this means at the least that tactical moves were badly upset. He notes demoralization among troops who felt that they had no air defence against the Allied air forces. Yet it is necessary to remember that the destruction wrought by air attack, on troops in defensive positions in mountainous or rugged country, was small. Direct hits on small targets behind sharp ridges or in holes and corners were rare, and near misses frightened rather than hurt. Even pre-arranged strikes could do little more than 'keep the enemy's heads down' for a time which, given the communications of the day, might or might not coincide with the haphazard minor moves of an attack.

The Allies reaped a varied harvest from their mastery in the air. The tactical day bombers met fighter opposition so seldom that they discarded fighter escort, while formations of fighter-bombers operated very much as they pleased. Even the heavy day bombers, when over northern Italy, found very little organized fighter opposition, and the medium day bombers met still less. Flak defence however became stronger beyond the area of battle, and stronger within it in terms of light weapons. The Allied tactical and administrative transport enjoyed something like immunity from air action. If the Allied air forces had been unable to give this boon, chaos would almost certainly have come on the narrow, vehicle-crowded roads. Wherever the troops saw their own aircraft in action the sight was tonic.

Experience had shown that the most effective means of interfering with the enemy's moves, in any weather, was to put over his territory a stream of fighters and fighter-bombers as nearly constantly as possible. But in the prevailing bad weather the greater reliance was in fact placed on the fighter-bombers for general tactical bombing, and in N.A.T.A.F. these aircraft flew between nine and ten thousand sorties in fifty days. It would be excessively lengthy to list all the points of attack and the attacks upon them, yet an impression of the pattern of tactical bombing can be formed in the following way. Turn the eye to 5th Army's front and mark some place-names as the glance travels clock-wise round the compass-points from south through west and north and east, and again to south. The names are Gaeta on the west coast, Terracina, Ceccano, Frosinone, Alfedena, and again Gaeta. These names describe a rough rectangle on sides of thirty-five miles south to north and twenty-five miles west to east. Twenty-nine target areas lay within this rectangle, grouped thus: on the coast; on the approaches to the Garigliano; and in the valleys of the Liri and the upper Volturno. Targets in these areas were attacked constantly. A similar glance at 8th Army's front should mark the names Boiano, Alfedena, Popoli, Pescara, Vasto on the east coast, and Boiano again. The names describe an irregular pentagon, sixty miles long, south to north, and forty-five miles

broad, west to east. Forty-four target areas lay within the pentagon, grouped thus: on the approaches to Isernia; in the country from north of Isernia across to the east coast; on the east coast; on the approaches to the Sangro; and along the Sangro. Targets in these areas were attacked constantly. In both the main areas the air forces related their attacks to the armies' operations as closely as the weather and other circumstances would permit.

German reports of the effects of Allied air operations in the areas listed above are scarce but some inferences can be made. On the 4th October air attacks at Isernia delayed the supply of petrol to 16th Panzer Division and therefore the division's move to Termoli, a fortunate happening for the British force engaged there. On 5th October 16th Panzer Division suffered from the air attacks made on it during the battle at Termoli, a help to the hard-pressed British. On 11th October 65th Division's troop-trains were bombed near Pescara and delays and casualties occurred. On the 13th, 14th Panzer Corps reported that hoped-for air support had been prevented by Allied fighters. This day saw the beginnings of 5th Army's crossings of the Volturno. On the 16th railway movement south of Ancona became impossible until large damage to the track could be repaired. On 20th October the bridge at Castiglione in the Sangro approaches was destroyed. On 3rd November, when 78th Division was crossing the Trigno, air attacks made German communications in the area of S. Salvo very difficult, and on this day two dumps of mines, valuable defence stores, were destroyed at Alfedena. On 5th November, when 6th U.S. Corps was in close contact with the Germans on the upper Volturno, the destruction of the bridge at Cerasuolo interrupted supplies to 305th Infantry Division. If these reports are treated as smoke, more fire may reasonably be inferred. The inference is supported by the complaints of senior officers of *AOK 10*, who had served in Russia, concerning Allied air superiority in Italy. But in fairness it must be said that these officers probably did not know how seriously the demands of the Russian theatre and for the defence of Germany against the combined Allied Bomber Offensive were affecting the potential of the *Luftwaffe* in Italy.

During our chosen period the Allied strategic bombers, supplemented at times by tactical bombers, carried out five main classes of operations over nearly all parts of the Mediterranean theatre occupied by the enemy. Some operations occurred over Germany and Austria. The classes of operations were: the interruption of the German rail system, and general L. of C., in Italy; attacks on railway

targets in southern France and minatory attacks on similar targets in the Balkans; attacks on airfields in Crete, Greece, the Aegean, and the Balkans, particularly in relation to Allied operations at Cos, Leros, and Samos; attacks on airfields in southern France; operations planned to support the Combined Bomber Offensive from the United Kingdom.¹

The greater part of the strategic bomber effort was provided by Northwest African Air Forces (Major-General Carl Spaatz) through, in particular, Northwest African Strategic Air Force, and Northwest African Tactical Bomber Force helping in the strategic role. Middle East Air Command (Air Chief Marshal Sir William Sholto Douglas) also took part with the R.A.F. Liberator and Halifax night-bombers formerly controlled by U.S. Ninth Air Force.²

The distribution of effort, shown in detail in the table at the end of this chapter, worked out in general terms as follows, if we exclude attacks against shipping and ports. The heavy bombers of Northwest African Strategic Air Force flew over 2,000 sorties. Of these: more than half were against the German L. of C. in Italy; a quarter was against airfields in Greece, Crete, and the Aegean in support of Allied operations in the Dodecanese; and the remaining quarter was spread over tasks in Austria, France, Germany, and Yugoslavia. The medium bombers of N.A.S.A.F. and N.A.T.B.F. flew more than 3,900 sorties. Of these: N.A.S.A.F.'s Mitchells and Marauders flew about 1,750 by day; the remainder, approximately 2,150, were shared almost equally by N.A.T.B.F.'s Mitchells by day and by N.A.S.A.F.'s Wellingtons at night. Put in another way the summary runs like this. Two-thirds of the effort of N.A.A.F.'s medium day and night-bombers was spent on attacking the German L. of C. in Italy. Of the remaining third a small part was accounted for by attacks against airfields in France, Italy, and Yugoslavia; a rather larger part by attacks against airfields in Albania; and the greatest part, some 600 sorties, by attacks against airfields in Greece.

The weather was as bad, and as varying over airfields and targets, for the strategic air forces as it was for the tactical air forces. The heavy bombers flew on 29 out of 50 days, and the medium day bombers on about the same number of days though not on the same days. The Wellingtons, whose aircrews maintained a remarkably high operational standard despite casualties and replacements, as well as a habit of flying in almost any weather, were grounded on 18 out of 49 nights. It chanced that a spell of bad weather in the third week of November coincided with the Wellingtons' move to

¹ Allied operations in the Dodecanese and the Aegean are discussed in Chapter XV.

² It will be remembered that U.S. Ninth Air Force discontinued operations in the Mediterranean theatre during October 1943 in order to move to the U.K. to undertake operations in connection with Overlord. See Chapter VII, p. 229.

airfields near Tunis, and thus few sorties were lost by the move. The bad weather, which limited N.A.S.A.F.'s Wellingtons to some 120 sorties in support of 5th and 8th Armies, did not prevent them from operating in other quarters where the weather was better.

See Maps 16 and 22

The Fortresses on 5th October made one of their heaviest raids on a railway target when 124 aircraft with 113 tons of bombs put out of action the marshalling-yards at Bologna. On the 16th 36 Mitchells of N.A.S.A.F. did an amount of damage at Ancona which was remarkable for so small a force, and badly delayed troop movements. On 19th October the first important experiment in rail interdiction began. The idea was to cut simultaneously as many rail routes as possible by destroying, in a planned programme, key bridges and sections of track. Because the sets of targets might be chosen anywhere the enemy could not deploy defences in advance, and it was hoped that the programme would bind him to an endless cycle of repairs and readjustment of traffic. For no sooner had he repaired his railways at one set of points than they would be destroyed at another, and so on and on. At the least the flow of traffic would be reduced, at best chaos might be caused. The first set of targets was chosen between Grosseto on the west coast and Ancona on the east coast, and also southwards of Rome. In this area railways in narrow valleys or en corniche offered vulnerable targets.

On 19th October eleven Liberators began the programme by bombing bridges and tracks near Ancona. During the next four days Liberators, Fortresses, Mitchells and Mauraders of N.A.S.A.F. attacked targets in this pattern:

<i>West Coast</i>	<i>Central Italy</i>
Grosseto	Orvieto
Albinia	Marsciano
Orbetello	Terni
Montalto di Castro	

On the night 21st/22nd October a strong force of Wellingtons bombed bridges and track near Giulianova on the east coast, while on the 21st Mitchells, Bostons, and Baltimores from the Tactical Bomber Force chimed in with attacks in the area of Cassino. During this offensive fighter escorts, additional to those provided by N.A.S.A.F., were supplied at need by U.S. XII Air Support Command and Desert Air Force. Between 19th and 23rd October nearly 1,300 tons of bombs were dropped in 700 sorties. Rail traffic was almost entirely halted at a line across Italy north of Rome, and the enemy had to turn largely to motor transport and coastal shipping.

These types of transport provided the light bombers and fighter-bombers with the kind of target that they relished.

Unfortunately at this point in events the weather interfered with further attacks on bridges. Nevertheless the attacks on other railway targets continued as pendants of the scheme of interdiction.¹ 133 Fortresses on 29th October, and 20 Liberators on the 30th, disrupted the railway at Genoa besides damaging the Ansaldo steel-works and the city. On 10th November 75 Fortresses put the marshalling-yards at Bolzano well nigh out of action with 900 five-hundred pound bombs. On the night 10th/11th 23 Wellingtons from Africa, staging at Decimomannu in Sardinia, attacked the railway viaduct at Recco, south-east of Genoa, and made a direct hit with a 4,000 lb. bomb. The Antheor Viaduct near Cannes received two attacks by Fortresses and one by Wellingtons. 38 Fortresses on 31st October made direct hits on the viaduct and the roads near by with 98 tons of bombs, and on the 11th cut the roads. On the night 13th/14th November four Wellingtons, staging at Elmas in Sardinia, attacked the viaduct and the rail bridge over the Var with 4,000-pound bombs.

The light bombers of the Tactical Bomber Force, and the fighter-bombers took part in the attempt to strangle the German L. of C. in Italy. They added chance attacks on the railways and road bridges to their normal missions against roads and traffic in the approaches to the areas of battle. Mosquito fighter-bombers during the second week of November flew some sorties by night in the areas (west to east) of Genoa, Spezia, Milan, Verona, Padua, Venice, and Ancona. Their targets were railway tracks and bridges, trains, and road transport. One peculiar incident must be mentioned. On the night 5th/6th November some bombs fell on the Vatican City and the German propagandists made much of the occurrence. They had indeed a little earlier predicted an attack on Rome in the near future. In fact, eight British Bostons on the night 5th/6th were on armed reconnaissance north of Rome but none dropped bombs near Rome, and no other Allied aircraft bombed targets within forty miles of the city. On the other hand German bombers raided Naples during that night, and to manufacture an incident at Rome may have been an extra task.

We turn now to other operations, mainly outside Italy. Two attacks were planned to remind the Bulgarians of the reality of war and to hurt German traffic on the Berlin-Istanbul line. The first, within our period, occurred on 14th November when 91 Mitchells of N.A.T.B.F., escorted by Lightnings, dropped 550 five-hundred

¹ Seven main lines were of particular importance to the supply of the German forces in Italy. They were: Rome-Florence (direct); Rome-Pisa; Florence-Pisa; Genoa-Pisa; Marseilles-Genoa; Bologna-Rimini-Ancona; Arezzo-Foligno-Terni-Orte

pound bombs on the marshalling-yards at Sofia and the adjacent airfield of Vrazhdebna. Elsewhere, airfields in Greece, Crete, and the Aegean received most attention, and these attacks attracted a large effort by N.A.A.F. M.E.A.C.'s Liberators and Halifaxes contributed 249 sorties, but its coastal Wellingtons were able to attack land targets only if they failed to find their primary target, shipping, and they seldom failed. N.A.A.F. filled the gap with nearly 1,120 heavy and medium bomber sorties. The airfields at Tirana and Berat/Kircone in Albania received a good deal of attention. Some of the few attacks against airfields other than in the Eastern Mediterranean should be mentioned. On 5th/6th October 51 Wellingtons badly damaged Grosseto airfield, the last occasion on which Nos. 420, 424 and 425 Squadrons R.C.A.F., on loan from the United Kingdom, appeared before returning there.¹ On the night 23rd/24th October 70 Wellingtons with 103 tons of bombs greatly damaged the former Italian Research and Development airfield at Guidonia, and destroyed six German aircraft. On 16th November the group of airfields at Istres was attacked because of the renewal of attacks by German long-range bombers on ports and convoys. 83 Fortresses dropped 160 tons of bombs on Le Tube and Les Pates, and 43 Marauders, from Sardinia, dropped 4,602 twenty-pound fragmentation bombs at Salon. The damage was severe.

N.A.S.A.F. made a series of attacks in Austria, Italy, and France to complement the Combined Bomber Offensive. On 1st October 92 Liberators dropped 167 tons of bombs on the Messerschmitt, and other, aircraft works at and near Wiener Neustadt. 14 Liberators were lost and 52 damaged, and after this mission three participant Liberator Groups, on loan from U.S. Eighth Air Force, returned to the United Kingdom. On 24th October 23 aircraft of a force of 111 Liberators and Fortresses persisted through heavy cloud and repeated the attack. Again, on 2nd November 74 Fortresses and 38 Liberators dropped 292 tons of bombs. This attack was judged to have wiped out 30% of the total German output of single-engine fighters for several months. It cost six Fortresses and five Liberators. Ball-bearing plants at Turin were attacked by 31 Fortresses on 29th October, and by 81 on 8th November, and similar plants at Villa Perosa, near Turin, on 9th and 10th November, and at Annecy on the 10th. The attack of 8th November at Turin stopped production for two months.

This help was reciprocated by R.A.F. Bomber Command in England, for on the night 10th/11th November 313 Lancasters bombed the marshalling-yards and railway station at Modane, putting the railway there out of action for 27 days. Next night 10

¹ Since the night 26th/27th June these squadrons had flown 2,127 sorties and dropped 3,746 tons of bombs and some ten million leaflets: a distinguished spell of service.

Lancasters bombed the Antheor Viaduct, neatly following up the daylight attack by N.A.S.A.F.'s Fortresses on the 11th.

This review shows that the Allied strategic bombers had, in spite of bad weather, used every advantage and opportunity and that they faced a promising future. The move of the Marauders and Lightnings to Sardinia on 31st October brought the sweep of coast between Perpignan and Rome within the range of the medium day bombers and their fighter escorts. The group of airfields at Foggia would be a great advantage to the heavy bombers, although airfield space was at a premium there as elsewhere, because the German decision to stand on the Winter Line denied northward deployment to the Allied air forces. Nevertheless the heavy day bombers by staging in the Heel and in Sardinia could now reach targets in Greater Germany and in the Satellite countries which hitherto had lain beyond their range. N.A.A.F. too were taking advantage of new bases in Italy, which gave increased range, to follow good flying weather wherever it might occur: over Italy one day, and over the Balkans the next, or Greece or Crete or the Aegean, and so on. This flexibility set the *Luftwaffe* an unanswerable problem because its small fighter strength in the central and eastern Mediterranean was dispersed astride the Adriatic and split between two commands. Since no one could tell where the next Allied blows would fall, the German fighter force remained dispersed and adequate nowhere.

On 31st October Tedder wrote to Portal giving his views of the functions and future dispositions of the Mediterranean Air Command. His main objects in order of priority were:

- (a) To help the Allied armies in Italy, principally by tactical air support and by interrupting the German L. of C.
- (b) To contribute to the Combined Bomber Offensive.
- (c) To weaken the German hold on the Balkans and the Aegean.

A little later he added the destruction of the German Air Force within range of N.A.S.A.F. and U.S. Fifteenth Air Force, as first priority.¹

Several factors would bear on the accomplishment of his objects.

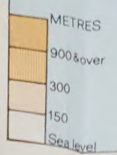
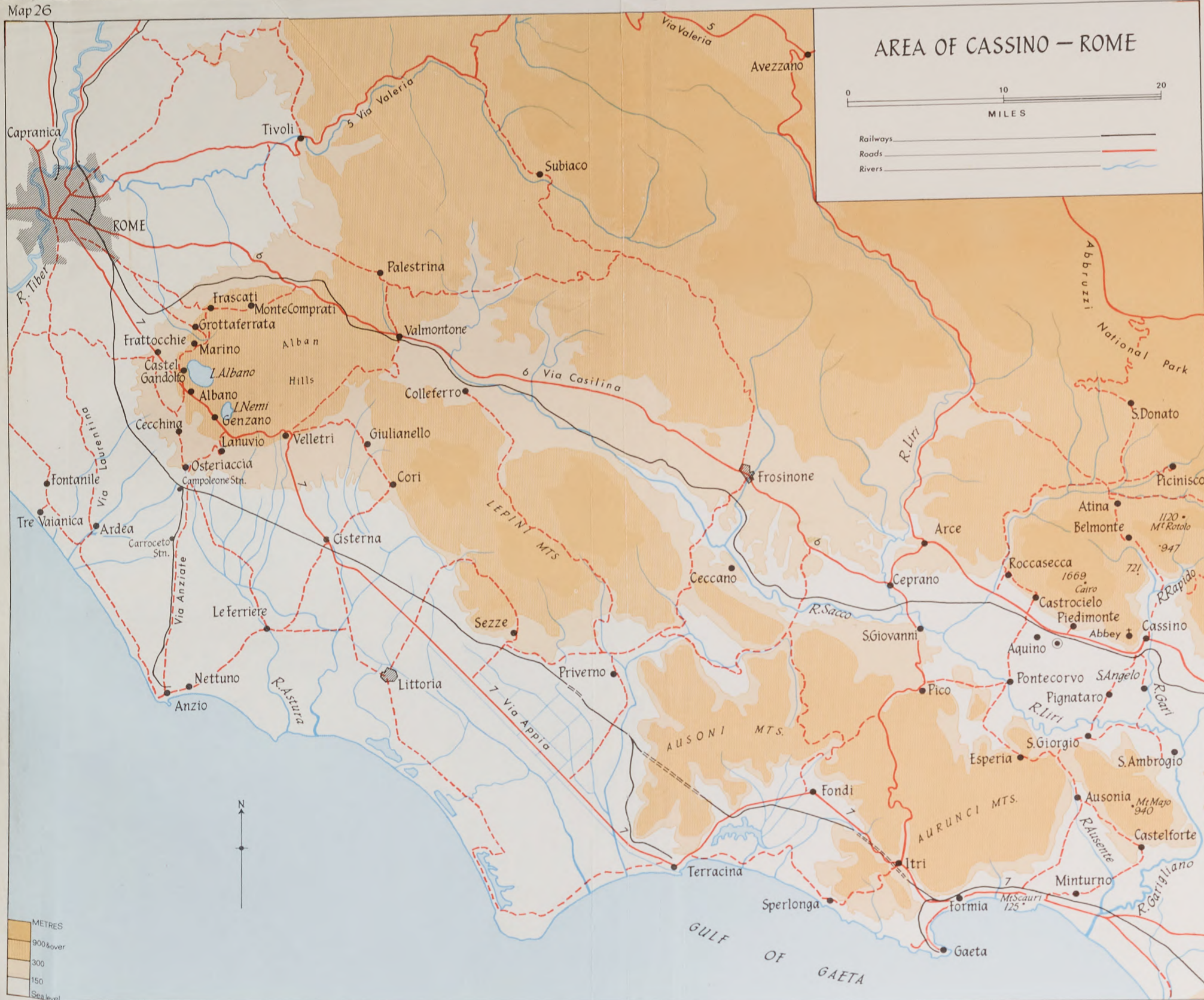
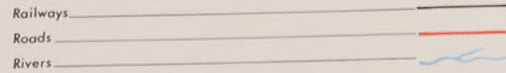
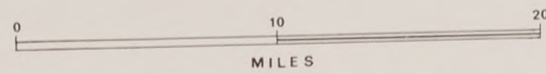
¹ On 1st November the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force came into being (see Chapter XI). Major-General Doolittle assumed command the same day but also remained Commanding General of N.A.S.A.F. In practice the two Headquarters were physically the same. General Spaatz became Commanding General of the U.S.A.A.F. in the Mediterranean theatre but retained command of U.S. Twelfth Air Force.

The background to the creation of a separate strategic air command in the Mediterranean area to support the Combined Bomber Offensive is discussed in 'The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany 1939-45', Volume II, and in 'The Army Air Forces in World War II', Volume II. General Eisenhower was empowered to use units of the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force for purposes other than support of the Combined Bomber Offensive when strategical or tactical emergencies justified such a course.

On 5th January 1944, by which time the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces had come into being, the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force became part of the U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe (U.S.S.A.F.E. until 4th February 1944 when the abbreviation became U.S.S.T.A.F.).

Among them were such matters as the priority and the degree of urgency of tasks; the weather; the number and position of new air bases; whether air forces could move to these self-contained by air or would have to bid for shipping and other transport; supply and maintenance. But a guiding principle was flexibility. A directive by General Spaatz on 14th November embodied Tedder's objects.

AREA OF CASSINO - ROME



CHAPTER XIV
THE ASSAULT ON THE
BERNHARDT LINE
(November and December 1943)

(i)

See Maps 26 and 27

THE Allied forces in Italy now faced the Bernhardt Line and were about to assault it. Eisenhower had given his general view of the situation in a telegram to the Prime Minister on 25th October.

'My principal commanders and I are in complete agreement that it is essential for us to retain the initiative until the time approaches for mounting Overlord, otherwise the enemy will himself seize the initiative and may force us on the defensive prematurely, thus enabling him to withdraw divisions from our front in time to oppose Overlord. If we can keep him on his heels until early Spring, then the more divisions he uses in a counter-offensive against us, the better it will be for Overlord, and it then makes little difference what happens to us if Overlord is a success . . .'

It seems doubtful whether anyone in high places fully understood what a winter campaign in Italy implied. The Prime Minister, commenting on a forecast by Alexander wrote, ' . . . Is he really not contemplating being in Rome until January or February?' The Chiefs of Staff replied that '[our] understanding of the position is that we may be able to capture Rome before Christmas without undertaking an amphibious operation but that, should such an operation prove necessary, the city may not fall until January . . .'

The 5th Army, as things turned out, entered Rome on June 4th 1944. This chapter will perhaps explain why Allied hopes of quickly winning the prize that was Rome vanished in the mountainous battlefield marked by Mts Camino and Sambucaro, by S. Elia and Atina, and in the tangled terrain on both banks of the Sangro river.

To recapitulate, Alexander planned operations in three phases:
First: 8th Army was to get astride the lateral road Pescara-Popoli-

Collarmente (the Valerian Way), and then through Avezzano threaten the L. of C. of the enemy facing 5th Army.

Second: 5th Army was to attack up the valley of the Liri and Sacco to reach Frosinone.

Third: When Frosinone had been reached, a sea-borne landing would be made south of Rome, directed against the Alban hills.

The 8th Army was to strike first, beginning its offensive not before 20th November.

The reasoning behind Alexander's plan was on the following general lines. The 5th Army was by now perceptibly exhausted, had before it a tract of country which was a sea of mud or starkly mountainous, and was matched division for division by the enemy. A co-ordinated effort by both Allied armies therefore would be required to drive the Germans from their positions. 8th Army would strike first, so that its threat to the enemy's communications would help 5th Army's attack, and so that Clark might have a pause during which to regroup. The best road to Rome for an army was the highway running through the Liri and Sacco valleys. The alternative route, the Appian Way, was too cramped between, successively, the Aurunci and Ausoni mountains, and the Pontine marshes and the sea.¹ Any sea-borne assault had to be deferred until the overland force had come within a practical supporting distance, because an isolated sea-borne force could always be eliminated by a greater concentration of enemy force. All available air support was to be at 8th Army's disposal for the first phase, and at 5th Army's for the second and third.

The main limiting circumstances in the general plan were the shortages of tank landing ships and vehicles, and the weather.² Meteorological studies had not suggested that the weather would be more than ordinarily bad during November and December, but local variations can belie a general forecast. In Campania, Latium and the Abruzzi the rain fell early and continued to fall.³ There were many fair intervals but the prevailing wet weather produced mud and flood on low ground and snow on high ground, besides damage to roads and tracks. In these conditions the 8th Army proposed to

¹ The disadvantages attributed to the Appian Way may well have reflected the higher commanders' belief, at this stage, that armour was the main striking arm. In May and June 1944 largely infantry forces, advancing on the axis of the Appian Way, outflanked the Gustav Line and went forward to Rome.

² For tank landing ships, see Chapter XI, p. 384-86.

³ Some statistics of rainfall in inches are:

	September 1943		October 1943		November 1943		December 1943	
	Actual	Usual	Actual	Usual	Actual	Usual	Actual	Usual
Rome	1	2.9	5	5	6.6	4.6	3.5	4.2
Naples	2.6	2.5	5.1	4	5	5	5.7	4.6
Salerno	2.4	4.4	4.6	6.8	8.7	8.3	7.2	7.5
Pescara	1.6	1.9	4.2	2.8	2.6	3.8	1.1	3.4
Foggia	1	1.9	3.9	1.6	2.2	2.2	1.5	2

advance some twenty-two crow-flight miles, and the 5th Army thirty-seven.¹ Between the armies and their goals lay the defended belt of terrain, some nine miles deep and steadily developing which was the Winter Line, of which the Bernhardt Line was the forward edge.

The administration of both armies was sound as regards operational maintenance. There were many great difficulties in general administration, which were being overcome by developing advanced base installations at Naples and in the Heel. There were tremendous physical difficulties in delivering supplies into the hands of the troops. But it was evident that operational maintenance was working on the whole satisfactorily, and fairly between the armies.

At this point a synoptic table of Allied divisions in Italy during the period 15th November–31st December may be useful as an aide-memoire, and to compare with a similar table of German divisions which is on a later page. The divisions are listed under Armies to avoid the complication of inter-Corps transfers.

8th Army

- 5th Division (Bucknall).
- 78th Division (Eveleigh, then Keightley).
- 8th Indian Division (Russell).
- 1st Canadian Division (Vokes).
- 1st Division (Penney). Temporarily during December.
- 4th Indian Division (Tucker) " " "
- 5th Canadian Armoured Division (Simonds). Arriving early December.
- New Zealand Division (Freyberg).

5th Army

British

- 46th Division (Hawkesworth).
- 56th Division (Templer).
- 7th Armoured Division (Erskine). Withdrawn for Overlord, beginning 14th November.
- 1st Division (Penney). Arriving end December.

U.S.

- 3rd U.S. Division.
- 34th U.S. Division.
- 36th U.S. Division.
- 45th U.S. Division.
- 1st U.S. Armoured Division.
- 82nd U.S. Airborne Division. Withdrawn for Overlord, beginning 14th November.

¹ Taken as: (a) Sangro River to Pescara; (b) Mignano to Frosinone.

French

- 2nd Moroccan Division. Beginning to arrive early December.
- 3rd Algerian Division. Beginning to arrive mid-December.

On the German side, the exalted band that was Hitler and his entourage began during November and December to show a fresh attitude towards the campaign in Italy. This was to take capriciously an intense, busy interest in some aspect or detail and to disregard others which commanders in the field believed to be as, or more, important. The feeling of all, however, was that the Germans and the Allies were in Italy to stay. On November 6th Keitel issued a directive, which we have mentioned in Chapter XI, setting forth Hitler's instructions for reorganizing the high command in Italy. The directive left no doubt that the Bernhardt Line was to be held. When the troops had fallen back to that line it would be necessary to place all the forces in Italy under one command. This command would be vested in Kesselring as Commander-in-Chief Southwest and Commander-in-Chief Army Group C. He would command:

- (i) All troops of the three Service arms of the *Wehrmacht*, and of the *Waffen S.S.*, who were engaged in fighting on land.
- (ii) The Mediterranean deputy of the Reich Commissioner for shipping in all matters pertaining to the conduct of military operations.
- (iii) The parts of the Todt Organization which were employed in Italy.

When C.-in-C. South, Kesselring's powers of command over German naval and air units had been variously defined from time to time, but had not been comprehensive and permanent.

The Todt Organization came into being before the war when Hitler entrusted Fritz Todt with building Germany's *autobahnen*. Todt was killed in an air accident in 1942, and was succeeded by Speer, but the organization kept Todt's name. In September 1943 a decree of the Reich Chancellery explained that the organization existed to perform all kinds of constructional work of importance to the outcome of the war. The organization was semi-military; there was a cadre of German officers; and the labourers were German, or foreign volunteers, conscripts, and prisoners of war. The Todt organization first appeared in north Italy under command of an engineer general, Fischer.

Kesselring's tasks in his new appointment were the same in substance as those which Hitler had given him on 4th October.¹

¹ See Chapter XI for the directive of 4th October.

They were:

- (a) To defend central Italy on the line Gaeta–Ortona.
- (b) To protect the coasts of the Tyrrhenian, Ligurian, and Adriatic seas. The points of main effort to be on the coasts of the Tyrrhenian, and in the Gulf of Genoa.
- (c) To pacify those areas of northern Italy which were still 'in revolt'.
- (d) To plan an attack on Apulia, to be launched if it became evident that the Allies were preparing, in south Italy, an operation against the Balkans.

The Germans had no smaller problems of build-up in Italy than had the Allies. The German problems however arose from the difficulty of trying to meet the needs of their various theatres without having sufficient general reserves. Interior lines on land as yet gave them freedom of movement, although the Allied air forces were disrupting land movements, temporarily, more often than during any earlier period. An ironical consequence of the German downfall in Africa had been relief from the immense labour of trying to maintain sea communications in the teeth of the Allies' dominant naval and air forces.

The moves of German formations in and out of Italy, and within Italy, were so complicated and confusing, that a synoptic table, which disregards precise detail, may be welcome. November and December are the period of this table, and it was on 21st November that Kesselring began to exercise his full powers, and that *AOK 14* under von Mackensen came formally into being in northern Italy.

AOK 10

14th Panzer Corps. (von Senger):

- 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division (Gräser). Withdrawn, beginning c. 13th November.
- 15th Panzer Grenadier Division (Rodt).
- 29th Panzer Grenadier Division (Fries). Withdrawn from 76th Panzer Corps c. 4th November; returned, beginning c. 13th November.
- 94th Infantry Division (Pfeiffer).
- 305th Infantry Division (Hauck).
- 44th Infantry Division (Beyer). Arriving 29th November–14th December.
- 5th Mountain Division (Ringel). Began to arrive c. 17th December.
- 26th Panzer Division (von Lüttwitz). From c. 6th November; returned to 76th Panzer Corps 26th November.
- Hermann Göring Panzer Division. (Conrath).

76th Panzer Corps (Herr):

- 1st Parachute Division (Heidrich). Many detachments occurred during November.

- 65th Infantry Division (von Ziehlberg, then Pfeifer).
- 90th Panzer Grenadier Division (Lungershausen, then Baade). Arriving 29th November–3rd December.
- 334th Infantry Division (Scheller). Began to arrive c. 18th December.
- 16th Panzer Division (Sieckenius, then Balck). Withdrawn, beginning c. 13th November.
- 26th Panzer Division (von Lüttwitz). Returning from 14th Panzer Corps c. 26th November.

AOK 14

- 71st Infantry Division.
- 162nd (Turcoman) Infantry Division.
- 334th Infantry Division. To *AOK 10*.
- 356th Infantry Division.
- 362nd Infantry Division. Forming.
- 188th Reserve Mountain Division.
- 278th Infantry Division. Forming.
- 16th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Division. Forming.
- 4th Parachute Division. Forming.

See also Map 20

While twelve of the above divisions had been in the Order of Battle for Italy in early September, as outlined in Chapter VI, the policy regarding Army Group B/*AOK 14* had changed. In October and November this Army had lost a Corps Headquarters and four divisions to other theatres, and its status had changed almost to that of a training ground on a low priority.¹ This is not to say that Italy was starved, for new equipment kept on reaching the front-line troops but reinforcements arrived for the time being in the shape of *Marsch* Battalions, or units of *Osttruppen*, or perhaps battle-worn formations from the east.²

For the Germans as for the British the next phase of the campaign became a series of battles on two almost independent fronts. On 13th November Lemelsen submitted to Kesselring an appreciation of the western part of his front. He interpreted the Allies' limited sharp attacks on particular objectives, which he did not believe would stop, as the forerunners of a great attempt to break through the Bernhardt Line and drive on to Rome. The phase was a very critical one and was bound to be costly because mountain warfare was costly, whether one defended or attacked. Lemelsen's paper may not have

¹ H.Q. 2nd S.S. Panzer Corps; 24th Panzer, Adolf Hitler, 76th Infantry, 371st Infantry Divisions.

² It was the German practice to organize reinforcements in *Marsch* Battalions. These could either be used independently, or absorbed by formations, or the men could be posted to units. *Osttruppen* were originally non-Russian prisoners of war from the Red Army; later, deserters were accepted also. The battle-worn formations referred to were absorbed by 362nd Infantry Division.

reached *OKW* yet the High Command began to indulge one of its bouts of intense interest in tactical details. On the 13th Lemelsen proposed to Kesselring to withdraw from the hills in the area of S. Pietro Infine, north of the Mignano Gap. Kesselring referred to Hitler, who on the 14th ruled that he would himself decide whether *AOK 10* should counter-attack or withdraw a little, but that meanwhile it must hold a switch line north and south of S. Pietro. The Allies' attempts to break through the Bernhardt Line were to be resisted with the greatest vigour, and the utmost energy was to be devoted to preparing another line of defence, well in rear, named for the moment the 'Cassino Position', later the Führer Line and finally the Senger Line. Hitler's intervention now intensified, and the High Command became inextricably mixed up in the planning by Kesselring, *AOK 10*, and 14th Panzer Corps of a complex of defences known as the Gustav Line, upon which work had been in progress since 10th November.

On 15th November Kesselring's Chief of Staff, Westphal, was summoned by Hitler to discuss the Cassino Position, and there followed wider-ranging talks with Jodl and Warlimont. Hitler decreed that a new line of fortress strength was to be built from a point some sixteen miles west of Cassino southward to Pico, and perhaps to be extended to Gaeta or to a point on the coast about thirty miles west of that place. The Todt Organization would be responsible for the work. Jodl, Warlimont, and Westphal then added their views to Hitler's directive. They believed that the Bernhardt Line was the best and the shortest, that it must be held for as long as possible, and that the projected Cassino Position must not tempt *AOK 10* to contemplate withdrawing from the Bernhardt Line short of sheer necessity. The trio considered that thought should be given to building defences pivoting on S. Giorgio, some nine miles east of Hitler's Cassino Position and in more defensible ground. *OKW*'s operations branch calculated that to defend the Bernhardt Line from coast to coast eight divisions and a reserve of two more were required. Since Rommel had already advised that twelve divisions would be required to defend an 'Apennine Line' there clearly was no force to be saved by withdrawing northwards.

Kesselring, *AOK 10*, and 14th Panzer Corps were evolving a complex of defences known as 'G1-Gustav-G4'. The intricate details kept altering but the backbone of the positions can be indicated. G1 was the line of the Garigliano from the coast to Mt. Valle Martina (Pt. 321), and thence northward until it met the River Liri. Here began Gustav which ran to a point south of the town of Cassino and then struck north and north-east across the mountains to S. Biagio. From S. Biagio G4 continued northwards to the neighbourhood of Alfedena. By 14th November the whole complex, which in places

coincided with the Bernhardt Line, was known as the Gustav Line. The work was to be supervised by Colonel von Corvin, commanding 2nd Panzer Grenadier Regiment Hermann Göring, because control by engineers alone had proved insufficiently forceful. Kesselring by 27th November gained Hitler's agreement to a change in the siting of the rear switch line. This position was now to run, broadly speaking, from Cassino westwards to Frosinone. But this line did not in fact coincide with that fixed on the ground by *AOK 10* on 26th November. This ran, south to north, from Fondi-Pontecorvo-Aquino-Mt. Cairo. The infuriating changes however were not yet over. On 29th November Hitler directed that Mt. Cassino, well to the east, was to be incorporated. The status of the great Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino had been since October a subject of negotiations between the Vatican and the German and Allied governments. By mid-December the outcome was a German assurance that German troops would not occupy the abbey, and an Allied assurance that its safety would be provided for.¹

Work on the defences continued most vigorously. Divisions found most of the labour in their own sectors but engineer units were liberally supplied by Corps. Kesselring sent 44,000 Todt-workers to labour on the Cassino position. *OKW* in November provided 100 steel 'shelters' (Stahlunterstände), and more to follow, 76 armoured 'casemates' (Panzerstände), and a number of 'armoured machine-gun nests'.²

No sooner, however, was work on the Gustav and Cassino systems in full swing than events on the Adriatic wing began to look threatening. The 8th Army began to make a bridgehead on the Sangro on 20th November. On the 23rd November Lemelsen told Kesselring that he was 'beginning to get really worried about the northern wing' [*AOK 10*'s line ran obliquely across Italy, and 76th Panzer Corps therefore lay well north of 14th Panzer Corps.] On the 25th he very accurately appreciated Montgomery's strength, and described 8th Army as preparing to strike for Pescara in order to help 5th Army's main thrust for Rome by attracting German reserves to the Adriatic wing. He nevertheless appealed for reinforcements, with small result because Kesselring's cupboard was not well stocked. Before much could be done the 8th Army attacked in strength and engulfed the Germans on this front in a crisis which lasted until December 5th.

¹ The abbey was particularly venerable because of its fourteen hundred years of history, and because St. Benedict himself had ruled over it as Abbot.

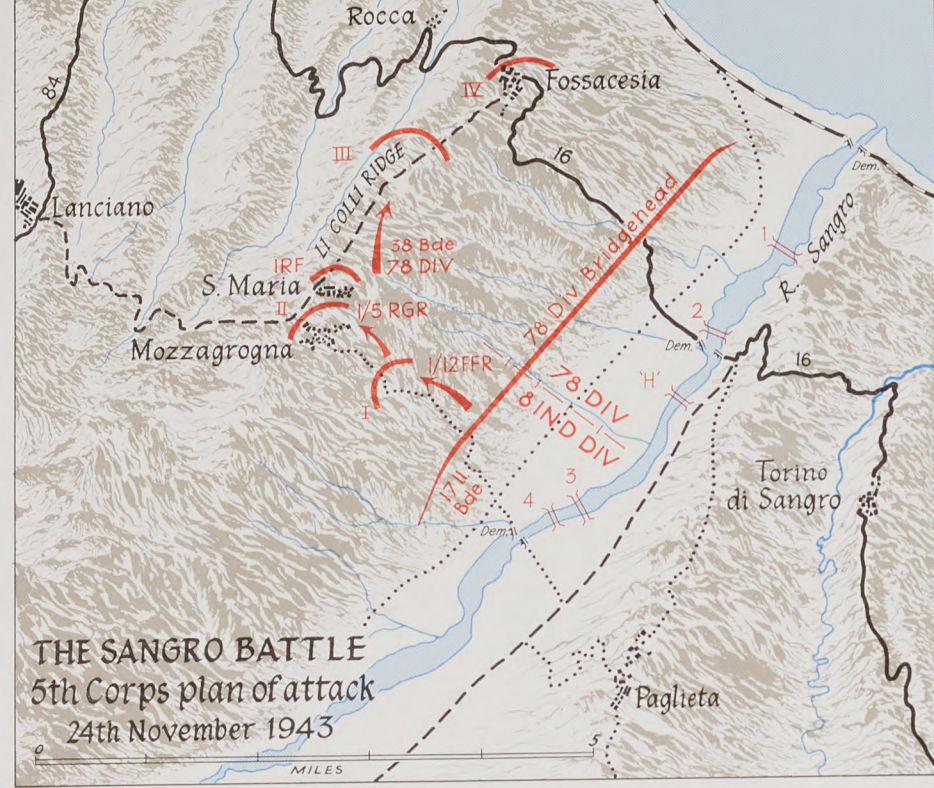
² The German 'Armoured Portable Pill Box', as the British called it, was dome-shaped and 6 feet in height, of which 3 feet appeared above ground. Armour was between 5.46 inches and 3.51 inches thick in front, and 1.56 inches on sides, rear, and top. One M.G. 42 or 34 was placed in the pill-box, which weighed 3 tons.

Map 27



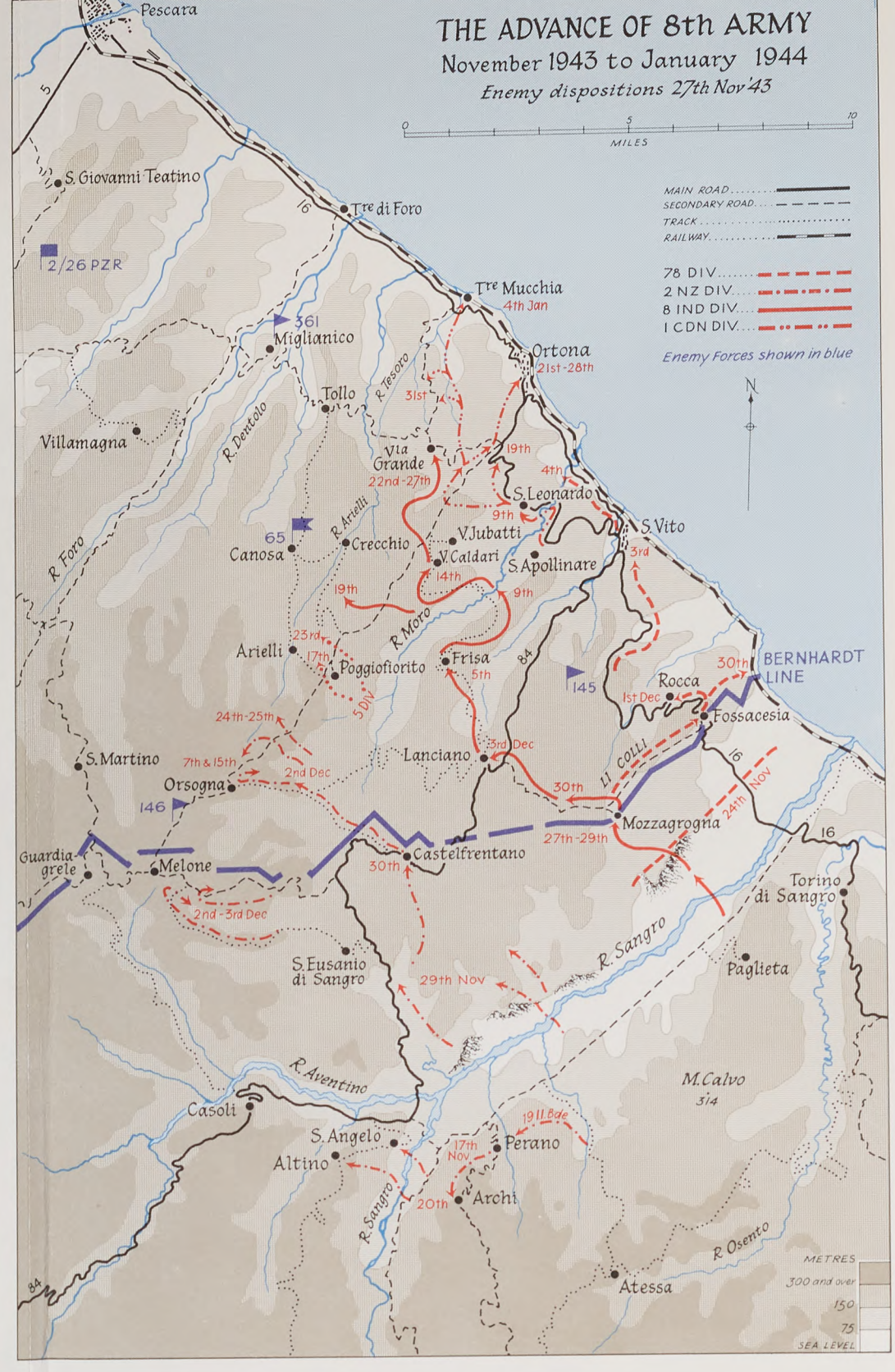
Possible routes of advance for 8th Army, Nov 1943.

Map 28



THE SANGRO BATTLE 5th Corps plan of attack 24th November 1943

Map 29



THE ADVANCE OF 8th ARMY November 1943 to January 1944 Enemy dispositions 27th Nov '43

- MAIN ROAD.....
 - SECONDARY ROAD.....
 - TRACK.....
 - RAILWAY.....
- 78 DIV.....
 - 2 NZ DIV.....
 - 8 IND DIV.....
 - 1 CDN DIV.....
- Enemy Forces shown in blue

The moving war represented by the 8th Army's 400-mile advance from Calabria and the 5th Army's 100-mile advance from Salerno had ended, and a static phase was beginning, marked by set-piece attacks on limited objectives against a defence that was resolutely conducted on the sound German tactical doctrine. This, in a nutshell, was to force the enemy to deploy completely before he reached the main defensive belt, and then to bring his assault to a halt. The defence was thoroughly aggressive, based on the schematically planned fire of all arms, and on the immediate, and also the deliberate, counter-attack.¹ The fighting included struggles on mountains, on great hills, on river-banks, and deadly grappling, house to house, in shattered towns and villages. In this sort of fighting success and failure lie almost wholly in the hands of regimental officers and men, and theirs are the pains, the loss, and the praise. Superior commanders find their scope to be restricted once battle is joined although the heaviest demands are made upon their constancy and courage.

(ii)

See Maps 27 to 29

By 9th November 8th Army's extreme right flank had closed on the Sangro River and elsewhere the Army was approaching the river along its length. Montgomery's immediate intention, to fulfil Alexander's directive, was to force the Sangro river and advance to gain control of the lateral road from Pescara to Avezzano. He had been considering since the Trigno battle how to approach the Sangro for he had been aware of Alexander's general intentions. Characteristically, he marshalled his formations to fit in exactly with his plan.

Because Avezzano was a road-centre from which future operations would develop to help 5th Army's thrust for Rome, the merits of the routes leading to that area had to be examined. The most direct was the mountain road through Isernia, Alfedena, and Gioia dei Marsi. A second road ran through Castel di Sangro and Sulmona. Both these routes were unsuitable to maintain a force of even two divisions because they could easily be blocked by demolitions, were certain to be blocked if snow fell, were in many places fit only for one-way traffic, offered successive defensive positions to the enemy, and would lock up a large number of troops in piquetting the flanks. A third route ran from Casoli on the Sangro to Chieti and then joined the Pescara-Avezzano lateral. But the mountain roads leading to Casoli from the south were so poor that the administrative objections to this route were very strong. There remained a roundabout route; to

¹ German theory recognized a main defence zone (*Hauptkampffeld*), a main defensive belt (*Hauptkampfflinie*), battle outposts (*Gefechtsvorposten*), and advanced positions (*Vorgeschoebene Stellungen*).

Pescara by the coast road, and thence westward along the lateral to Avezzano. The coast road was good and could maintain an adequate force. Moreover Pescara was about half-way to Ancona, a desirable port on the Adriatic coast. If it proved to be impracticable to move westward on Avezzano from Pescara, the 8th Army by reaching Pescara would have at least gone far towards gaining the valuable prize of Ancona. Montgomery therefore decided to use the coast road as his main axis although he knew that he would meet strong defences on it. He decided to try to make the enemy believe that the main thrust would follow the most direct route to Avezzano through the mountains. His outline plan was to use 13th Corps in a diversionary attack on Alfedena and Castel di Sangro; to use the New Zealand Division under direct Army command in a subsidiary thrust through Atessa and Casoli; and to launch 5th Corps in a main attack through Fossacesia to Lanciano and S. Vito, and then northward to Pescara and Chieti.

In more detail, Montgomery's first plan for his main attack was that the two infantry divisions of 5th Corps should break into the Sangro defences in a quick and violent assault on a narrow front between Mozzagrogna and Fossacesia near the sea, and that one of them, with an armoured brigade, should then thrust quickly to Pescara by the coast road. Simultaneously almost, the New Zealand Division on 5th Corps' left would attack on the axis Casoli-Guardiagrele-S. Martino and press on to Chieti which would be reached, it was hoped, in 48 hours. The New Zealand Division might then turn west towards Avezzano. We will follow first the development of the main phases of the Sangro operation, and leave until later the plans for 13th Corps' diversionary operations. The footnote gives an outline Order of Battle of the 8th Army, as it stood at the battle of the Sangro.¹

¹ (a) *A. Right*

5th Corps (Lieut.-General C. W. Allfrey):

Right 78th Division: 11th, 36th, 38th Infantry Brigades,
4th Armoured Brigade.

Centre 8th Indian Division: 17th, 21st Indian Infantry Brigades.

Under direct command of 8th Army

Left New Zealand Division; 5th, 6th New Zealand Infantry Brigades.
4th New Zealand Armoured Brigade; 19th Indian Infantry Brigade
(from 8th Indian Division).

B. Left 13th Corps (Lieut.-General M. C. Dempsey):

Right 1st Canadian Division: 1st, 2nd, 3rd Canadian Infantry Brigades.

Left 5th Division: 13th, 15th, 17th Infantry Brigades;
12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Three Rivers Regiment).

(b) On 26th November 8th Army's field artillery stood at 22 field regiments and 7 medium regiments. The total of guns was:

25 pdr	538
105-mm	39 (98th Field Regiment R.A. 26, Reserves 13).
5.5-inch	56
4.5-inch	57

690

[Continued on opposite page

Intelligence of the German positions and general dispositions was very good and owed much to aerial photography. Between the sea and the confluence of the Sangro and Aventino rivers, some twelve miles inland east of Casoli, the general physical features of the battlefield were as follows. On the south bank of the Sangro hills fell sharply as much as four hundred feet to a narrow strip of plain and towards the river. The Sangro bed was between three and four hundred yards wide, gravelly, and strewn with boulders. The river flowed in several channels, each about one hundred feet wide and eighteen inches deep in summer. But in autumn and winter the stream was treacherous. A few hours' rain would bring down a rushing spate five feet deep, which would subside during the next fairly dry spell, and rise when the rain fell once more. The speed of these changes, which was not correctly estimated before it had been experienced, was to be one reason for three important changes in the plan of battle. Four bridges had spanned the river but had been demolished: one near Torino di Sangro, one near Paglieta, and two above the meeting of the Sangro and Aventino. The Sangro bed was firm enough to carry an improvised roadway, yet bridging or making crossing-places was very difficult. The approaches to the south bank lay on soil too soft to support much traffic, while the northern bank was steep and undercut, making exits few. Bridges, to be reliable, had therefore to be long and flood-proof. Fords and ferries were always at risk. The Germans had mined both banks.

On the north bank of the Sangro the strip of plain was about two thousand yards wide and its northern edge was marked by an escarpment about forty feet high. North of this escarpment the ground rose to the Li Colli ridge, parallel to the river, some three miles distant from it, and about four hundred feet high. This high ground overlooked the whole countryside to the south including the river. On this high ground, from the sea inland, lay Fossacesia, S. Maria, Mozzagrogna, and Castelfrentano. The ridge was well cultivated, and dotted with farm-buildings and olive groves. A lateral road, mainly under cover, connected the four places mentioned above. Further north there was another pair of laterals between S. Vito, Lanciano, and Castelfrentano, and further north again, yet another lateral connecting Ortona, Orsogna, and Guardiagrele. In fact, north

(c) Tank State on the evening 25th November was:

	<i>Fit</i>	<i>Under Repair</i>
4th Armoured Brigade: Sherman III		
3rd C.L.Y.	43	14
44th R.T.R.	53	3
50th R.T.R.	40	17
12th Canadian Armoured Regiment: Sherman V	50	3
	<u>186</u>	<u>37</u>

of the Sangro the countryside was well served with north-south and east-west roads and tracks albeit of poor quality.

The Germans had decided to hold the north bank of the Sangro with outposts only, lightly entrenched. Their main defences lay on the Li Colli ridge, and conformed with the standard German pattern of strong points, well wired and mined, containing deep bunkers connected by trenches to weapon pits.¹ Some strong points were connected by trenches and the whole complex was two to four kilometres deep or more. The Germans believed the forty-foot escarpment and the Li Colli ridge to be steep enough to be tank-proof, and had not covered them by large anti-tank works or by anti-tank guns.

The sector from the coast road to just west of Guardiagrele was held by 65th Infantry Division, while 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division lay further north at Villa Grande, Miglianico, and S. Giovanni Teatino. The British were well acquainted with 65th Infantry Division's lay-out, and had a low opinion of the division's quality because it had been formed of young troops in Holland in 1942 and was without experience in battle. This knowledge was a factor in Montgomery's plan. The German commanders themselves were not too confident of 65th Division's prowess, and Kesselring on 28th November recalled a remark of its commander, von Ziehlberg '... the dug-outs will hold; whether the troops will also hold remains to be seen'.² The division's fighting strength on 4th November was 6,552. Its artillery was the equivalent of seven troops, at the end of November; the number of guns is uncertain, but the total in 76th Panzer Corps was between 70 and 75. The division held 52 anti-tank guns of 7.5-cm. Herr, the Corps Commander, had formed the shrewd opinion that Montgomery's attack was likely to begin with a thrust west of Castelfrentano through S. Eusanio di Sangro, which would develop into two further thrusts, one towards Casoli and the other on Fossacesia and Mozzagrogna.

Montgomery's planning, which had begun as the 8th Army crossed the Trigno, was accompanied by preliminary operations, to deceive the enemy, and to gain a jumping-off place on the north bank of the Sangro for the main attack by 5th Corps. A summary of these operations at this point will help.

The plan to deceive the enemy aimed at concealing 8th Army's concentration and preparations for the main attack, and at leading

¹ Between the middle of November and the middle of December *AOK 10* laid mines in the approximate numbers:

	<i>14th Panzer Corps</i>	<i>76th Panzer Corps</i>
Anti-tank	17,792	29,402
Anti-personnel	13,636	19,296

The total of 80,126 may be compared with the 445,000 laid in the Alamein position.

² von Ziehlberg was wounded on 28th November, and was replaced by Colonel Baade from 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, until Major-General Pfeifer arrived in early December.

him to think that the main attack would follow the most direct route to Avezzano. If there was small hope of tactical surprise, at least the enemy might be hoodwinked into using his reserves piecemeal. 13th Corps therefore was to begin its advance towards the upper Sangro early, to make ostentatious troop movements, and to plant bogus dumps in its maintenance areas to simulate far-reaching administrative support. A wireless deception scheme was contrived to make the enemy think that Army Tactical Headquarters and 8th Indian Division would arrive in 13th Corps' sector. Operations by 19th Indian Infantry Brigade were to screen 8th Indian Division's actual eastward side-step to Paglieta and the New Zealand Division's arrival near Scerni. Wireless silence, patrolling of unimportant ground, dummies and camouflage all played their parts. A naval demonstration towards Pescara was arranged to foment the enemy's known fears for his sea flank.

13th Corps therefore by 18th November was advancing towards Castel di Sangro and Alfedena in continual rain and deep mud, along roads cluttered with demolitions, and through a country-side ravaged by the Germans' 'scorched earth' measures.¹ 3rd Canadian Brigade, from a 'firm base' at Carovilli, reached Caprocotta and S. Pietro and pushed patrols across the Sangro between S. Angelo and Ateleta. On 24th November it began an attack on Castel di Sangro, which was then called off by a change in Montgomery's plans. Concurrently 5th Division gained Mt. Civitalta, overlooking Alfedena, and on 22nd November opened an attack on that place, which was also not pressed owing to change of plans. We turn from 13th Corps to 5th Corps and the New Zealand Division.

On 7th November 78th Division's 11th Brigade reached Paglieta and Mt. Calvo, overlooking the Sangro, and was joined by two squadrons of tanks from 4th Armoured Brigade. From 10th November until 19th 78th Division's patrols crossed the Sangro almost nightly, dominating the 'No Man's Land' below the escarpment. Patrols of engineers and tank-men also crossed to make reconnaissances and lift mines. The enemy seemed almost supine. However from about 15th November the Sangro spates became a dangerous adversary. No patrol when crossing the river knew when it would be able to return, and the always deepening, greasy mud in the approaches to the river bedevilled the preparation of fords. A quick assault by fording became unlikely, and 78th Division's preliminary task changed to making a bridgehead. By November 22nd 11th

¹ 13th Corps was to find itself faced with a refugee problem. At the end of November some 4,000 required food, shelter, and settlement, and 500 a day were coming in. To care for these unfortunates was a heavy burden, and to move them was an extra strain on overworked transport, particularly as each vehicle had to be disinfected after every trip. The medical services accepted a great liability which Allied Military Government could not yet accept in forward areas.

Brigade had gained a bridgehead east of Fossacesia, and 36th Brigade one west of it. Six battalions and some tanks of 3rd C.L.Y. and 50th R.T.R. then had footholds on the escarpment.

Meanwhile on 14th November the New Zealand Division was beginning to arrive in Scerni, and took under command 8th Indian Division's 19th Indian Infantry Brigade. The remainder of 8th Indian Division side-slipped quietly to Paglieta between 14th and 18th November over villainous roads and tracks.¹ On 17th November 3rd/8th Punjab Regiment (19th Indian Infantry Brigade) and 19th N.Z. Armoured Regiment took Perano, held by part of 64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (16th Panzer Division) and on the 20th the brigade took Archi. The next step was to take the high ground in the angle between the Sangro and Aventino to prepare the way for the New Zealand Division's crossings. 3rd/8th Punjab and 1st/5th Essex forded the swollen Sangro on the night 22nd/23rd November and began to try to take S. Angelo and Altino. All these small actions were grimly fought in horrible weather—on the far bank of the Sangro many of the badly wounded died of exposure because they could not be brought back across the accursed river.

Such is a sketch of the operations preliminary to the Sangro battle. It would be pleasant to record that 8th Army's deception plan, particularly the toils and enterprise of 13th Corps, deceived the Germans. But in fact, apart from some confusion at divisional level and below, the German commanders were for a time almost offhand. They were too practical as soldiers to believe in a serious thrust towards Alfedena and Castel di Sangro through the worst of the country at the onset of winter. On the other hand accumulating evidence led them, by 24th November, to think that 8th Army's main attack would fall where in fact it fell—on 65th Infantry Division. They uneasily awaited the 8th Army's onslaught but attempted no spoiling attacks.

Montgomery held his first planning conference on 14th November. The weather then was just fair but Montgomery declared that 48 hours of dry weather immediately before D-Day were essential. He was ready to postpone D-Day, which he hoped would be the night 19th/20th November. On the 17th he stipulated a week of fair weather for the whole operation. The first plan depended upon the Sangro being fordable so that the assault could be launched, and its momentum maintained, without much bridging and improvement of roads. In fact the assaulting troops were to cross by five fords and the

¹ Good examples of the state of the roads and tracks are recorded by the New Zealand Division. On 18th November 6th New Zealand Brigade spent twelve hours in crossing a ford of the Osento. On 17th November 4th New Zealand Field Regiment took eight hours to move seven miles.

engineers were to make three temporary crossing places for vehicles. And so 5th Corps' plan took shape as an operation in three phases:

First. 8th Indian Division (less 19th Indian Infantry Brigade) to assault through 78th Division's covering screen [not yet seen as a bridgehead] and to capture S. Maria and Mozzagrogna. One brigade then to form a firm base at S. Maria; the other to capture Lanciano.

Second. 4th Armoured Brigade and 38th Infantry Brigade (78th Division) to attack Fossacesia by advancing eastward along the crest of the Li Colli ridge.

Third. 78th Division and 4th Armoured Brigade to advance to Pescara, through S. Vito, by the coast road.

Three Army field regiments and five medium regiments of artillery were allotted to 5th Corps, and the whole available bomber force was to attack the enemy, both in position and in rear of the battlefield on 20th November.

The New Zealand Division would attack, simultaneously with 5th Corps' first phase, through 19th Infantry Brigade's bridgehead. One infantry brigade, on pack transport, supported by 4th N.Z. Armoured Brigade would be directed on Guardiagrele, S. Martino, and Chieti.

On 16th November the rain poured down and during the next three days the engineers' work on fords and approaches at the Sangro was undone. The river fell on the 19th, raising eleventh-hour hopes of keeping D-Day, but on the 20th itself postponement became inevitable and was ordered. It was hopeless to attempt the operation without first building bridges, 78th Division's screen was turned into a bridgehead, and on the night 21st/22nd the engineers set to work. There was hope that the attack might begin on 24th November. Montgomery revised his plan by fixing the limit of his advance as Lanciano, and by directing that there would then be a pause for two or three days 'while the Sangro valley is thoroughly organized for movement'.

The bridging plan was clearly all important, and the following bridges were to be built:

- No. 1 Equidistant between the 'old' Sangro bridge (about three miles from the sea, and bearing the main road to Fossacesia) and the sea. Main span: 140 feet. Bailey.
- No. 2 Just downstream from the 'old' Sangro bridge. Main span: 140 feet. Bailey.
- H Half a mile upstream from the 'old' Sangro bridge. Main span: 100 feet. Bailey.
- No. 3 Half a mile downstream from Paglieta. Main span: 140 feet. Bailey.

No. 1 was to carry wheeled vehicles and tracked Bren carriers; No. 2, all types of wheeled vehicles, and in emergency, tanks; H tanks; No. 3 wheeled vehicles and Bren carriers.

Bridge No. 1 and H were completed during the night 21st/22nd November but work on No. 3 was held up because congestion on the roads delayed sending forward bridge-building equipment. On 22nd November the weather was fine on the lower Sangro but rain fell heavily in the upper reaches and during the night 22nd/23rd a flood swept down the river. The Chief Engineer of 5th Corps described the results ' . . . Old Man Sangro, deciding that our task was not meeting with sufficient opposition, rose in all his wrath and came down in spate. Where the water gap was 100-150 feet it suddenly became 1,000 and [the bridges] were to be seen at daylight splendidly forlorn in the middle of a vast span of swiftly flowing water . . .' All work was stopped on the bridges until 26th November. DUKWs of 156th and 385th DUKW Companies R.A.S.C. swam about, carrying supplies to the bridgehead and rescuing the wounded; some of these vehicles constantly made a dangerous sea-passage from Vasto, and back. On 24th November Allfrey issued final orders for limited, slower, operations, giving hoped-for dates. In short:

First phase. A battalion of 8th Indian Division to capture a spur one thousand yards south-east of Mozzagrognà. 26th November.

Second phase. A brigade (less one battalion) of 8th Indian Division, to capture Mozzagrognà and S. Maria. 28th November.

Third phase. A brigade of 78th Division, to capture a part of the Li Colli ridge, a mile east of S. Maria. 29th or 30th November.

Fourth phase. The same brigade to capture Fossacesia as soon as possible after the third phase. Exploitation as far as the River Moro was left open. Tanks were to be used in each phase if possible, but no phase was to depend upon their use. In consequence 78th Division prepared a dry-weather plan, and a wet-weather plan. The first gave a leading role to tanks in the attack on Fossacesia, and a supporting role to infantry; the second gave the roles vice versa. Attempts to prepare in secret were now more or less given up which may explain the enemy's forebodings of evil for 65th Infantry Division.

Rain and the River Sangro had converted 8th Army's plans for a sudden, smashing blow, followed by swift exploitation, into a series of limited, though very heavily supported attacks.

(iii)

The 8th Army's limited attacks in the early stages of the Sangro battle were so successful that it is tempting to speculate on what might have been achieved had not the rain and the river spoiled the original plan.

Between the 23rd and 26th November the Sangro fell. No. 1 and

H bridges were restored to use and No. 3 bridge was completed on 26th November. A floating bridge (No. 4) was finished near Paglieta on 28th November but No. 2 bridge did not come into service until 2nd December.¹ Early on 27th November 1st/12th Frontier Force Regiment (17th Indian Infantry Brigade) easily took a jumping-off place below Mozzagrogna, and 38th Brigade (78th Division) also crossed the river. On the evening of the 27th 1st/5th Royal Gurkha Rifles, supported by eight field regiments and two medium, attacked Mozzagrogna (Phase II) and reported its capture soon after two o'clock in the morning of the 28th. Part of 1st Royal Fusiliers then joined the Gurkhas, and together they 'winkled out' Germans from houses and hide-outs with grenade, bullet, kukri, and bayonet. The intense artillery fire and bombing had wrecked 65th Infantry Division's communications, isolating units, and had shaken its 'green' troops. Nevertheless a company of 26th Panzer Division's 2nd Tank Regiment and a reconnaissance squadron, newly arrived on the battlefield, counter-attacked Mozzagrogna at dawn on the 28th. Although the armour amounted to only five Mark IV tanks, five flame-throwers, and six Italian S.P. guns,² Brigadier Wyndham interpreted the uproar to mean a strong counter-attack and needlessly withdrew his troops a thousand yards to reorganize to meet it. The Gurkhas had suffered 136 casualties. Meanwhile 4th Armoured Brigade was passing tanks over the river and 124 had crossed by the evening.

The drying ground now suggested that 78th Division would be able to use tanks to attack the Li Colli ridge (Phase III), and this was arranged for the morning of the 29th. But before this 1st/12th Frontier Force Regiment, supported by the Corps' artillery retook Mozzagrogna by 1.30 a.m. on the 29th. At 9 a.m. on the 29th 3rd C.L.Y. and 6th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, supported by six field regiments of artillery and three medium, surmounted obstacles including steep slopes and a sunken lane, and cleared S. Maria. This was a bad day for 65th Infantry Division. It lost Mozzagrogna and S. Maria, and also the high ground north of the Sangro to 5th and 6th New Zealand Brigades which were attacking towards Castel-

¹ The engineers were:

5th Corps Troops: 564th, 565th, 751st Field Companies R.E.

78th Division: 214th, 237th, 256th Field Companies R.E.

8th Indian Division: 7th, 66th, 68th Field Companies I.E.

² The flame-thrower was a standard Pzkw III tank in which the tank gun had been replaced by a projector 4 feet $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches long, of overall diameter $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and with a main jet $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in diameter. Two fuel tanks, each of 50 gallons, were mounted in the hull. The official effective range was 65 yards and in practice about 20 yards. Flame could be emitted in a jet or in blobs. Witnesses have described the weapon as very frightening but a random killer.

There was a portable projector (*Wurfsgerät*) worked by four men. This discharged a 28-cm H.E. missile or a 32-cm incendiary missile to a range of 70 yards. The incendiary contained 8 gallons of oil which ignited on impact, and splashed up to about 160 yards.

frentano. The 2nd/145th Grenadier Regiment was thought to be written off, and here and there troops had been unwilling to leave their dug-outs. The Germans ascribed their misfortunes mainly to intense artillery fire and to continual air attacks. Their own local counter-attacks aborted and 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (26th Panzer Division), a mobile reserve, could not reach the battlefield by daylight owing to the threat of air attack. Baade doubted whether he could regain the lost ground although he intended to try. The German commanders indeed had no doubts that 8th Army had broken into the Bernhardt Line and was unlikely to be dislodged. But they meant to fight it out.

Allfrey decided to keep up his pressure and seize Fossacesia. It seemed unwise to count on tanks again scaling the Li Colli ridge, this time below the village. Therefore during the night 29th/30th 1st/5th Royal Gurkha Rifles and 1st/12th Frontier Force Regiment captured dominating ground north-west of Mozzagrogna to enable the road leading east to S. Maria and Fossacesia to be used as a tank-run. This success clinched the battle. By noon on the 30th 3rd C.L.Y., 44th R.T.R., and 2nd London Irish Rifles swept down the ridge and into Fossacesia, and later the Royal Tanks and the Royal Irish Fusiliers went onwards to the sea. The Corps artillery had again been in support. During the first three days of battle the field regiments fired over 600 rounds per gun, the 5·5-inch over 350 rounds per gun, and 4·5-inch over 327—some 145,770 rounds in all or very roughly 1,623 tons.¹ If we remark that only one road was available, over a good part of the way, for the transport of this quantity of shells, we can gain an inkling of the administrative difficulties, and can understand why dry weather had been prayed for. While the attacks towards Fossacesia were in progress the London Irish and 6th Inniskilling Fusiliers advanced on Rocca and captured this place on 1st December. On 5th Corps' left the New Zealand Division moved steadily towards Castelfrentano, and 24th N.Z. Battalion was overlooking this place from a hill close-by on the evening of 30th November.

Meanwhile the Germans had been assembling a reserve as best

¹ The basic grouping of the field and medium artillery regiments of 5th Corps was:

1st A.G.R.A.	51st	Medium	Regiment	R.A.
6th A.G.R.A.	66th	"	"	"
	70th	"	"	"
	80th	"	"	"
78th Division	17th	Field	Regiment	R.A.
	57th	"	"	"
	98th	"	"	"
	132nd	"	"	"
	138th	"	"	"
8th Indian Division	52nd	Field	Regiment	R.A.
	53rd	"	"	"
	111th	"	"	"
	166th	"	"	"

they could, and by the morning of the 30th two battalions of 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (26th Panzer Division) had reached the area Arielli–Miglianico. The idea was that the regimental commander, von Usedom, should control a mobile reserve formed of these battalions, and parts of 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment (90th Panzer Grenadier Division) and of 2nd/26th Panzer Regiment. When more troops of 26th Panzer Division arrived, it was hoped to stabilize the battle. But this was not to be. The loss of Fossacesia and the impending loss of Rocca and Castelfrentano exposed the Germans to the threat of so many concentric attacks that, on the 30th, Herr saw his best chance as being to delay on the line S. Vito–Lanciano–Castelfrentano while a new position was being prepared on the line of the road Ortona–Orsogna–Melone–Guardia-grele. Lemelsen, after visiting the front, had a gloomy report for Westphal (Kesselring's Chief of Staff) on the evening of 30th November. The whole of 145th Grenadier Regiment must now be treated as a 'write-off' and the two available battalions of 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment were reduced to the strength of one. This remnant with von Usedom's two battalions might hold the S. Vito–Castelfrentano line for a very short time, but only a big, well-staged counter-attack could restore the situation. Kesselring indeed was sending the rest of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division from Ancona to Pescara, and Herr was bringing 4th Parachute Regiment over from his right wing. But the earliest date of complete regrouping was 3rd December, and until then 76th Panzer Corps must take what came, especially from the air. 'Good God' exclaimed Lemelsen during a telephone conversation 'then there's another four days to go; if it goes on like this I don't know what will happen . . .' From afar Hitler directed that a counter-offensive could be launched on 65th Infantry Division's front only if the weather grounded the Allied air forces; otherwise, apart from small local enterprises, reserves were to be used to establish fresh positions.

By 1st December the 8th Army and the air forces associated with it had broken the Adriatic end of the Bernhardt Line and the German commanders and troops in that sector were in temporary disarray. Through attrition—for the battles were now taking that detestable shape—the Germans had suffered, in relation to their strength, much more severely than the British.¹

The Allied air forces associated with 8th Army for direct support in the Sangro operations were the Desert Air Force and the North-west African Tactical Bomber Force. Beyond the battlefield and out

¹ The extant records do not allow of breaking down casualties date for date. As illustrations however:

	<i>Killed</i>	<i>Wounded</i>	<i>Missing</i>	<i>Total</i>
8th Army during November	591	1,956	295	2,842
76th Panzer Corps during November	345	788	1,379	2,512
76th Panzer Corps 21st to 30th November	195	403	1,261	1,859

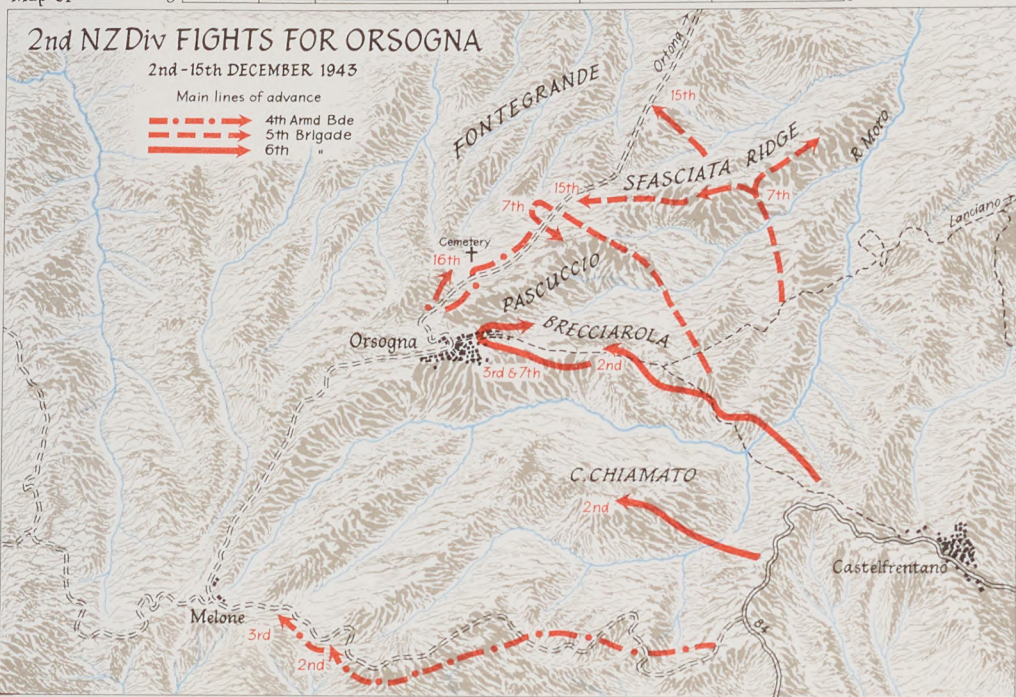
of sight of the troops the strategic bombers, as will be related later, helped indirectly in two main ways. Their attacks, though not numerous, upon the airfields of the dwindling German air force freed the 8th Army almost completely from air attack. Their constant attacks upon rail targets delayed and frustrated the moves of German reserves from northern Italy.

During the last ten days of November and throughout December bad weather continually handicapped direct air support. The airmen very often had to seize any favourable patch of weather, which yet might not prove favourable both over airfields and targets, and they also did their utmost to perform pre-arranged tasks whatever the weather. Owing to the narrow front of 8th Army's main attack there is a sameness in the supporting air operations, but in fact the unchanging onslaught seriously harmed German morale. A summary runs like this:

20th November.	Almost all aircraft grounded.
21st	„ Moderate activity possible.
22nd	„ Again moderate activity. Mitchells and Baltimores dropped 141 tons of bombs on targets in the area Fossacesia-Lanciano-S. Maria.
23rd	„ Almost all aircraft grounded.
24th	„ Mitchells attacked Fossacesia and Lanciano. 127 fighter- and light bombers gave direct support.
25th	„ Mitchells again attacked the same areas and Bostons and Baltimores, Casoli. D.A.F. fighter-bombers flew over 100 sorties in direct support.
26th	„ Mitchells, Bostons, and Baltimores dropped 220 tons of bombs in the area Fossacesia-Lanciano. Fighter-bombers active. Castel-frentano attacked every few minutes during $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours.
27th	„ Mitchells, Bostons and Baltimores dropped 200 tons of bombs Fossacesia-Lanciano. Fighter-bombers attacked Casoli, and on the next three days.
28th	„ Sorties rise to 500 over Fossacesia-Lanciano.
29th	„ Bostons and Baltimores attacked Rocca-Lanciano. Fighter-bombers flew 319 sorties. Bostons, Baltimores and fighter-bombers attacked Guardia-grele and S. Eusanio, and Orsogna.
30th	„ Bad weather again. However, over 100 Bostons and Baltimores flew, and fighter-bombers topped, 300 sorties.



Map 31



The pattern of persistent attack upon the enemy facing 5th Corps and the New Zealand Division stands out clearly from the summary. Sometimes German records confirm the pattern. On the 27th they note that Lanciano has been bombed 22 times during the day. On the 28th it is recorded that nearly all the German armour had been damaged by air attack that day, and that von Ziehlberg lost his right arm, and his A.D.C. his right hand, in one of the 'bomb carpets'. On the 29th 50 to 60 'bomb carpets' are noted in the area Mozzagrogna-S. Maria-Lanciano, and it is remarked that a proposed move of 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment to take part in a counter-attack would have been 24 hours too late because it dared not travel in daylight.

The German Air Force in Italy was suffering hard times to which Allied air attack added a final rigour. Of fighters, by the end of November, five *Gruppen* of single-engine aircraft remained: two near Turin and Milan, and three mainly on the Rome complex of airfields: Faiano, Ciampino, Centocelle and others. A *Gruppe* of F.W. 190 fighter-bombers also was in the Rome area. The activities of fighters and fighter-bombers did not exceed 30-35 sorties daily. During December one *Gruppe* (Italian M.C. 205s) left Italy but two others (Me. 109s) arrived. There was no further reinforcement because the defence of Germany was now demanding the whole output of fighters from the factories. At the end of December there were in Italy 173 (76 serviceable) single-engine fighters and 16 (10 serviceable) fighter-bombers. The daily total of sorties was a little greater than during November. The activities of the long-range bombers increased a little during November and then faded away because the aircraft were steadily transferred to northern Europe to join in reprisal-raids (for the Combined Bomber Offensive) on England. Moreover the long-range bombers did not directly (and scarcely indirectly) affect Italian battlefields since their objectives were ports, or Allied landings if any were made.

Montgomery now judged that the Germans would hold the lateral road Ortona-Orsogna-Guardiagrele, north of the Moro river, and that his next problem was to force the Moro. He believed that, as he had foreseen, a pause was necessary to organize for further movement. The administrative task was large: as a yardstick, on 30th November 1,485 tons of supplies and stores reached 5th Corps' rail-heads for distribution and 73,900 rounds of artillery ammunition were on the ground ahead of F.M.C.s. Traffic was necessarily heavy; in four nights from 26th/27th November an average of 800 vehicles nightly was controlled by that adaptable unit H.Q. 20th Beach

MMR-R

Group. Secure movement depended, among other things, on secure bridges across the Sangro—and the weather was turning wet. As regards the bridges, by 4th December the engineers completed two fairly solid structures for maintenance routes, while one of the earlier bridges was still in good order, and two were on their last legs. Then on the 4th, down swept the spates destroying most of the work, and reducing the bridges to one. This example illustrates the factors which led Montgomery to pause. Another was that he wished to rest 78th Division, and therefore ordered 1st Canadian Division to move from 13th Corps to replace it, a transfer almost complete by 2nd December.

General Montgomery's orders on 1st December were that the main bodies of 5th Corps would not pass the line S. Vito–Lanciano until the crossing of the Sangro had been made proof against storm and flood. 8th Indian Division was to hold the Li Colli ridge as a firm base, and to secure Lanciano. 78th Division (pending relief) was to take S. Vito and push light forces towards Ortona. But Montgomery believed, as did Freyberg, that in Castelfrentano there was a soft spot. And so the New Zealand Division's objectives were set as Orsogna, S. Martino, Chieti, in the hope of quick success. Montgomery and Freyberg were not wrong. On 28th November Kesselring had remarked to Lemelsen à propos of the New Zealand advance 'The enemy always comes on the boundaries . . .' [in this case of 65th Infantry Division and 26th Panzer Division], and Lemelsen had replied 'The Devil knows how he always finds out where they are.' But by 2nd December, alas, the soft spot was becoming hard.

(iv)

See also Maps 30 and 31

The 8th Army's next heavy blows were delivered by the New Zealand and Canadian Divisions, and by 8th Indian Division striking in on 9th December. The New Zealanders made sustained, unsuccessful attempts to take Orsogna; the Canadians engaged in fierce fighting for a piece of the Ortona–Orsogna road lying across a baneful ravine known as the 'Gully', and then in house-to-house fighting which cleared Ortona; the Indians fought their way to Villa Grande, on the Canadians' left, and captured it. The German story is reorganization and stubborn defence on the line Melone–Orsogna–Arielli–Villa Grande–Ortona. Its notable features were the consolidation of Orsogna and its environs, and the concentration, beginning about mid-December, of Heidrich's formidable 1st Parachute Division in the sector Villa Grande–Ortona. The 8th

Army's partial pause during the first week of December helped the Germans to emerge from sixes and sevens on the battlefield.

It was important to capture Orsogna for two reasons. In British hands the place could become the starting-point of an attempt to roll up the German line by a stroke eastwards down the road to Ortona. It would form moreover a necessary guard for the right flank of any force which might advance northwards, aiming at Chieti via Guardiagrele and S. Martino.

Orsogna, a small stone-built town on a 1,300-foot ridge, was the western bastion of a wall formed by two other ridges which ran north-eastward for four and a half miles, one leading into the other. Pascuccio ridge was the nearer to Orsogna, and then came Sfasciata ridge. Just behind, or north of, the crest of the ridge-wall lay a stretch of the Orsogna-Ortona road, and this became the contested prize. For this road was one of the two practicable approaches lying close to Orsogna. The other was the Brecciarola ridge, a mile and a half east-south-east of the town, steep, narrow-crested, and dotted with olive-trees, vineyards, and farm buildings. If one passes westwards and south of Orsogna, the ground is too steep and broken to favour an attack. The more distant approaches to the Orsogna-Sfasciata wall were uninviting. On the west flank a road took off at Melone from the S. Eusanio-Guardiagrele road, but ran towards the tactically most unfavourable side of Orsogna. On the east flank something between a road and track existed wandering northwards from near Castelfrentano towards the Sfasciata ridge. As things turned out most of the fighting was on the Sfasciata and Pascuccio ridges. If these ridges and the road beyond them were not taken, it seemed very difficult to take Orsogna, and if Orsogna was not taken it seemed rash to hope to be secure on the ridges when one had captured them. This was Freyberg's problem. To solve it he had his division—six infantry battalions only and three armoured regiments—and additional British artillery in 6th A.G.R.A., two medium and two field regiments, and strong air support.¹

¹ *New Zealand Division* (Lieut.-General Sir Bernard Freyberg), main formations and units:

4th N.Z. Armoured Brigade (Brigadier K. L. Stewart):

18th, 19th, 20th N.Z. Armoured Regiments (Shermans),

22nd N.Z. Motor Battalion.

5th N.Z. Brigade (Brigadier H. K. Kippenberger):

21st, 23rd, 28th (Maori) N.Z. Battalions.

6th N.Z. Brigade (Brigadier G. B. Parkinson):

24th, 25th, 26th N.Z. Battalions.

N.Z. Engineers: 5th Field Park Company; 6th, 7th, 8th Field Companies.

N.Z. Artillery: 4th, 5th, 6th Field Regiments; 14th Lt. A.A. Regiment.

Divisional Cavalry Regiment (Staghound armoured cars).

27th N.Z. (M.G.) Battalion.

British Artillery:

66th, 80th Medium Regiments R.A.

11th, 117th Field Regiments R.A.

On the German side, as elsewhere, commanders and troops were affected by the prevailing sixes and sevens. The boundary between 26th Panzer Division's left and 65th Division's right (facing towards the New Zealanders) projected from Orsogna, roughly speaking at a right angle. Misunderstandings resulted on 2nd December, in a gap in the area of Colle Chiamato, and chance led 6th N.Z. Brigade to this gap. Castelfrentano had been entered on the morning of the 2nd, and 24th N.Z. Battalion reached the Brecciarola ridge in the afternoon after fording the Moro and plodding up hill, down hill, and up again. At the same time patrols of 25th N.Z. Battalion came over Colle Chiamato. Machine-gun fire and skirmishing broke out, and the New Zealanders halted, for they had no reason to think that the positions ahead could be rushed.

The day's events led to two important results. Quite early von Lüttwitz (26th Panzer Division) decided that someone must control the situation at Orsogna. He sent 26th Reconnaissance Battalion into the place, and ordered Captain Klemme to take command of the troops in and near it, and to hold on. Klemme quickly organized a group from his Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Battalion 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and 2nd Battalion, 1st Parachute Regiment. Freyberg, on the other hand, was encouraged in his belief that the Germans in front of him were caving in. He decided to deal brusquely with them, and directed 6th N.Z. Brigade to take Orsogna, 4th N.Z. Armoured Brigade to thrust straight to S. Martino through Guardia-grele, and 5th N.Z. Brigade to remain at Castelfrentano. The commanders of 6th Brigade and 4th Armoured Brigade were as brusque as Freyberg. Parkinson ordered 25th N.Z. Battalion to take Orsogna at dawn on 3rd December as an intermediate objective in a cross-country thrust towards S. Martino. Stewart ordered his Motor Battalion to clear a way along the twisting mountain road for his tanks.

In fact Orsogna almost fell on 3rd December. At 6.15 a.m. in a cloudy, misty dawn 25th N.Z. Battalion, because of some German inattention or negligence, won a surprise. Two companies, passing along the Brecciarola ridge, gained the town's eastern edge. There one dug in, while the other rushed into the main street. But a German armoured car began a *mêlée* which spread as German infantry and armoured vehicles joined in. The New Zealanders had no pre-arranged artillery support, and their F.O.O.'s jeep and wireless sets were demolished by a chance hit. A troop of New Zealand tanks, at long range, gave some support. But the New Zealand commanders were as much taken aback by the hornet's nest as the Germans had at first been surprised, and before they could mount a follow-up, 25th N.Z. Battalion was repulsed with 83 casualties. The Motor Battalion had no better success and was firmly held up at Melone, three miles to the south-west.

A summary of the further operations of the New Zealand Division will be useful.¹ The check to his coup de main led Freyberg to decide to make a full divisional attack. This began on 7th December and had failed by the early hours of the 8th. Freyberg intended to renew his attack on the night 10th/11th December but postponed it because of a set-back in the progress of 5th Corps with which the New Zealand attack had been intended to harmonize. The next attack's time was influenced also by a regrouping by Montgomery. H.Q. 13th Corps was to leave its mountain sector, as was 5th Division on relief by 78th Division, and then to direct further operations by the New Zealand and 5th Division. In the early stage of the regrouping 17th Brigade (5th Division) passed temporarily under Freyberg's command on 12th December. H.Q. 13th Corps took over its new task on 15th December. The New Zealand Division attacked again on that day, and by the end of the 16th had achieved some success but by no means what it hoped for. On the 24th December a final, unsuccessful attack began.

Before and after the attempt of 3rd December on Orsogna the Desert Air Force, supported by the Tactical Bomber Force until the end of November, gave consistent help to the New Zealanders.² Briefly, during the last three days of November Castelfrentano was bombed twice and Guardiagrele and S. Eusanio once each by Bostons and Baltimores, and Castelfrentano and Orsogna three times and Guardiagrele twice by the fighter-bombers. However, during the first week of December the weather varied wildly. Except on the 2nd and 5th when there was an improvement, conditions were bad and on the 6th almost all air operations on 8th Army's front were brought to a standstill. Nevertheless Orsogna and Guardiagrele received plenty of attention. They were strafed on the 2nd, and heavily attacked on the 3rd by the fighter-bombers which flew 211 sorties—an ammunition dump was blown up at Guardiagrele. On the 4th, when only a small fighter-bomber effort was possible, Orsogna was the target, and next day the air attacks were switched to Guardiagrele. It was particularly disappointing that on the 7th the weather severely curtailed the air plan in support of the New Zealanders during their attempt to capture Orsogna.

Freyberg, on 5th December, decided on a two-brigade attack on the Orsogna ridge-wall for patrols had discovered no practical way of outflanking it. The bridges across the Sangro, wrecked by spates on the 4th, had to be repaired. Tracks and roads had to be bull-dozed into a roundabout supply route. Supplies and more than 550 tons of

¹ For a full account the reader may see *Italy, Volume I, The Sangro to Cassino* by N. C. Phillips. Wellington 1957.

² During the first week of December two of N.A.T.B.F.'s light bomber wings were diverted to the support of 5th Army.

artillery ammunition had to be carried forward. 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade, Army troops, came in to guard the New Zealand flank. Freyberg's final plan took the following tactical shape. In 5th N.Z. Brigade (two battalions, for one was holding Castelfrentano) on the right, 23rd N.Z. Battalion was to take and hold a mid-point on the Sfasciata ridge; 28th (Maori) Battalion a point on Pascuccio. In 6th N.Z. Brigade on the left, two battalions were to hold firm bases and 24th N.Z. Battalion was to assault Orsogna from the Brecciarola. The attack was to be in the afternoon of 7th December so that the infantry might have time to consolidate their captured objectives before dark, and so that the Germans might have only a few hours of daylight for counter-attacks. 18th New Zealand Armoured Regiment (less a squadron) was to struggle over the wretched supply tracks in support. For 2½ hours before the assault fighter-bombers, thirteen squadrons in all, were to attack almost continuously, while the artillery had a programme of barrages, concentrations, and counter-battery. The Germans meanwhile, although they expected no major attack before the 8th, had thoroughly organized their force in the Orsogna area, based on the Reconnaissance Unit, two battalions, and two companies of tanks.¹

We can now see that an attack by three battalions in such terrain against an enemy almost equal in strength, and in position, was almost certain to fail. Low cloud on the afternoon of 7th December completely spoiled the air forces' preparatory programme, although some strikes became possible towards evening. 23rd N.Z. Battalion easily gained its objective on Sfasciata, and dug in there. 28th (Maori) Battalion, scrambling and climbing close to the barrage of H.E. and smoke, reached its objective after brisk fighting. After a time the Germans counter-attacked with tanks and infantry, never many but from both flanks, and persistently until after midnight. 28th Battalion was in a kind of saucer which was likely to be a death trap when daylight came. Brigadier Kippenberger therefore withdrew the battalion to the afternoon's forming-up place. The 24th New Zealand Battalion, supported by a hail of shells and its own dash, broke into Orsogna, and fought house-to-house. A squadron of New Zealand tanks, coming to its help, was blocked by demolitions, mines, and anti-tank fire.² Orsogna was too tough a nut for this force to crack and in the end infantry and tanks fell back into leaguer just outside the town. Freyberg accepted stalemate and ordered withdrawal. The

¹ In Orsogna: 26th Reconnaissance Unit, an engineer company, miscellaneous infantry detachments.

On the ridge-wall: 2nd/9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 2nd/146th Grenadier Regiment, 6th and 8th Companies 26th Panzer Regiment, and towards evening on the 7th part of 3rd/4th Parachute Regiment.

² Although not specifically told of the tanks' advance to Orsogna, it should be remarked that such accidents as burning out clutches, throwing tracks, and skidding into gullies befell tanks time and again on the rain-soaked Italian mountains.

New Zealand Division had won one secure lodgment on Sfasciata at a cost of 160 casualties and two tanks. It ascribed the failure mainly to the local German superiority in tanks, the more effective since the New Zealanders had been unable to man-haul six-pounders up the steep ridges. Another cause was too few infantry.

The next plan, timed to help 5th Corps' operations, was again to take a stretch of the Orsogna-Ortona road as a first step. The second step would be a drive westward from this jumping-off place by the armour, supported by infantry, along a strip of fair going north of the road. The idea was to by-pass Orsogna and sweep down to Melone, where a renewed attempt to penetrate would be made by part of 4th N.Z. Armoured Brigade. If all this succeeded, Orsogna—*isolated*—might fall.

While the New Zealand Division prepared, the tactical air forces had to meet heavy demands for air support on both the New Zealand and Canadian Divisions' fronts, and because of bad weather on several days between the 8th and 14th less than 400 fighter-bomber sorties were possible against the enemy's defences in and around Orsogna. Disappointingly, New Zealand patrols found no softening in the German positions along the front. The New Zealand plan gave to 5th N.Z. Brigade the main infantry role. Its 21st N.Z. Battalion was to advance north-west from Sfasciata and seize a dominating ridge; 23rd N.Z. Battalion was to gain control of the road from a point at Cemetery; 28th N.Z. Battalion was in reserve. From this bridgehead up to two armoured regiments, depending upon the space available, were to thrust west, by-passing Orsogna. Infantry of 6th N.Z. Brigade, which meanwhile was forming a left flank-guard against Orsogna, was to co-operate with the tanks. The Germans by 15th December had four battalions in the sector Orsogna-Poggiofiorito-Arielli, more anti-tank guns than before, and a few tanks.

At 1 a.m. on 15th December the battle began in bitter cold and icy showers of rain. 5th Brigade's attack quickly succeeded on its right, but on Pascuccio there was hard fighting, from which 23rd N.Z. Battalion emerged successful but with a loss of 40% in its rifle companies. On the other hand 2nd/9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was grievously mauled. 21st N.Z. Battalion withstood the inevitable counter-attack, and during the forenoon 18th N.Z. Armoured Regiment came up, followed later by 20th N.Z. Armoured Regiment. The tanks, in the afternoon, struck towards Orsogna but, on a narrow front, could not pass through a hail of anti-tank fire. When darkness fell 25 N.Z. tanks were out of action though the N.Z. Division as a whole was well-placed to continue the fight on the 16th. At 3 a.m. on the 16th two German battalions and a few tanks counter-attacked the N.Z. right flank, and were driven off. Then at 7 a.m. 20th New

Zealand Armoured Regiment (19 tanks) and the 28th Battalion again thrust towards Orsogna, but the thrust met a stronger parry. Once again it was stalemate, although the New Zealand Division held the ground which it had gained. Freyberg continued to think of attacking from his right, but for the time being the Germans (to quote the New Zealand historian's summing-up) were 'willing to sell ground, but only at a price the New Zealanders were not willing to pay'.

(v)

Between 30th November and 5th December the Canadian Division left the upper Sangro and arrived in the coastal sector facing the Moro river. 38th Infantry Brigade (78th Division) and 4th Armoured Brigade meanwhile had pushed the Germans out of S. Vito on 3rd December, and had reached the Moro on the 4th. On the 3rd December, too, 21st Indian Infantry Brigade had expelled the enemy from Lanciano, and had moved up to Frisa on the 5th. On 5th December 2nd (Canadian) Brigade was near S. Apollinare, 1st Brigade near S. Vito, and 3rd Brigade was trying to cross the flooded Sangro.¹ On the German side the principal change in the coastal sector was the arrival, almost complete by 3rd December, of the remainder of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division consequent upon Kesselring's decision of 30th November that this formation would relieve 65th Infantry Division.² 90th Panzer Grenadier Division's boundary with 26th Panzer Division on its right ran through Frisa.

¹ At the end of August some re-designations occurred in the Canadian Division, and the prefix 'Canadian' was apparently dropped from the titles of brigades.

1st Canadian Division (Major-General C. Vokes):

1st Infantry Brigade (Brigadier H. D. Graham, then Brigadier D. C. Spry): The Royal Canadian Regiment, The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, 48th Highlanders of Canada.

2nd Infantry Brigade (Brigadier B. M. Hoffmeister): Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, The Loyal Edmonton Regiment.

3rd Infantry Brigade (Brigadier T. G. Gibson): Royal 22e Regiment, The Carleton and York Regiment, The West Nova Scotia Regiment.

4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards (Armoured Cars).

R.C.A.: 1st Field Regiment R.C.H.A., 2nd and 3rd Field Regiments, 1st A/Tk Regiment, 2nd L.A.A. Regiment.

R.C.E.: 1st, 3rd, 4th Field Companies, 2nd Field Park Company.

The Saskatoon Light Infantry (M.G.).

1st Armoured Brigade (Brigadier R. A. Wyman):

11th Armoured Regiment (The Ontario Regiment).

12th Armoured Regiment (Three Rivers Regiment).

14th Armoured Regiment (The Calgary Regiment).

² It will be recalled that part of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division's 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment had been engaged in the Sangro battle. The remainder of the division consisted mainly of 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (three battalions) and 190th Panzer Abteilung (assault guns and Pzkw III and IV). On 12th December the formidable Colonel Baade relieved General Lungershausen in command of the division. 65th Infantry Division moved to a narrow sector in rear of Casoli-Orsogna.

200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and a company of 26th Panzer Division's tanks faced the Canadians and on the 3rd Lemelsen declared that he was 'quite strong' in 90th Panzer Grenadier Division's sector.

On 4th December Allfrey, aware of the check to the New Zealanders, told the Canadians to pass the Moro as soon as possible. It was more important to thrust on than to wait for flood-proof Sangro crossings. Vokes fixed his own objective as the junction of Highway 16 and the Ortona-Orsogna road. This was four crow-flight miles away, but seven by road across the grain of four 500-foot ridges. The Moro was fordable everywhere, and the country was thick with olive groves and vineyards. Vokes planned to make his main crossing of the Moro at S. Leonardo, with smaller crossings at Villa Rogatti, west of S. Leonardo, and east of it near the coast. One brigade would then advance to the final objective along Highway 16, and exploitation would follow to Tollo and Ortona. 1st and 2nd Brigades attempted to cross the Moro on the night 5th/6th December in artillery 'silence'.

In 2nd Brigade Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry surprised the Germans at Villa Rogatti, and the Seaforth of Canada in a five hour battle established two companies across the river at S. Leonardo, while on their right the Hastings of 1st Brigade gained a small hold on the far bank. Yet early on the 6th 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment began to show the resilient pugnacity which is the hall-mark of good German troops. There were furious counter-attacks everywhere. At the end of the day the Patricias and the Seaforth were back on their own bank, but the Hastings were not to be dislodged. On the 7th December Vokes ordered a further two-brigade operation: 1st Brigade to force the Moro at S. Leonardo; 2nd Brigade and tanks of 1st Armoured Brigade to pass through to the final objective, later known as Cider Cross-Roads. S. Leonardo was to be attacked on the afternoon of the 8th. The Royal Canadian Regiment was to pass through the Hastings' bridgehead and right-hook to S. Leonardo down a lane, known as Royal Canadian Avenue. The 48th Highlanders would attack frontally S. Leonardo and La Torre. Six field regiments and two medium were in support, and fourteen squadrons of Kittyhawk fighter-bombers of the Desert Air Force were available.¹

During 8th December 108 fighter-bomber sorties were flown on the Canadian front, and the light bombers, which had now reverted to 8th Army's support, added 72 sorties.

¹ Artillery of the Canadian Division, and 57th and 98th Field Regiments R.A. and 4th and 70th Medium Regiments R.A. Some of 8th Indian Division's artillery joined in part of the programme. On 8th and 9th December the artillery of 5th Corps fired 41,131 rounds of 25-pdr ammunition, and 3,272 of medium.

For an hour before zero at 4.30 p.m. the whole artillery bombarded. Just as the leading company of the Royal Canadian Regiment left the Hastings' bridgehead the Germans by coincidence attacked the bridgehead. Canadians and Germans fought it out for two hours in a cross-hail of shells. Meanwhile the other Canadian companies went steadily on, until a little before 10 p.m. the whole battalion reached a point half-way to S. Leonardo. Almost at once a counter-attack came in, which was broken by the guns' defensive fire called down by Colonel Spry almost on top of his battalion. A lull followed. Meanwhile on the left flank the 48th Highlanders had won the La Torre spur, near S. Leonardo, with ease. Here on the 9th morning a company of 2nd Brigade's Seaforth and a squadron of the Calgary Regiment took up the fight for S. Leonardo. This continued all day, drawing in the whole of the Seaforth and the Calgary Regiment, until at 5.40 p.m. they won S. Leonardo. The Calgary Regiment had lost 27 of its 51 tanks. Over 300 fighter- and 35 light-bomber sorties were flown in support of the attack on S. Leonardo, and after bombing the fighter-bombers turned to strafing enemy traffic which provided many profitable targets. On the Royal Canadians' flank the Germans strove all day to destroy that battalion and the Hastings' bridgehead, but could not pass the storm of defensive fire and drew off at dusk. The Canadians had won the first stage on their way to Cider Cross-Roads. On their left 21st Indian Infantry Brigade, which had taken over Rogatti on the 8th, won a small bridgehead, and in it 69th Field Company Bengal Sappers and Miners built the famous 'Impossible Bridge'. The bridge deserved the name because it was in truth impossible to assemble and launch a Bailey from the constricted home bank. The engineers manhandled their equipment to the enemy's bank and built their bridge backwards, a fine feat of courage and ingenuity. 8th Army had crossed the Moro along its length.

At this point we must jump ahead to discover the recorded thoughts of the higher German commanders, although these had been formed as a result of earlier fighting. On the 15th December it was decided to transfer the whole of 1st Parachute Division to 76th Panzer Corps' coastal sector as soon as a shuffle of troops, depending upon the arrival of 5th Mountain Division in 14th Panzer Corps, could be made. The shuffle amounted to placing an 'ad hoc' *Korpsgruppe Hauck* of one division and one Alpine battalion between the two Panzer Corps. In 76th Panzer Corps the resulting shortening of front would make available the whole Parachute Division, of which 2nd and 3rd Battalions 3rd Parachute Regiment and 2nd Battalion 1st Parachute Regiment had moved to Ortona by the 11th. Lemelsen

and Kesselring believed that 5th Army was now a greater danger than the 8th because the 8th had too few troops for far-reaching operations and would therefore continue limited attacks on limited objectives. Herr nevertheless felt that the strength of his Corps was being gradually eaten up in defending a line which had no natural advantages. He longed to adopt a more mobile and elastic defence. Kesselring and Lemelsen so far agreed that *AOK 10* on the 16th sanctioned a fighting withdrawal, step by step to a line north of the Foro river: Pretoro–Villamagna–Torre di Foro. Lemelsen undertook that the British would be ‘made to fight for every house and every tree’, and Herr directed that although his formations might take preliminary measures for withdrawal, they would defend their present positions stubbornly for as long as possible.

From Ortona the road to Orsogna ran along a low ridge for rather more than three miles. Below this ridge on the south side there was a narrow deep ravine. Some farm-buildings were dotted along the ridge, notably Casa Berardi which we can take as near the ridge’s western end. Highway 16 crossed the ravine and ridge at their mid-point and led to Cider Cross-Roads. Ravine and ridge formed the Gully, which the Germans were determined to defend. There was no obvious way of outflanking it because the sodden ground discouraged cross-country manoeuvres, while only a bad track led from S. Leonardo to a point about a mile west of Casa Berardi. The Canadian Division spent from 11th to 19th December in forcing this position at a cost of over 1,000 casualties. The defence was conducted by Colonel Heilmann of 3rd Parachute Regiment with his own 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 2nd Battalion 1st Parachute Regiment, the battered 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, a battalion of 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 90th Engineer Battalion, and detachments of tanks from 190th Panzer Abteilung and 26th Panzer Regiment. These troops were not all simultaneously engaged. The battle was fought in fair and foul weather, on boggy ground in a tangle of olive trees and vineyards sprinkled with mines and booby-traps. From the 11th to 19th December 5th Corps’ artillery fired about 3,000 tons of ammunition.

The details of dogged attacks by the Canadians and of the Germans’ resolute defence and fierce counter-attacks are too many for the scale of this narrative. What follows is descriptive analysis.

On the morning of 10th December the Edmontons and a squadron of the Calgary Regiment reached the Gully so quickly that at 10 a.m. Colonel Jefferson signalled ‘We are now proceeding on final objective.’ Slashing mortar and machine gun fire soon blew away this

hope. Vokes seems early to have accepted the front of little more than two thousand yards which lay before him, and to have resolved to go straight for his objective. His reasons were the sodden ground which would hinder cross-country movement; a feeling that the objective was very close and would fall to a quick punch and therefore a wish not to spend time in fully concentrating his division. Moreover the Canadians had a predilection for small attacks, powerfully supported, on narrow fronts, markedly shown in the fighting from Assoro to Regalbuto in Sicily.¹

The Canadian Division made eight main attacks on the Gully. Of these, if we set aside overlappings and diversions, five were by single battalions, two by two battalions, and the final attack was by three battalions following each other in three closely successive phases. Armour, not in great strength, took part in all attacks. All the attacks except the last failed because momentum was lost owing to the same general causes. The enemy's fire, much of it cross-fire, was very heavy and his counter-attacks were frequent, determined, and well-timed. The Canadian infantry often 'lost' their artillery support because of the ordinary mischances of battle and because the artillery was fighting at a disadvantage. This was because the succession of attacks was so quick that often two or three fire plans were being prepared at once, largely from not altogether accurate maps. The resulting fire programmes were often faulty, and frequent calls for heavy Defensive Fire to meet counter-attacks sent them further astray.

The key phase of the battle occurred probably on the 13th and 14th December. On the 13th, one of the rare occasions on which the fighter-bombers could operate in strength, a frontal attack towards Cider Cross-Roads by the Carleton and York Regiment, and attacks on its right and left by P.P.C.L.I. and the West Novas failed. But meanwhile two small fighting reconnaissances produced unexpected results. On the left flank a bad track led from S. Leonardo to the Ortona road a mile west of Casa Berardi. Two small parties—'B' Squadron of the Ontarios and a platoon of West Novas, and four tanks of the Ontario's 'C' Squadron with 'A' Company of the Seaforth—independently followed this track, found 'soft spots' on the German right flank, slaughtered some surprised detachments, and almost reached Casa Berardi. The press of the main battle made it impossible at once to exploit the opportunity, but Vokes turned his

¹ The Canadian official historian has written of the five-day battle of Agira in Sicily ' . . . Because the extremely rugged nature of the country prevented deployment on a large scale, the six battalions of the 1st and 2nd Canadian Brigades had been committed one by one against the stubborn defenders . . . It was not until the last two days of the battle, when the 2nd Brigade used more than one battalion at critical moments . . . that the desired momentum was achieved and the issue was at last decided . . .' *The Canadians in Italy 1943-45*, Volume II, Lieut.-Colonel G. W. L. Nicholson, Ottawa 1956, p. 134.

eye to this route. On the 14th December he launched The Royal 22e Régiment along it with 'C' Squadron of the Ontario Regiment, while P.P.C.L.I. attacked frontally. The Germans were now guarding their right flank, but there followed a splendid feat of Canadian arms. Captain Paul Triquet with his 'C' Company of the Royal 22e and the Ontario's tanks captured Casa Berardi by sheer, relentless fighting and a furious determination to win. In Casa Berardi Triquet, who had only fifteen men and four tanks, gave the time-honoured order 'Ils ne passeront pas'.¹ Nor did the Germans pass, for by 3 a.m. on the 15th Colonel Bernatchez had collected a larger force and had consolidated. Captain Triquet was later awarded the Victoria Cross.

Vokes now sent another squadron of tanks to Casa Berardi and ordered another frontal attack by the Carleton and York, believing that this and the flanking threat from Casa Berardi would make the defence collapse. The attack failed. But the events of the 13th and 14th had seriously worried Heilmann and Baade; their immediate reserves were all committed; and they now blessed the two-day respite which followed the failure of the Canadian attack on the 15th. On the 18th Vokes launched a carefully staged attack from west of Casa Berardi in three phases with the support of fighter-bombers. This attack by the 48th Highlanders, the Royal Canadian Regiment, the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, and the Three Rivers Regiment, was admirably executed, and succeeded, not without very sharp fighting. By dusk on the 19th the Gully and Cider Cross-Roads passed into Canadian hands.

The next phase of the 8th Army's offensive turned out to be final because the savage arrival of winter and the exhaustion of more than a month's severe fighting forced a stalemate on the British and Germans. A pattern can be disentangled from the series of fierce battles and engagements which were fought along the twelve-mile front between Ortona and Orsogna. While the Canadian Division fought for the Gully (10th-19th December) and the New Zealand Division (from 17th December) made ready to attack the Orsogna ridge-wall once more, the 8th Indian Division and the 5th Division were advancing between them. The Indians took Villa Caldari north of the Moro on the 14th, and Villa Jubatti on the 17th. 5th Division entered Poggiofiorito on the 17th December. The fighting was dogged pounding in which very often two out of three battalions of each brigade in succession drove home limited attacks, and broke the

¹ Attributed to General Pétain, Verdun, February 1916.

almost invariable counter-attacks. In administrative terms it had become an 'ammunition' rather than a 'petrol' war. During the hard fighting between 22nd–28th December 5th and 13th Corps expended about 8,325 tons of ammunition, six times the quantity of petrol used. On the whole Montgomery was pleased with progress and about the 20th directed Allfrey to push hard on the road Villa Grande—Tollo in order to bring his whole Corps into concerted action in the coastal sector, and to outflank Ortona. Dempsey in 13th Corps planned to isolate Orsogna by directing 5th Division to capture the high ground at Arielli, and the New Zealand Division a plateau, north of Orsogna, named Fontegrande.

The Germans' intention was still to 'fight for every house and tree', but the Canadians' battering of Ortona and the 8th Indian Division's advance were suggesting the questions: Which houses? Which trees? On 24th December *AOK 10* was thinking of withdrawing 76th Panzer Corps to a shorter front ahead of the Foro line: from Torre Mucchia on the coast, Villa Grande–Villa S. Tomasso. On Christmas Day Kesselring told Lemelsen that *OKW* had rejected a scheme for a counter-offensive against 8th Army, and Lemelsen told Kesselring that part of his Corps was on the Villa Grande–Villa S. Tomasso line. Kesselring remarked of Ortona '... It is clear that we do not intend to defend Ortona decisively, but the British are making as much fuss about it as if it were Rome,' and Lemelsen replied '... It costs so much blood that it cannot be justified.' On the 27th December Lemelsen approved withdrawal from Ortona. Herr then directed that 90th Panzer Division and 1st Parachute Division would pull back to the general line of the Tesoro stream from a point west of Villa Grande to Torre Mucchia, but that from near Crecchio to Orsogna the present positions would be held.

Before turning to Ortona we must glance at the fight which raged on its inland flank at Villa Grande, S. Nicola and S. Tomasso. In this area stood 1st/3rd Parachute Regiment, 2nd/1st Parachute Regiment, and 3rd/3rd Parachute Regiment, and two battalions of 4th Parachute Regiment—as Lemelsen said 'the right men in the right place.' Between 22nd and 27th December 19th Indian Infantry Brigade, principally 1st/5th Essex and 3rd/8th Punjab Regiment, fought to capture and clear Villa Grande village. For much of the time the British and Germans were face to face in the village, by turns storming, losing, and re-taking the houses. Early on the 28th Russell began to send in 21st Indian Infantry Brigade but by this time the enemy, in accordance with Lemelsen's decision of the 27th, were pulling out. In this battle the Essex had 285 casualties and were removed from all action to re-form: thus a battalion can be ground to pieces by this type of fighting. On the Indian Division's right 1st Canadian Brigade attacked on 23rd December, aiming at, succes-

sively, S. Nicola, S. Tomasso, and Torre Mucchia. By the 27th the Canadians had fought their way almost to the first two places through a sea of mud, and on the 31st they took them. 3rd Canadian Brigade entered the fight on the 29th, and by 4th January 1944 had fought the two miles to Torre Mucchia. On the Fontegrande plateau 5th New Zealand Brigade, on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day tried to make a breach for the armour to exploit. In the New Zealand historian's words '... By early afternoon, [of the 25th] it was clear that the battle remained tight and the enemy unbudging. "It is not a question of further advance" remarked the General [Freyberg] "It is a question of holding on to what we have got".'

The casualties of the three formations principally engaged on the Sangro and after it were: New Zealand Division 1,200 of which 72% were in the infantry; Canadian Division 2,339; 8th Indian Division 3,400.

The fighting in Ortona was the first example in the Mediterranean war of a large pitched battle in a town. Ortona had no special tactical value yet the Germans decided to defend it and the backbone of the defence was formed by 2nd/3rd, 3rd/3rd and 2nd/4th Parachute Regiments. The German parachute troops, in their own eyes the pick of Germany's fighting men, seem to have decided to make the defence of Ortona to the death a point of honour.

The course of the battle can be described very shortly. The Edmontons of 2nd Canadian Brigade and some tanks of the Three Rivers Regiment entered the town at first light on 21st December, and began to clear it house by house on the line of the central streets. By the afternoon it was plain that even five-hundred yards was too great a front for one battalion, and Brigadier Hoffmeister sent in first a company of the Seaforth of Canada, and on the 23rd the whole battalion. Thereafter the Edmontons on the right, and the Seaforth on the left, with tanks, and detachments of anti-tank guns, fought house by house until on the 28th December they emerged victorious at the town's northern end, leaving behind them mounds of rubble.

Ortona stood between the sea on the east and a deep ravine on the west. The houses were in terraces or built close together, of stone or brick, commonly three or four stories in height. The main streets were fairly wide, the side-streets too narrow to admit a Sherman tank. The sole practical line of attack was south to north along the principal streets, because there was no tactical sense in becoming entangled in the side-streets. The Germans also understood this and had blocked off the side-streets, hoping to draw their opponents into a series of killing-grounds, natural as in the Piazzas, or contrived by demolition of houses. Every so often one or more houses on one or both sides of the street had been made into small fortresses. The fronts of the

houses facing them had been blown in to deny cover, and the debris had been piled across the streets in barricades often seven feet high. Every storey of a defended house was usually occupied, and every type of weapon was used. Anti-tank and anti-personnel mines were laid although not thickly. Booby-traps varied from stick-grenades to inviting, empty houses in which heavy explosive charges were placed, to be detonated by time-mechanisms. The parachutists in general held their defended points until each was knocked apart by the close-range fire of tank and anti-tank guns and then cleared by the infantry with grenades, bullets, and explosive charges. The parachutists did not counter-attack but were quick to creep back into houses from which they had been expelled or to infiltrate by any unguarded route.

The single grace from the Canadian point of view was that there was plenty of time and plenty of cover. The company was the largest tactical unit, and the platoon stormed one or two houses as a single operation. Each operation was planned in detail during hours of close observation, and with the help of town-plans. When an assault came, it was fast '... The first tank came rumbling up the street ... at a range of 30 yards it blasted down the side of the school with its 75 mm. [Two more tanks then joined in with guns and machine guns] ... So much dust had been kicked up by the gun fire and falling masonry that smoke was unnecessary ... the first section dashed across the street, and struggling over rubble, entered the school ...' Another method was 'mouse-holing' from one house to another. The first group of mouse-holers might be a section, and two pioneers with 'bee-hive' charges. '... We crossed the street in nothing flat ... Luckily there were no enemy on the ground floor and, as it turned out, nowhere in the house.' The pioneers then set their 'bee-hives' against the dividing wall on the top storey; the remainder waited below. '... With the fuses set, the pioneers tumbled down the stairs ... there was a loud explosion. We all tore up the stairs in order to get through the "mouse-hole" before the dust settled ...' The storming party then cleared each room downwards from the top storey with grenades and bullets. By mouse-holing it was possible to work from house to house and scarcely to appear in the street.

All this was desperately slow work. On 23rd December the Edmontonians advanced two hundred yards and almost every yard gained had to be held against counter-infiltration. But by these means Ortona was taken. It cost 650 Canadian casualties, but how many of the 455 parachutists who fell during the week died in Ortona we do not know.

It is perhaps impossible to give a true picture of the air forces' actions in support of the 8th Army's advance to the Moro, and thence to the Arielli, or to assess the effects. Some hundreds of sorties were flown by the fighter-bombers and the light bombers did their share. The places which were attacked most constantly were Orsogna, Canosa, Tollo, Miglianico, Torre Mucchia, and Chieti. Ortona was spared because of a hope that it would fall quickly and be useful as a rest-centre for troops during the coming winter, and as a port. The purpose of the air operations, broadly speaking, was to interrupt the Germans' lateral communications as well as to attack strong-points, gun-positions and so on. The fighter-bombers therefore did much bombing and strafing over wide areas between the front line and Chieti as well as singling out particular targets. The trouble throughout was that it was nearly impossible to synchronize ground and air operations because of the very changing weather for flying. There is little evidence that at this stage the local tactical moves of German units were much interrupted. Moreover, whatever the reasons, 26th Panzer Division, 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, and 1st Parachute Division seem to have been made of sterner stuff than 65th Infantry Division and to have suffered far less in morale. The very closeness of the combatants on the ground gave real protection to the Germans against attack from the air.

Between 28th November and the end of December the 8th Army advanced 14 crow-flight miles, and at the end of 1943 some 8 to 10 miles lay between it and Pescara. From Termoli to S. Vito 58 miles had been covered in 60 days, but that mean rate of advance of a mile a day had slowed to half a mile a day. The enemy was resisting stubbornly and the signs indicated that the German higher commanders were now quite confident that 76th Panzer Corps would be able to prolong resistance. The weather had broken in earnest. The country which lay before the 8th Army was no better than that which lay behind it. There was small prospect of bringing the superior weight of the British armour to bear in such country and such weather, and the strain upon the infantry must increase. The 8th Army's casualties in December were 6,453, and the enemy's were certainly heavy.¹

All these factors led General Montgomery to believe that the 8th Army's offensive must halt for a time. His superiors agreed with him. At this point, on 30th December, Montgomery, who had been

¹ We have statistics of 76th Panzer Corps' casualties only from 1st to 10th December: a total of 2,051. If this rate continued the Germans must have lost far more men than 8th Army in proportion to total strength. In December *AOK 10* as a whole had 13,362 casualties.

chosen to command 21st Army Group in Overlord, handed over 8th Army to General Sir Oliver Leese.¹ Leese had commanded 30th Corps in 8th Army since just before the battle of El Alamein, and he brought, as Chief of Staff, his B.G.S. Brigadier G. P. Walsh, also an 8th Army 'old hand'. The change of command therefore was smooth. The immediate policy for the 8th Army became to contain the enemy in his present positions, and by patrolling, raids and deception to lead him to expect a renewed and early offensive. For the 8th Army's operations were still designed to help 5th Army, although that army's offensive also had come to a temporary halt.

Future military biographers and historians will analyse General Montgomery's personality and generalship, and will discuss his place in the military pantheon. We will venture only a few obiter dicta suggested by his rise to fame as commander of the 8th Army in Africa and Italy.

He took command of that Army in August 1942 when it was temporarily baffled and deprived of self-confidence and purpose by violent changes of fortune which seemed inexplicable. The 8th Army had successfully driven the enemy from the Egyptian frontier almost to Agedabia during the months November 1941 to January 1942, and then had itself been driven back, during the months January to July 1942, to El Alamein, well within the borders of Egypt. As a result, for the 8th Army the world turned upside-down. Montgomery arrived at a time when British military fortunes were at their lowest but also when the material means of restoring them were pouring into the Middle East. In this he was lucky as is any commander who arrives when a lean period is ending and when resources, denied to his predecessors, are available to himself. His extraordinary achievement was to reanimate the 8th Army at amazing speed by every means moral and material, and to launch it again on a career of success which proved to be irreversible. The British soldier as a rule takes pride in first his Regiment and second his Division, and bestows his loyalty and affection in that order. The Corps and the Army are remote abstractions to him. Montgomery did not create the 8th Army but he made of it a body with an identity and esprit de corps of which each man was vividly and proudly conscious.

A consideration of Montgomery's accomplishment can begin with his tactical methods. He saw, with single-minded simplicity, that his task was to destroy the Axis forces in the Desert, and he devoted all

¹ The Prime Minister had consulted Alexander on the choice of Montgomery's successor. Alexander named Leese. Sir Oliver Leese served with the Coldstream Guards in World War I. Thereafter he commanded 1st Battalion The Coldstream Guards and held several Staff appointments. In 1940 he was D.C.G.S. of the B.E.F., and then passed to command of the West Sussex County Division and 15th Scottish Division. He commanded the Guards Armoured Division from June 1941 until becoming commander of 30th Corps on 10th September 1942.

the powers of his strong mind and of his energetic personality to accomplishing the task.

He believed that 'operations must develop within a predetermined pattern of action' and that only the commander could determine the pattern and vary it to suit the changing tactical situation. Subordinates must be made to conform with the commander's master-plan although they might use initiative and enterprise within its framework. His tactics were eminently sound and orthodox but he applied them in so unvarying a manner that a cyclic pattern became recognizable. The cycle was of this kind. Montgomery chose a limited objective and carefully built up a force so strong that it could scarcely fail, given time, to take that objective. The succeeding stages were to consolidate the gain, to re-group, to push light forces ahead, and to build up once more in order to take the next limited objective. The cycle was always accompanied by the establishment of an ample part of the force in some position to 'form a secure base'. Montgomery believed that his method ensured that the enemy commander must dance to his tune, while he himself could never be deflected from his course by any moves that the enemy commander might make.

Montgomery's carefully-chosen higher subordinates found his methods congenial, because they, as severely practical men, appreciated the value of simplicity and the dangers which lay in unorthodox or complicated plans. Enemy commanders learned to understand Montgomery's methods and to expect the cycle. If they were never able to resist one of his thrusts for very long, they were always able to withdraw and to prepare to give battle once more while the phases of the cycle succeeded each other. Montgomery's methods never seemed monotonous and uninspiring to his army because he had the unusual gift of persuasively combining very bold speech and very cautious action. Moreover he won battles.

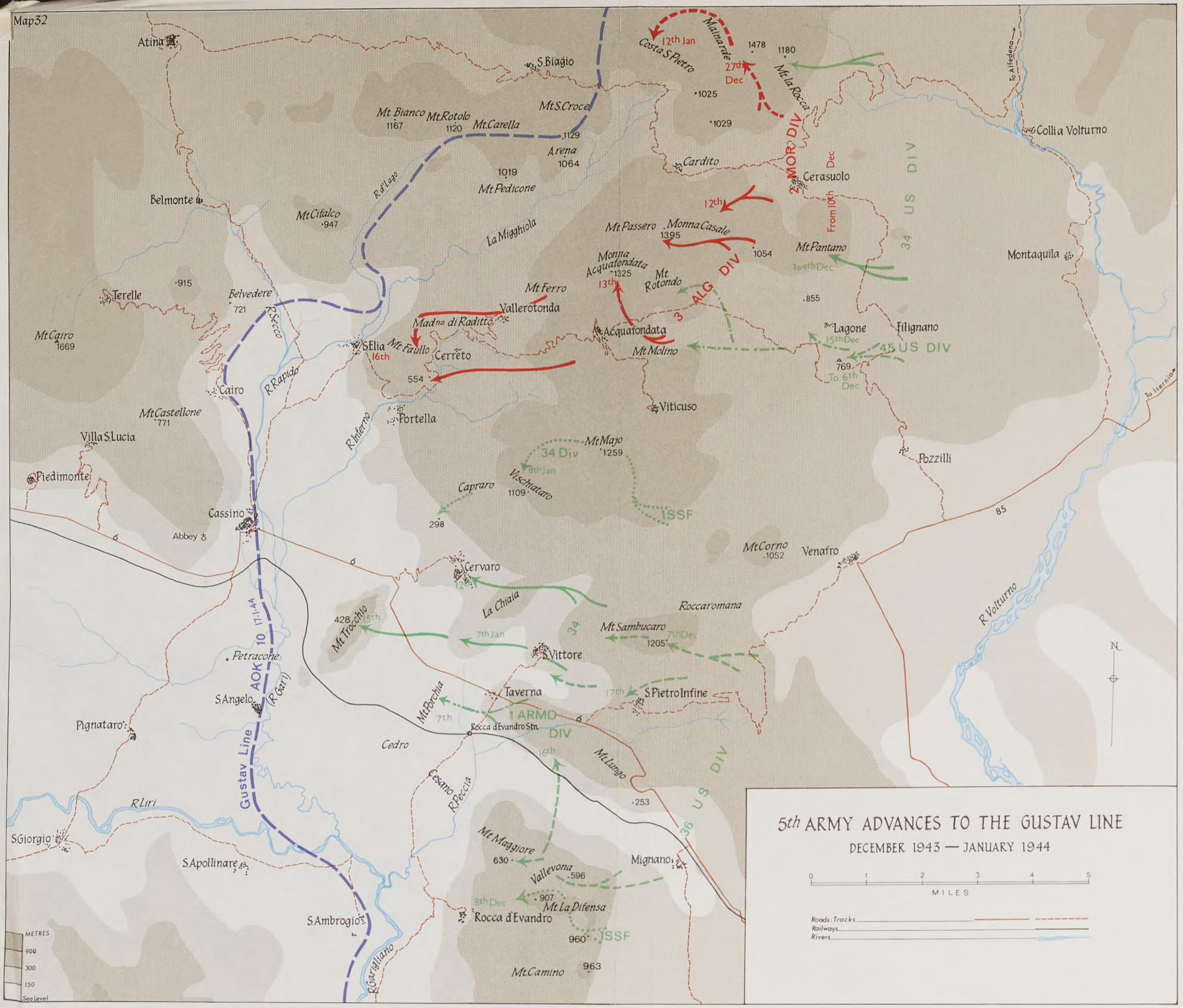
Montgomery grasped from the beginning that his 8th Army was composed mostly of citizen-soldiers. He knew very well the strength and weaknesses of his Regulars. He cared for their needs, in many ways unlike those of citizen-soldiers, and relied upon them. They gave him the loyalty, obedience, and service of their kind, and they were the deep, sure foundations of Montgomery's army. The citizen-soldier provided the edifice. He had never wanted to be a soldier but fate had made him one, and in his new surroundings he was eager to know what was going on, what his part was to be, and what was its meaning. In short he needed a military commander, a father-figure, and a representative. Montgomery set out to be this three-fold figure and created his *persona* with an originality, insight, and skill that amounted to genius.

He caused himself to be seen and heard by great numbers of men whom he addressed not as parades but as individuals gathered round

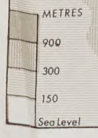
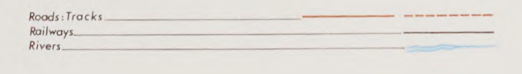
himself. He spoke simply and with telling repetition of key phrases. He assured men that every circumstance had been provided for but nevertheless that they and himself together were the architects of victory. Informal as his manner was, he allowed no familiarity. He studied intently his own appearance and bearing. His carefully unconventional uniform was designed to make a sharp visual impression of workmanlike plainness coupled with soldierly panache. His spruce, taut, active bearing, his dress and his words created a figure which his men were certain to remember, to discuss and to describe in their letters home. Montgomery handled the war-correspondents with tact, cordiality, and interest. The public in the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, and the United States, after three years of war marked by many reverses, were hungry for a taste of success on land that was not transient. Moreover, the war had not so far produced an Allied soldier who was the household-word that the British people at war seem to need. Alam Halfa and Alamein gave the Allied peoples an earnest of what they craved, and the letters of Montgomery's men, the despatches of war-correspondents, and the film 'Desert Victory' released in February 1943, united to create a household hero. Montgomery saw to it that this figure did not lose colour and brilliancy.

Montgomery did not command the trust and affectionate regard of brother-commanders, British and Allied, of the three Services. Some of these men held commands which were as important or more important than Montgomery's, and they bore responsibilities which were as great or greater. They perceived with distaste his assumption that the 8th Army was the only force that counted and that its commander alone understood modern war. They did not like his arrogance, bumptiousness, ungenerosity towards other men's achievements and aspirations, and single-minded pursuit of the 8th Army's interests. They were not amused by his school-boy humour. Yet again and again they subordinated their feelings to their determination to co-operate in a common cause, and to their understanding of the unquestionable ability and worth of a disagreeable colleague. On the other hand Montgomery formed a markedly successful relationship with Mr. Churchill. He judged the Prime Minister's power to a hair's-breadth, and read some of his characteristics like a page of print. The Prime Minister liked, in a commander, self-confidence proved by success. He liked to hear first things first from conversable subordinates, he liked himself to be liked, and to receive attentions. He enjoyed personalities whom he felt to be refreshingly odd. The commander of the 8th Army did not disappoint him.

Montgomery matched his hour and rose to his great opportunity. The goddess of fate determined that he would arouse strong feelings



5th ARMY ADVANCES TO THE GUSTAV LINE
 DECEMBER 1943 — JANUARY 1944



in others. Many men almost idolized him, and some detested him. A contemporary judgment that does not find greatness in him is wilful. Greatness, however, is not proved by adulation any more than it is disproved by denigration, and the quality must not be confused with fame, popularity, or notoriety. Time alone tries and proves greatness by secret, unhurried assay. This astonishing man must abide Time's questioning and judgment.

(vi)

See Map 32

Although the greater part of this chapter has been given to 8th Army's operations there is no doubt that 5th Army's offensive caused the Germans more concern during the second part of November and during December because they judged it to be the main Allied thrust towards Rome. Limits of space however compel the account of these operations of 5th Army to be reduced here to a summary.

General Clark, during the pause granted by Alexander on 13th November, re-grouped his army in the following form:

Right Flank. 6th U.S. Corps (Major-General John P. Lucas):

34th and 45th U.S. Divisions
2nd Moroccan Division, which replaced 34th U.S. Division between 9th–13th December.¹

Centre. 2nd U.S. Corps (Major-General Geoffrey T. Keyes):²

3rd and 36th U.S. Divisions
1st Special Service Force³
1st Italian Motorized Group.

¹ 2nd Moroccan Division (Général de Division André Dody) was the first formation to arrive in Italy of the French Expeditionary Corps (Général de Corps d'Armée Alphonse Juin). Its main units were

3rd Spahi Reconnaissance Battalion; 41st Automatic Weapons Battalion; 87th Engineer Battalion; 4th Battalion 63rd Algerian Artillery Regiment (155-mm How).

R.C.T. 'A': 4th Moroccan Infantry Regiment; 2/63rd Algerian Artillery Regiment (105-mm How).

R.C.T. 'B': 5th Moroccan Infantry Regiment; 1/63rd Algerian Artillery Regiment (105-mm How).

R.C.T. 'C': 8th Moroccan Infantry Regiment; 3/63rd Algerian Artillery Regiment (105-mm How).

Attached troops: 4th Group of Tabors; 15th Pack Mule Company; one company 201st Pioneer Battalion.

Further information concerning the French Corps is given in Chapter XVI.

² H.Q. 2nd U.S. Corps arrived from Sicily in October, and took command in the field on 18th November.

³ 1st Special Service Force (Colonel Robert T. Frederick) came to the Mediterranean in the autumn of 1943. It was composed of picked United States and Canadian troops trained to undertake long-range sabotage in snow-covered country. They were trained also as parachutists and skiers, and in demolition. The force had three Regiments, each of two two-company battalions, and one administrative battalion. Arms were rifles, carbines, light machine-guns, 60-mm mortars, and rocket launchers. In Italy a battalion of U.S. airborne artillery was attached. The Force's 1,200 vehicles included 1,000 Weasels, small tracked carriers capable of working in snow. Before coming to Italy the Force had taken part in unopposed landings at Kiska in the Aleutians in the summer of 1943.

Left. 10th Corps (Lieut.-General R. L. McCreery):
 46th and 56th Divisions.
Army Reserve. 1st U.S. Armoured Division.

On 16th November Clark expressed his general intentions as follows:

'Fifth Army will hold its present positions, regroup its forces and prepare an attack to be launched about 30th November . . . it is planned to attack with the VI, II and 10th Corps abreast. The VI Corps on the right to attack generally west with the axis of advance along the roads Colli-Atina and Filignano-S. Elia. The II Corps to breach the enemy lines along Highway No. 6. As soon as the advance of II Corps attack permits, it is planned to employ all or part of the 1st Armd Div. [U.S.] for an attack in this sector. The 10th Corps on the left will assist the attack of II Corps and force a crossing of the Garigliano River to establish a bridgehead in the Castelforte area and from that area be prepared to operate to the north and/or west . . .'

Then on 24th November Clark issued an operation instruction which requires extensive quotation because with modifications it remained fundamental to 5th Army's operations until February 1944.

'The Fifth Army will resume the offensive by phases, Phase I beginning on or about Dec. 2nd. In order that the maximum air and artillery support may be used against the most difficult terrain, the operation will be divided into the three phases as follows:

1. Phase I: Capture of the critical terrain features M. Camino-M. La Difensa-M. Maggiore.
 - a. 10th Corps
 - (1) To capture the M. Camino hill mass . . .
 - (3) Feint . . . to indicate to the enemy intentions to force a crossing of the lower R. Garigliano . . .
 - b. II Corps
 - (1) To capture M. La Difensa and M. Maggiore . . .
 - c. VI Corps
 - (1) To harass enemy . . . along entire Corps front, with particular emphasis on the Corps right flank . . .
2. Phase II: Capture of M. Sammucro [Sambucaro] simultaneously . . . with an attack west along the Colli-Atina road . . .
 - a. 10th Corps
 - (1) Consolidate positions on M. Camino, M. La Difensa and M. Maggiore . . .
 - (4) Continue offensive activity along the River Garigliano.
 - b. II Corps
 - (1) Capture of M. Sammucro . . .

- c. VI Corps
 - (1) Assist II Corps in capture of M. Sammucro.
 - (2) Launch an attack with one division west via the road Colli-Atina in the direction of the hill mass N. and N.W. of Cassino.
 - (3) Make a secondary attack west along the Filignano-S. Elia road, towards the same objective . . .
- 3. Phase III: the main attack into the Liri valley . . .
 - a. 10th Corps . . .
 - (2) When the advance of the II Corps is such as to permit the bringing up of bridging materials, to force a crossing of the River Liri, occupy a bridgehead in the general vicinity of S. Ambrogio and from that bridgehead be prepared to conduct further operations to cover the left flank of II Corps . . .
 - (4) Continue offensive activity along the River Garigliano.
 - b. II Corps
 - (1) To attack N.W. along Highway No. 6 with the mission of enveloping the enemy defences in the vicinity of Cassino.
 - (2) To be prepared at a favourable opportunity to attack to the west with additional elements and create an opening for armoured attack . . .
 - c. VI Corps
 - (1) Continue attacks outlined in Phase II and, assisted by II Corps, seize the high ground north and N.W. of Cassino . . .

Phases II and III were to begin on 5th Army's orders.

A deception scheme was included in the first phase. It was to threaten a landing in the Gulf of Gaeta by assembling ostentatiously landing-craft, troops, and stores at Naples and Mondragone. Cruisers and destroyers were to bombard targets between Minturno and Gaeta during the last week of November.

14th Panzer Corps faced 5th Army in the following positions north to south:

1. (On general front of 6th U.S. Corps).
 - 305th Infantry Division (fighting strength 6,700), covering the approaches from Isernia and Colli a Volturno towards Castel di Sangro, Alfedena, and Atina.
 - 44th Infantry Division (newly arrived; fighting strength unknown), covering the road Venafro-Filignano.
2. (On general front of 2nd U.S. Corps).
 - 29th Panzer Grenadier Division (fighting strength 7,460), from

Mt. Corno to Mt. Sambucaro and then southward to S. Pietro Infine and Mt. Lungo.

3. (On general front of 10th Corps).

15th Panzer Grenadier Division (fighting strength 6,660), on the mountain-mass of Mts Maggiore, La Difensa, and Camino.

94th Infantry Division (fighting strength 7,430), from the lower slopes of Mt. Fuga near Castelforte, along the Garigliano to the sea.

4. *AOK 10* Reserve. Hermann Göring Panzer Division, part in the line and part working on the Gustav defences.

The forces of a little more than seven Allied divisions against five German were fairly equal if the advantages given to the German defence by very difficult country are taken into account. The Allies enjoyed great superiority in artillery and in the air. Over 200 guns, in addition to the divisional artilleries, were given to 10th Corps for the first phase, and 2nd U.S. Corps received fourteen additional battalions of U.S. Field Artillery. In the air U.S. XII Air Support Command, to be supplemented by as many Boston and Baltimore light bombers as Air Marshal Coningham could provide, arranged a weighty programme of preparatory operations and direct support which unfortunately was greatly spoiled by bad flying weather.

Enough has been said of the harsh mountain country to indicate that the approaches open to 5th Army were uninviting. The best, Highway 6, was flanked on the south by the Camino massif and Mt. Lungo, and on the north by the well-defended village of S. Pietro Infine and by Mt. Sambucaro. The Filignano-S. Elia road was poor, climbed up and down an endless series of transverse ridges, each a natural defensive position, and was commanded almost everywhere by flanking hills. The road Colli a Volturno-Atina was better but ran through worse country which rose towards the Apennines, facing assailants with high peaks and deep valleys and ravines. The German commanders had understood the military facts and expected the main Allied thrust to follow Highway 6. They regarded the high ground north of Cassino as an important obstacle to a flanking move, but they had made very strong defences in the sector which we call the Mignano gap. Mines had been sown in the roads and tracks, and in streams. Bridges and culverts had been demolished and mined. There were numerous emplacements for machine-guns and mortars and important points were guarded by well-dug posts or by log 'bunkers' combined with wire and minefields. The artillery had excellent observation. Work on the Gustav line defences was going

¹ German fighting strengths are as on 9th December 1943.

busily on and by mid-December was reasonably satisfactory. The German policy for 14th Panzer Corps (as for 76th Panzer Corps) was resolute defence, and local counter-attack. Local withdrawals might be permitted if coupled with stubborn delaying tactics. But Kesselring sternly directed that there would be no major withdrawals, e.g. to the Gustav defences, until the casualties of formations were 'no longer in fit proportion to their tactical successes'.

During the battles of December the weather was usually bad and often vile. The battle for the Camino massif lasted from 1st to 8th December, and its crisis came for the Germans on the 6th. In November the British had used one brigade for their main attempt, and some 180 guns. In December 46th and 56th Divisions attacked, and in the opening bombardments 820 guns were used, and later not less than 300. American troops of two divisions were co-operating on the northern flank. This huge increase of force was not simply because of a better calculation of the size of the problem and to regrouping. It was owing also to the continuous work of the engineers in improving and keeping repaired roads and tracks to make it possible to maintain so big a force, and also to administrative ingenuity.

46th Division's 139th Brigade on the night 1st/2nd December and on the 2nd cleared enough of the Calabritto 'basin', held by 129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, to make secure the starting points of 56th Division on its right. In that division, during the night 2nd/3rd December 169th Brigade attacked up Razor Back Ridge towards Monastery Hill, and 167th Brigade up Bare Arse Ridge towards Point 819.¹

The defenders were the 1st and 3rd Battalions of 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and 115th Reconnaissance Battalion. On the 3rd December the enemy added the 2nd Battalion 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and 2nd Battalion 1st Hermann Göring Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and on the 5th 1st Battalion 2nd Hermann Göring Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the total of their reinforcement. The British attacked with tremendous artillery support, mainly in the form of concentrations which fell on targets, or switched, or returned to earlier targets, as might be required. Figures which give an impression of the storm of high-explosive that broke on the real or suspected German positions are as follows. Eleven tons of shell per minute on some targets; 1,329 tons on four areas each 500 yards square in 75 minutes; more than 3,800 tons fired by 10th Corps' artillery during the battle. For the infantry there was as before the cruel climb over the loose stones, and tufty grass, and among the boulders two to six feet in circumference.² There occurred on the 3rd

¹ The features of the battlefield have been described in Chapter XIII, p. 450.

² The British infantry mainly engaged were, in Regimental order: 6th Grenadier, 3rd Coldstream, 2nd Scots Guards; 2nd/5th, 6th and 7th The Queen's Royal Regiment;

and 4th December a succession of attacks and counter-attacks, of pauses and renewals which must be imagined. 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment most stubbornly held the crests from Monastery Hill westward. On the right of the British, 1st Special Service Force took the better part of Mt. La Difensa and 36th U.S. Division gained a commanding height overlooking Vallevona.

On 4th and 5th December icy drizzle turned to heavy rain. The Garigliano, the Peccia, and the Liri, rose in flood, and it seemed that the German troops east of the first two might be cut off without supplies. On the 5th von Senger believed that soon he must abandon the Camino massif. On the 6th the Americans were threatening 15th Panzer Grenadier Division's main supply-route which ran from Camino village through Rocca d'Evandro. 169th Brigade gained the Monastery, 168th Brigade exploited the gain, and the Guards Brigade captured the Acquapendola ridge to the south-west. On the left of the Guards, 46th Division was clearing the Calabritto 'basin' and turning northwards towards Rocca d'Evandro. On the 6th Lemelsen told Kesselring that the Camino Massif could be held no longer, and that von Senger proposed to withdraw to a new line west of the Garigliano and the Peccia. This ran, south to north, from S. Ambrogio-Cesano-Rocca d'Evandro railway station—east of Mt. Lungo. 29th Panzer Grenadier Division also would have to adjust slightly its southern flank. Kesselring felt bound to ask Hitler's approval, and Hitler forbade any withdrawal. The tactical facts none the less brushed aside Hitler's interference. 129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was allowed to begin to withdraw from the Calabritto 'basin' behind rearguards; but the remainder of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division was ordered to hold on. And very bravely the battered 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the 115th Reconnaissance Battalion, and the Hermann Göring battalions tried to obey. 10th Corps pressure however was relentless, and on 7th and 8th December 36th U.S. Division of 2nd U.S. Corps took the crest of Mt. Sambucaro. Moreover the Allied air forces, which had been almost grounded since the thousand sorties flown during the 1st and 2nd, were renewing their attacks in improving weather. On the 8th Lemelsen and Kesselring answered appreciations from von Senger by authorizing 15th Panzer Grenadier Division to withdraw, and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division to withdraw its southern flank slightly. On the 9th the whole of the southern buttress of the Mignano Gap was in Allied hands. British and German casualties in the

8th and 9th Royal Fusiliers; 6th Lincolnshire Regiment; 2nd/5th Royal Leicestershire Regiment; 7th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry; 5th Sherwood Foresters; 10th Royal Berkshire Regiment; 2nd/4th King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry; 6th York and Lancaster Regiment; 16th Durham Light Infantry; 1st London Scottish; 1st London Irish Rifles.

second Camino battle were by coincidence almost equal: in 10th Corps 941, in 15th Panzer Grenadier Division 974.¹

Meanwhile between thirteen and sixteen miles north of Mt. Camino 45th U.S. Division was trying to dislodge 44th Infantry Division from its position at Lagone and Point 769 on the Filignano-S. Elia road, while 34th U.S. Division tried to drive 305th Infantry Division from its positions on the line Mt. La Rocca-Cerasuolo-Mt. Pantano on the road Colli a Volturmo-Atina. The fighting in both sectors was strenuous, but the German divisions seemed confident of holding their ground, and 6th U.S. Corps advanced no more than a mile or two. It was north of the Mignano gap that the next heavy fighting occurred during General Clark's second phase, which, on 16th December, he believed would be completed about 20th December.

We have seen that Phase II began with 2nd U.S. Corps' successes on the crest of Sambucaro and on Roccaromana to the north on 7th and 8th December. On 8th December, too, 1st Italian Motorized Group—67th Infantry Regiment and 51st Bersaglieri Battalion, 11th Artillery Regiment, 5th Anti-Tank Regiment, and an Engineer battalion—attacked Mt. Lungo but failed to capture it. And so the German defences at S. Pietro Infine and Mt. Lungo remained unbroken. It became plain that if the Mignano Gap was to be forced on its northern side, S. Pietro would have to be pinched out by an advance westward along the crest ridge of Sambucaro and by the capture of Mt. Lungo. On 15th December 36th U.S. Division, reinforced by 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, began these operations. On the 16th Mt. Lungo fell, but northwards of this there was little progress. However, in 6th U.S. Corps' sector events were occurring which, with the loss of Mt. Lungo, were to force the German hand. On the 15th December 45th U.S. Division penetrated 44th Infantry Division's defences at Lagone. Further north 2nd Moroccan Division began operations on 17th December to turn from the north flank 305th Infantry Division's positions in the sector Mt. La Rocca-Cerasuolo-Mt. Pantano. The German higher commanders were sensitive about threats to the northern flank of 14th Panzer Corps. Moreover from about 11th December they had been expecting the Allied armour to attempt to crash through the Mignano gap into the Cassino plain. On the 15th Kesselring mentioned a 'tense situation' and emergency measures. The first of these was to order to von Senger's northern flank 5th Mountain Division, whose leading troops were due in Rome on the 19th after a month's journey from Finland. 5th Mountain Division had been earmarked for relief of the 44th, so that the latter could relieve 29th Panzer Grenadier Division for the rest and re-equipment it had long been

¹ We have no account of casualties in 2nd U.S. Corps.

promised, but now this plan had to be shelved and it was not until the end of the year that the 29th began to leave the line. Far from reorganization, Lemelsen on the 16th asked permission to take the 'very grave decision' to abandon that part of the Bernhardt line which was held by 44th Infantry Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. Once again Kesselring referred to Hitler who agreed. The new line was to run (south to north) from Taverna (on Highway 6)—S. Vittore—Vitucuso—Monna Casale. To conform, 305th Infantry Division was to withdraw slightly into prepared positions between Monna Casale and the Mainarde massif. This decision necessitated withdrawal to a mean depth of about three miles. Delay, however, was the watchword, and 44th Infantry and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions were ordered to hold their present positions with strong rearguards for as long as possible.

This glance at the German side will explain why during the remainder of December the fighting continued with unabated ferocity for this ridge or that crest, and why the progress of 2nd and 6th U.S. Corps was so difficult. S. Pietro fell to the 36th Division on 17th December, and with it the Mignano gap fell at last. On the same day 45th U.S. Division made ground up to the new German line between Mts Rotondo and Molino, near Acquafondata. Between 17th and 23rd December 2nd Moroccan Division gained the area Cerasuolo—Mt. Pantano, and a foothold on the south slope of the Mainarde massif. By 26th December 36th U.S. Division was threatening S. Vittore from the east and south, and by the 29th 45th U.S. Division had reached a point near Acquafondata.¹ 14th Panzer Corps had now been forced out of the Bernhardt line on a front of about twenty miles from Mt. Camino to the Mainarde massif, but was doggedly holding new ground.

As early as 4th December Kesselring believed that there was no immediate threat to Rome and that the Allies would 'fight cheap' with small forces on narrow fronts. There seemed to be no near prospect of Allied landings far behind the German front. Amongst the higher German staffs there was a feeling that almost all the Allies' best troops in the Mediterranean were being satisfactorily contained south of Rome, and that there were none to spare for other enterprises such as an invasion of southern France. On 27th December

¹ 5th Army's casualties, to 30th December, were:

	<i>Killed</i>	<i>Wounded</i>	<i>Missing</i>	<i>Total</i>
American	2,614	10,821	3,364	16,799
British	1,669	7,023	2,869	11,561
French	141	1,158	57	1,356
				<u>29,716</u>

Jodl gave Kesselring as the main task 'defence of the hill country south of Rome'; counter-offensives were discouraged; positional warfare was the order of the day. Hitler, on 22nd December, thought that the Allies were 'making a fearful fuss and seemed to be asking themselves if the whole business was worth it'. On the 28th he announced that he did not believe that the Allies would continue indefinitely to 'fight their way painfully through the Italian mountains'. In contrast to his subordinates he suspected that they were more likely to attempt a landing far behind the present front, or even in some quite other quarter, perhaps in the Balkans. For the moment, however, he was content to leave Kesselring to his work.

We can now see that in Kesselring, in Italy, a formidable commander was appearing. He had been appointed *O.B. Süd* in October 1941 but as operations in Africa were in theory controlled by the Italian *Comando Supremo* and in fact by Rommel and von Arnim, Kesselring had been mainly an administrator and military diplomat before Mussolini's downfall. In consequence a fair assessment of him in his African days noted 'his strange mixture of blarney and optimism, his military competence, and his political manœuvrings'. But during the campaign in Sicily and after it, his military competence was becoming foremost. In November 1943 he was given clearly defined powers as Commander-in-Chief Southwest and Commander-in-Chief Army Group C, with immediate result. He began to show a strong mind in assessing tactical facts, a deep understanding of tactical detail, an unfaltering spirit, and a stern hold on his troops. For while quick to encourage and to praise, he was as quick to condemn and to castigate any commander or any troops whom he judged to have fallen short of a very high standard.

(vii)

December was a better month, in terms of sorties, for the Tactical Air Force than November had been, although unfavourable weather during most of the month spoiled direct air support. There is no satisfactory yardstick with which to measure exactly the conditions for flying, but during December there were six spells of a day or so of good flying weather, and the rest of the month showed weather varying between poor and very bad. Because the capture of Rome depended mainly upon 5th Army's success the Tactical Bomber Force gave preference to that Army's front whenever the weather was favourable. In direct support the nature of the terrain and of the fighting settled the nature of the targets which were generally the German gun-areas or other positions and occasionally bivouacs and other concentrations of troops. On 5th Army's front the sorties flown in direct support and the tons of bombs dropped were as shown overleaf.

	<i>Sorties</i>	<i>Tons</i>
U.S. XII A.S.C.	2,140	724
N.A.T.B.F.:		
Light bombers	371	189
Medium bombers	202	381
	<u>2,713</u>	<u>1,294</u>

Whenever the weather, the fewness of targets for direct support, or the situation on the ground suggested alternative action, the Tactical Air Force switched to indirect air support. Targets included road and rail traffic, bridges, and supply dumps in a target-area which extended from the battlefield to well beyond Rome. Pontecorvo in the Liri valley was a favoured target which attracted 290 sorties by tactical bombers of all types and 160 tons of bombs. Aquino came next with 139 tons of bombs, then Arce with 75 tons. The sorties flown in indirect support on 5th Army's front and the tons of bombs dropped were:

	<i>Sorties</i>	<i>Tons</i>
U.S. XII A.S.C.	868	330
N.A.T.B.F.:		
Light bombers	216	144
Medium bombers	103	128
	<u>1,187</u>	<u>602</u>

For air operations in direct support, which naturally involved only shallow penetration of enemy territory, it was possible to drop maximum bombloads in the area of the battle at the expense of fuel. For air operations in indirect support, for example attacks upon German airfields and L. of C. targets, the position was reversed and the extra fuel needed reduced the bombloads which could be delivered. The choice of L. of C. targets depended on such considerations as where congestion of traffic was occurring on roads and railways, where bottlenecks were appearing, and upon the opportunities presented by the weather. In general terms, the light bombers operated within a belt of country situated at between eight and thirty-nine miles from 5th Army's front, while the medium bombers operated within a belt at between thirteen and twenty-four miles' distance. Both types of bomber, therefore, were attacking at ranges far short of their maximum but by doing so applied a greater weight of attack where most it was needed. Moreover they could be used at longer ranges whenever suitable targets appeared. The fighter-bombers, in which the ratio between range and bombload was less

variable than in light and medium bombers, operated within their normal limits.

During the period from dusk on 19th November to dawn on 1st January 1944 Mediterranean Air Command flew the equivalent of 917 sorties every 24 hours. Total sorties, excluding attacks on shipping and on ports, amounted to 38,512, which can be distributed between:

Fighters	21,905
Bombers and fighter-bombers	14,852
Reconnaissance	1,755 ¹

During the above period 209 Allied aircraft were lost. 71 German aircraft were destroyed in the air or by ground action, and 76 did not return from operations owing to unknown causes. The total of 147 included 5 transport aircraft. A total of 142 aircraft lost from a total of 740 operational aircraft available gives a rate of attrition of 19%. With this figure in mind, we can reflect upon the opinion of experienced R.A.F. commanders that the greatest sustained rate of attrition that a fighter force could suffer, and remain effective, was 10%. R.A.F. Bomber Command believed that the greatest endurable rate of attrition for a formation of bombers was 5%.

The sorties flown by Northwest African Air Forces fell at the end of November to the lowest number since the previous July. Then during December the numbers began to rise. The main causes of falling numbers of sorties can be summarized. They were: the lengthening ranges at which aircraft had to operate; worsening weather; a difficult problem of maintenance on account of a high degree of wear and tear, want of replacements, and poor means for maintenance at advanced bases; and rain and mud which upset routine. Particular air forces suffered from particular handicaps. For example the moves of the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force to the Italian mainland claimed part of resources, such as transport, which else had been at the disposal of N.A.S.A.F.'s other air formations, with the result that the moves of the latter were not nearly complete until the end of December. For instance the Wellingtons of No. 205 Group, which moved to Italy, were unable to operate from 2nd to 27th December because of the move.

See Map 16

The air forces were now following the policy framed by Tedder at the end of October. Operations took the form of attacks upon the German L. of C. in Italy, upon airfields in Greece, and upon the

¹ Attacks on shipping and on ports are considered in Chapter XV. A detailed breakdown of the 38,512 sorties is in a table at the end of this chapter.

German L. of C. in France, Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria. A little attention was paid to airfields in Italy, and two attacks were made on targets related to the Combined Bomber Offensive. The distribution of effort was in the following rough proportions. The heavy day bombers of the Strategic Air Force gave just over half their 1,805 sorties to the German L. of C. in Italy, a quarter to airfields in Greece and the rest to L. of C. in France, Germany, Austria, and Bulgaria including a small effort against airfields in Italy. The medium bombers of N.A.S.A.F. and N.A.T.B.F. gave approximately two-thirds of their 2,738 sorties (all by day other than for 182 by the Wellingtons by night) to L. of C. in Italy, half the remainder to the support of 5th and 8th Armies and the rest to L. of C. in France and Yugoslavia and airfields in Italy and Yugoslavia. Middle East Air Command's bombers spent almost the whole of a very modest effort on ports in Crete, Greece, and the Aegean. From time to time some fighter- and light bombers of the Tactical Air Force joined in the attack on the German L. of C. in Italy.

While the L. of C. target in Italy during November and December can almost be equated with the internal railway system, we should bear in mind the main rail routes in and out of Italy. The most important was the Brenner Pass route into Austria because this carried half of the in-out traffic of Italy and the bulk of German military supplies. The routes linking Italy with Switzerland by the St. Gotthard and Simplon passes, and the routes in the north-east leading to the Balkans, shared the other half of the in-out traffic. The Balkan routes carried most of the oil. The internal rail routes, for our purposes, fall into three groups. These are:

West Coast	Genoa to Rome.
Central	Florence–Arezzo–Orvieto–Rome; Florence–Arezzo–Perugia–Terni–Rome.
East Coast	Padua–Ferrara–Ancona–Pescara.

A planning estimate of the greatest capacities of these routes was: West coast, 96 trains daily; Central, 96 trains daily by the route first given, but by the second only 12 trains daily between Arezzo and Terni; East coast, 96 trains daily as far as Ancona, and onwards 24. Rome was a bottle-neck.

Whereas the attacks on the railways had in October and early November been mainly upon key bridges and sections of track, the attacks from mid-November to the end of 1943 chose other types of target. These included marshalling-yards, important railway stations and their installations, bridges and viaducts. In general the heavy bombers took on the more northerly targets, and the mediums the targets on the west coast and in central Italy. The table on page 526 groups some of the main targets by routes, and by place from north

to south, and gives the dates of some important attacks. The table does not give the whole picture; for example it does not show a series of concerted raids on marshalling-yards.¹ It does, however, present a pattern drawn from a mass of detail, and shows how attacks must be distributed in time as well as in space. An L. of C. dies, if it does die, by the Death of a Thousand Cuts.

As a single example, on 2nd December Marauders greatly damaged the railway station at Arezzo and cut the main line to Florence. The result of this attack and others was to throw into confusion the southward move of the trains carrying 5th Mountain Division to *AOK 10*. In consequence units had to march round damaged sections of line to entrain further on, but their equipment remained behind. 'Orderly assembly was impossible' the Division reported. The like troubles affected 44th Infantry Division to some extent. A collation of German records discloses fifty-seven instances of major damage to the Italian railway system in December's thirty-one days.

The Strategic Air Force, in its attacks against German airfields, flew 433 sorties by day against those in Greece and, supported by the Mitchells of the Tactical Bomber Force, flew 241 sorties by day against those in Italy. The Wellingtons added a further 72 sorties by night. The principle was to choose three types of airfield. First, where concentrations of aircraft were known to be, and such targets ranged from the group of airfields at Istres in Southern France to others in Central Italy. Air reconnaissance was much concerned in the choice of these targets. Second, airfields where there were important installations for repair, assembly, or experiment, for example Guidonia near Rome. Third, airfields which seemed to guard key target areas; for example Vicenza or Treviso protecting the Brenner route and the air route to Austria and Germany; Pontedera (east of Leghorn) protecting the air route to Turin; and Ciampino which was one of Rome's guardian group. As it happened, of eleven major attacks, seven were directed against the Rome group and one each against Pontedera, Grosseto, and Vicenza. The attacks in Italy destroyed few aircraft for there were few to destroy but put airfields out of action for days because the Italian labourers deserted the repair-work.

In Greece eight main attacks were made during December by the heavy bombers. Mostar in Yugoslavia was visited once by 51 Mitchells of N.A.T.B.F., as was Podgorica by co-belligerent Italian fighter-bombers. Three 'cautionary' raids were made against marshalling-yards at Sofia, to remind the Bulgarians that association with Germany was dangerous.

¹ At: Pistoia, Borgo S. Lorenzo, Prato, Empoli, Castiglione, Poggibonsi, Perugia, Foligno.

*Italian rail systems and targets attacked
mid-November 1943 - 1st January 1944*

West		Central		East		North East	
Place	Date	Place	Date	Place	Date	Place	Date
Recco	26th Nov. 27th Dec.	Innsbruck Bolzano	15th, 19th Dec. 2nd, 15th, and 25th Dec.	Padua Ferrara	16th, 30th, Dec. 29th Dec.	Dogna	28th Nov./ 16th Dec.
Sestri Levante Chiavari (Zoagli) Aulla	1st Dec. 27th Dec. 1st Dec.	Pistoia Borgo S. Lorenzo	26th Dec. 30th Dec.	Ravenna *Rimini	30th Dec. 26th, 27th Nov. 28th, 29th, 30th Dec.		
Viareggio Cecina	30th Dec. 24th Dec.	Prato Empoli	26th Dec. 26th Dec.	Fano Ancona	21st Nov. 25th, 26th Nov. 8th Dec.		
		Certaldo Castiglione Poggibonsi	29th Dec. 28th Dec. 27th Dec.	Falconara Giulianova	30th Dec. 29th Nov. 9th Dec.		
Arezzo	2nd, 19th Dec.	Foligno	22nd Nov. 19th, 29th Dec.	Terni	9th, 19th Dec.	Aquila	8th Dec.
Perugia	19th Dec.	Orvieto	28th, 29th Dec.	Orte	8th, 14th and 19th Dec.	Ciampino	22nd/23rd Nov. (night)
Chiusi	21st Nov.						

* Rimini suffered a total of 259 heavy day bomber sorties during which 637 tons of bombs were dropped.

In support of the Combined Bomber Offensive two raids were made on ball-bearing factories in Italy and one on an aircraft factory in Germany. On the night 24th/25th November 76 Wellingtons took off from North Africa and Sardinia to attack Villa Perosa near Turin. They encountered terrible weather, thirty were forced back to base, nine reached the target, and thirty-seven went astray. Only six aircraft managed to pinpoint the target. Sadly, 17 aircraft and 14 aircrews, except for one survivor, were lost. On 1st December 118 Fortresses dropped 316 tons of bombs on the Fiat ball-bearing factory at Turin. On 19th December 50 Liberators dropped 77 tons of bombs on the Messerschmitt factory at Augsburg. German fighters met both attacks strongly, and in the first 15 Fortresses were lost, in the second four Liberators.

For the time being the German bomber force was in decline although December brought a furious last fling against the port of Bari, which is described in Chapter XV. It was not until the Allies landed at Anzio in late January 1944 that the German bombers came scurrying back to Italy. In contrast, the Allied air forces were re-organizing. On 10th December the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces came into being, but this and other matters are separately treated in Chapter XII. Some moves of Allied air forces however must be noticed here.

U.S. 321st and 340th Medium Bombardment Groups (both Mitchells) went from Grottaglie to Amendola and from S. Pancrazio to Salsola by 26th November, thus completing the move of the Tactical Bomber Force to the Foggia area except for the Headquarters which moved to Foggia on 14th December; Main H.Q. N.A.S.A.F. (U.S. Fifteenth Air Force) to Bari by 1st December; Tactical H.Q. Desert Air Force (henceforth to be known as 'Forward H.Q. Desert Air Force') to the Vasto area on 6th December and Advanced H.Q. to S. Severo on the 9th, joined by Rear H.Q. next day; No. 322 Wing R.A.F., by then made up of four Spitfire squadrons, transferred to Middle East on 9th December; Advanced H.Q. No. 205 Group R.A.F. to Bari by 12th December and to Cerignola soon afterwards, so that by the 26th its Wellingtons were on airfields on the mainland—No. 330 Wing at Cerignola No. 3 (Torretto), No. 231 Wing at Foggia No. 2 (Tortorella) and No. 236 Wing at Foggia Main. By the end of the year the Airacobras of U.S. 350th Fighter Group and the Spitfires of U.S. 52nd Fighter Group, both of Coastal Air Force, had arrived in Corsica.

The arrangements for control of the Tactical Bomber Force were to undergo a further change when on 26th November Headquarters N.A.T.A.F. issued an order, to become effective on 10th December, that operational and administrative control of the light bombers of the U.S. 47th Group (Bostons) was to pass to U.S. XII A.S.C. and

similarly that of No. 3 (S.A.A.F.) Wing and of No. 232 Wing R.A.F. (both had Bostons and Baltimores) to Desert Air Force.¹ Control of the medium bombers of U.S. 321st and 340th Groups (both had Mitchells) was to remain with N.A.T.B.F. under the general control of N.A.T.A.F. In the event the transfer of operational and administrative control of U.S. 47th Group to U.S. XII A.S.C. was postponed until the Group could move to the Naples area, and did not occur until 8th January 1944. In some ways these new arrangements reversed those made on 10th October, which are mentioned in Chapter XIII. The primary though not the sole role of the Bostons and Baltimores became direct support to the armies, the Mitchells' role (other than those of the U.S. 321st Group which were to continue to operate against the Balkans) became the attack of targets directly affecting the land fighting but which lay behind the battle area. Arrangements for the light bombers to be concentrated in support of either 5th or 8th Army were to continue, and likewise those for the Mitchells to reinforce the light bombers as need be. U.S. XII A.S.C. and Desert Air Force were to provide fighter escorts for the Mitchells as well as for the Bostons and Baltimores. Further improvements for the control of the tactical bombers were yet to come and will be discussed in a later chapter.

¹ During December No. 24 (S.A.A.F.) Squadron of No. 3 (S.A.A.F.) Wing was re-equipped with Mairauders. Soon afterwards this Squadron was withdrawn from operations and proceeded to the Middle East at the end of the month, and No. 55 Squadron R.A.F. (Baltimores) of No. 232 Wing R.A.F. followed a few days later, both squadrons joining Air Defences, Eastern Mediterranean. Meantime No. 12 (S.A.A.F.) Squadron of No. 3 (S.A.A.F.) Wing proceeded to North Africa together with its Bostons which it changed for Mairauders.

TABLE

*Sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command dusk 19th November 1943—dawn 1st January 1944
(excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports)*

Command	Land Rece	Fighters Includes shipping protection shown in ()	Bomber and Fighter-Bomber										Bomber Totals	
			France	Italy	Germany	Austria	Yugoslavia	Albania	Greece	Bulgaria	Crete	Day		
			L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	L. of C. & other Targets	L. of C. & other Targets	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfield and L.G.s	Night
N.A.A.F.*	1379†	18,803 (4,071)†	15	81	50	149	—	—	—	433	85	—	—	1,805
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M.B.			107	160	—	—	75	51	—	—	—	—	—	2,556
			—	110	72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	182
L.B.			—	104	—	—	—	10	—	—	—	—	—	1,788
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
F.B.			—	—	—	—	42	11	21	—	—	—	—	8,386
			—	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
H.B.			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M.E.A.C.	376†	3,102 (2,760)†	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15	15
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	1,755	21,905 (6,831)	122	13,255	241	50	149	117	62	433	85	—	—	14,535
			—	220	72	—	—	10	—	—	—	—	15	317

Total Sorties Flown = 38,512 or 917 every 24 hours

* The sorties flown by N.A.A.F. have been arrived at by deduction from a variety of sources, some contradictory, but they can be considered reasonably accurate for our purposes. They include those flown by Malta Air Command.
† Estimated.

CHAPTER XV
OPERATIONS IN THE AEGEAN,
AUTUMN 1943; THE WAR AT
SEA; CONFERENCES AT CAIRO
AND TEHERAN

(i)

See Map 22

IN order to tell the story of the campaign in Italy until towards the end of 1943 without interruption, we have referred only in passing to events in the Eastern Mediterranean. This chapter therefore begins with an account of the star-crossed British operations in the Aegean during the period September to the end of November 1943. During this period the island of Cos was first occupied in mid-September and fell to German attack on 3rd and 4th October. The island of Leros was garrisoned by a battalion in mid-September, was reinforced at intervals up to 11th November, and was lost between 12th and 16th November. These islands are focal scenes of the operations. The forces employed during the whole period were not great but the losses were grievous. The land forces amounted to five battalions and some supporting arms, and were lost. The naval forces, never all engaged at once, were six cruisers, thirty-three destroyers including seven Greek, a few submarines, and some lesser ships and craft. Four cruisers were damaged, six destroyers were sunk and four were damaged, two submarines and ten coastal craft and minesweepers were sunk. Some 282 aircraft, excluding air transports, of Middle East Air Command were at first allotted to operations in the Dodecanese. These together with later reinforcements and the aircraft of Northwest African Air Forces which gave support flew not less than 3,746 sorties. All told 113 Allied aircraft were lost including six Dakota air transports. Losses among the combined anti-shipping and day and night-fighter forces of Beau-fighters were at the fearful rate of fifty per cent of the entire initial strength of all the Beaufighter squadrons.

Although the forces were not great, events in the Aegean claimed the attention of the highest Allied leaders in the following ratio: constantly, the Prime Minister, the Chiefs of Staff, and the

Commanders-in-Chief in Middle East; occasionally, Eisenhower and his principal commanders, the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the British Foreign Secretary, the United States Chiefs of Staff, the President. A part-explanation of the Aegean episode, its entanglements and its melancholy outcome may perhaps be suggested by words which the Prime Minister addressed to his Chiefs of Staff, concerning action in the Aegean, as early as 2nd August: ' . . . Here is a business of great consequence to be thrust forward by every means . . . I hope the Staffs will be able to stimulate action which may gain immense prizes at little cost though not at little risk.'

For contrast, the general German position can be summarized. On 13th September Hitler decided, against the advice of his counselors, that the Aegean must be defended on a chain of islands stretching from the Peloponnesus by Cythera, Crete, and Scarpanto to Rhodes. In September the commanders most concerned, that is Field-Marshal von Weichs as *O.B. Südost*, General Löhr in Greece and the Aegean islands, and the Naval Commands in the eastern Mediterranean were averse from Aegean enterprises, and in October they became pessimistic and despondent when obliged to act. Yet largely through war's extraordinary chances they won a resounding tactical success but no long-lasting advantage.

Various plans for operations in the Eastern Mediterranean began to hatch during the Spring of 1943. Several plans looked towards the Aegean, an area which the British had always wished to control without having had the necessary means. And all through the spring, summer, and autumn of 1943 their means remained slender. The Washington Conference in May had given Eisenhower first call on all disposable land forces in the Mediterranean theatre except seven Allied divisions ear-marked for Overlord, and two British divisions which might be committed to support Turkey against an Axis attack. Naval forces for any operations had to be determined by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in the light of the demands of the war everywhere. Mediterranean Air Command had received a loan of extra air forces for the Sicilian campaign only, and the Royal Air Force had a large, contingent commitment in support of Turkey. Sir Henry Maitland Wilson, Commander-in-Chief Middle East Land Forces, had formal, ultimate control of some of the troops who were engaged in Sicily or who were likely to be used in Italy, but he had no real power to insist upon using them for his own purposes. These circumstances placed the Commanders-in-Chief in Middle East, who were Wilson; Vice-Admiral Sir Ralph Leatham, later Admiral Sir John Cunningham, and from 14th October Vice-Admiral Sir Algernon Willis; and Air Chief Marshal Sir William

Sholto Douglas, in continual uncertainty about what forces they were likely to have for operations in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Many advantages might accrue to the Allies from enterprises in the Eastern Mediterranean. There might be greater security for their shipping in the Eastern Basin, and an interruption of Axis communications with the Black Sea and the northern Aegean. It was possible that Turkey might be persuaded to favour the Allied cause so much as to allow the Allies to place airfields in Turkey. An Allied Black Sea route to Russia might be created. Since the beginning of the war the defence and the courting of Turkey had been constant strands in British strategic thought.¹ Even when writing of Cos and Leros in October the Prime Minister introduced large considerations '... The Turks have shown themselves unexpectedly co-operative in the matter of these islands ... If we are extricated from these islands, making no effort, all this will be chilled and frozen again ...'² Imagination, stimulated by the Mediterranean successes of 1943, painted pictures of ever-widening infiltration, and of an ultimate crumbling of Germany's Balkan satellites and its economic and moral consequences. Such a crumbling had been, in 1918, one of the beginnings of the German downfall.

The directive given to Wilson on 12th February 1943 had included instructions to prepare for amphibious operations in the Eastern Mediterranean. In March the Cs.-in-C. appointed Lieutenant-General Sir Desmond Anderson, Air Vice-Marshal R. E. Saul, and Rear-Admiral G. J. A. Miles to set about planning.³ Crete and Rhodes were assumed to be the keys of the Aegean. The capture of Crete could be achieved only by diverting forces from the main campaign in the Central Mediterranean, but to capture Rhodes seemed to be almost within the means of the Cs.-in-C. in Middle East. Rhodes was desirable because it was close to Turkey and contained airfields and a useful port. Therefore planning was directed to the capture of Rhodes, of Scarpanto south-west of it, and later of other Aegean islands, with a view either to opening the sea-route to Smyrna or as a preliminary to operations in the Greek mainland, or to both. 'Accolade' was the code-name for the capture of Rhodes, Scarpanto, and lesser islands to the north.⁴ By the end of July there were three versions of 'Accolade'. First, a walk-in to Rhodes and other islands if the Italians collapsed and the Germans withdrew. Second,

¹ See *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, Vols. I to IV, indexes s.v. *Turkey*.

² The Turks were not preventing the British from quietly establishing a rail supply route from the Middle East, and from gathering a fleet of supply-caiques at Kusadasi.

³ Anderson was commander of 3rd Corps in Persia and Iraq; Saul was A.O.C. Air Defences, Eastern Mediterranean; Miles represented the Naval C.-in-C. Levant. Their organization was first named No. 2 Planning Staff, and Force 292 from June. The planners could never be given a definite force as an element in their planning.

⁴ 'Handcuff' was the code-name for the capture of Rhodes by itself, but 'Accolade' was soon loosely used to mean this operation.

a quick, opportune 'Accolade' in the event that the Italians had collapsed but that the Germans were standing firm. Third, a full 'Accolade' against Italian and German opposition, an unlikely operation.

The Cs.-in-C. in the Middle East assumed in all their plans that Eisenhower would not claim for his own purposes all the resources on which he had first call, and that he might make loans, certainly of ships and aircraft, and perhaps of troops. Eisenhower was sympathetically disposed towards the Cs.-in-C.'s task but could nevertheless at any moment call in ships, aircraft, and troops and thus make 'Accolade' impossible. The proviso was a constant obstacle to firm planning by the Cs.-in-C. Satisfactory air plans, which were vital, were in any case most difficult to frame because the Germans had airfields quite close to the Dodecanese while the British had none that were close. Quite apart from air matters, the Dodecanese lay far distant from Egypt by sea.¹

The Germans had an airfield in the extreme southern tip of Scarpanto some 45 land miles from Rhodes, and their nearest bomber base on Crete was about 160 land miles from Rhodes, while their nearest airfields in southern Greece were less than 270 land miles distant. The nearest British airfields to Rhodes were on Cyprus at about 270 miles' distance, while Gambut, the nearest fully operational R.A.F. airfield in Africa, was 350 miles away.² The limit of Allied single-engine fighter cover fell hopelessly short of the distances required. Examination of the very many technical factors, including the comparative performance of British and German fighter aircraft, suggests, now, two inescapable conditions for the satisfactory air support of operations in the Dodecanese: either the use of airfields in Anatolia, or the creation on Cos of airfields capable of operating, as a minimum, four squadrons of single-engine fighters. To use twin-engine fighters from Cyprus or Gambut offered no remedy. The Beaufighter's performance doomed it in advance, and though the Lightning's performance was of a much higher order, in the face of the German Me. 109 single-engine fighter the small number of Lightnings likely to be available gave no promise of success. In 1943, in the early stages of planning the capture of Rhodes, it was taken for granted that only single-engine fighters could cover effectively

¹ To convey a general idea we take the distances in nautical miles from the naval base at Alexandria to two islands centrally situated, roughly speaking:
To Cos:

through straits between Rhodes and Scarpanto 370;
through straits between Rhodes and the Turkish coast 400.

From Cos to Leros was 30 miles, and from Leros to Samos was 40 miles.

² It must be remembered that since November 1942 Middle East's forces, including air forces moved steadily westwards on the African shore. Moreover while the campaign in Africa was ending, the Allied air forces were re-deploying for their next main task, operations in the Central Mediterranean.

the assault convoys and the landings. And because single-engine fighters were ruled out by distance, it seemed that 'Accolade' was impracticable unless the Turks would grant the use of airfields in Anatolia. By August 1943, however, another solution had gained credit. This lay in the hopes that the Allies' operations in the Central Mediterranean would fully attract the air forces available to the Germans, that Eisenhower would be able to release heavy bombers to attack German airfields in Greece and Crete while 'Accolade' was taking place, and would be able to loan four squadrons of Lightnings to provide fighter cover.¹ It is easy in the light of after-knowledge to find fault with the hopeful assumptions that were made, the compromises that were accepted, and the resulting plans. But in 1943 so many considerations were speculative. The Italians might collapse and the Germans might not be able to do much to off-set their disadvantages. The straits of the Axis appeared to be the Allies' opportunity and the consequences of Allied enterprise might snowball throughout south-eastern Europe.

On 27th July, two days after Mussolini's fall, the Prime Minister, who was deeply interested in 'Accolade', minuted the Chiefs of Staff: 'I suppose that the Planners are all keyed up with plans for taking Rhodes on the assumption the Italians ask for an Armistice.' This was all of a piece with the excited and stirring atmosphere of the period from July until September.² A signal, dated 1st August, from Wilson to Sir Alan Brooke fortuitously answered Mr. Churchill's enquiry:

'Reports from the Balkans, Crete and the Dodecanese during the last few days show developments which we might be able to turn to our advantage at short notice if we had the means . . . It seems possible that a situation favourable to us may develop shortly in the Dodecanese . . . it may well be necessary to strike quickly, as the opportunity may be fleeting owing to German counter-measures . . . Apart from 8th Indian Division, we have no fully equipped formation in Mideast. For a quick "Accolade" with full exploitation we should have available, if possible in addition, 10th Indian Division, 1st Greek Brigade and 9th Armoured Brigade, equipped to a minimum scale of 80 per cent. I suggest . . . immediate steps be taken to collect in Mid-east

¹ The main German bomber bases, listed here in order of importance under each geographical heading, were believed to be:

<i>Greece</i>	<i>Crete</i>	<i>Rhodes</i>
Eleusis	Heraklion	Calato
Kalamaki	Kastelli Pediada	Maritza
Tatoi	Tymbaki	Cattavia
Sedes	Maleme	
Larissa		

Cattavia was known in mid-August to be out of action although not seriously damaged. It was hoped that successful attacks on the main airfields would greatly upset German bomber operations in the eastern Mediterranean. ² See Chapter VI.

assault shipping for a minimum of one infantry brigade plus one armoured regiment. Also, that we hold up deliveries to Turkey until 10th Indian Division, 1st Greek Brigade and 9th Armoured Brigade are equipped [to 80 per cent.]’

The minimum shipping that Wilson needed for his purposes included one H.Q. ship, 8 L.S.I.(L) or L.S.P. and 18 M.T. ships. Eight L.S.I.(L) were already in the Middle East, including five earmarked for dispatch to India. A signal next day from Cs.-in-C. M.E. stated, ‘Majority of air and naval forces, shipping and landing-craft will have to come from Central Mediterranean.’

With Mr. Churchill’s approval, the Chiefs of Staff replied that the Cs.-in-C. should prepare to the best of their ability to profit by any favourable opportunity in the Aegean. They authorised the L.S.I.(L) earmarked for India to be detained, and certain of the supplies to Turkey to be suspended. The Cs.-in-C. were told to ask Eisenhower for any craft and ships that he could spare. The Cs.-in-C. on 5th August asked Eisenhower for eight ships and craft, four squadrons of Lightnings, transport aircraft to lift a parachute battalion, one parachute battalion, and two small special units—all to arrive by 14th and 15th August. Given the ships, they would aim at having an assault brigade of their own ready to sail by 18th August and a follow-up brigade four days later. Eisenhower, on the 7th, agreed to provide the troops though not quite as soon as desired, and the ships and craft. He could not spare the Lightnings from his proposed landing at Salerno, nor the transport aircraft from other planned operations. But by 12th August he had changed his mind. He now feared that the requirements for ‘Accolade’ would draw upon resources that he urgently needed for his main business, the campaign in Italy. He, Alexander, and Tedder were agreed that ‘we should concentrate on one thing at a time and that “Accolade” should be abandoned for the present’.

Meanwhile the Chiefs of Staff, on board the *Queen Mary* on their way to Quebec, had received a warning from the Joint Staff Mission in Washington:

‘There is apparent in all the U.S.C.O.S. a feeling that British are not standing firm enough to considered decisions of “Trident”, and are tending too readily to depart from these decisions and to set aside the operations agreed upon. They [the U.S.C.O.S.] realize the importance of putting Italy out of the war, but are not prepared to see “Bullfrog”, the Pacific or “Overlord” suffer unduly in consequence of new commitments in the Mediterranean.¹ They seem particularly to take exception to British Standstill order in Mediterranean, to which they refer as a unilateral decision.’²

¹ ‘Bullfrog’. Code-name for operations on the Arakan coast of Burma.

² See Chapter VI, pp. 200–201.

At first the Chiefs of Staffs' thoughts on the message were that:

'Although it is necessary that there should be general agreement between Allies as to the conduct of the war, and on general distribution of resources, we should be placing ourselves under a grave handicap if such agreement were to be regarded as rigidly binding in matters of detail. Some flexibility, both in plans and in the distribution of resources, is essential to allow for the changing situation, for the success or otherwise of operations as they unfold, and for the reactions of the enemy . . .'

But their minds changed as appears in a signal to their Vice-Chiefs dated 18th August:

'As a result of our discussions with U.S.C.O.S., we have agreed that operations in the Mediterranean theatre will be carried out with the forces allotted at "Trident", except in so far as these may be varied by the C.C.S. We have therefore been considering the general Standstill order in the Mediterranean which we issued before "Quadrant", and we have agreed that it should be revoked . . .'

When this information reached the Cs.-in-C. Middle East a day or two later, it knocked the bottom out of their plans, and further blows followed. On 21st August the ships authorized to be detained were ordered to disperse, and on the 26th Eisenhower warned Wilson that he would soon require 8th Indian Division upon which Wilson had been counting for Rhodes.

On 31st August the Cs.-in-C. reported that any enterprise against Rhodes or Crete except an unopposed walk-in was now impossible, given only their own resources. However by 7th September they had arranged some small operations, to begin as soon as an armistice with Italy was announced. A small detachment of the Special Air Service Regiment was to go to Castelrosso, a little island about 80 miles east of Rhodes and close to the Turkish mainland. The detachment was to inspire the Italian garrison to hold the island which would become a base for small craft. Other parties were to go to other islands, to Cos in particular because there was a good (so called) airfield there and space in which to make others. Scarpanto offered the same advantages. An inter-Service mission was to go to Rhodes to see if General Scaroina and Admiral Campioni could be encouraged, and helped, to round up the German garrison, an 'Assault Division'.¹ If the mission reported favourably, 234th Brigade and some tanks would sail to Rhodes in three available merchant

¹ On 8th September Lieut.-Colonel D. J. T. Turnbull R.H.A. was appointed head of the British Mission to Rhodes ('Rodell'). His staff officer was Major the Earl Jellicoe, and the five other members included naval and air force officers, an interpreter, and a wireless operator. The mission's journey to Rhodes and its action there were left to its own initiative and resource, qualities with which it proved to be well endowed.

ships, of a type, however, that could not be assault-loaded.¹ Success would depend upon being able to use Rhodes harbour without opposition, and likewise one airfield upon which one or two Spitfire squadrons would be ready to land.

The Prime Minister sent from Washington on 9th September his first 'blessing' which is a key to much subsequent planning and action: 'Good. This is a time to play high. Improvise and dare.'

Turnbull's mission called first at Castelrosso where the Italian garrison had surrendered to a British raiding party. Turnbull constrained an Italian pilot to fly him to Rhodes in a seaplane, and on the night 9th/10th September Jellicoe and another officer parachuted in, twenty-four hours later than they had intended because of fog. Already, however, General Kleeman had seized Scaroina, commander of the Regina Division, and had attacked the division by land and air. Admiral Campioni learned from Jellicoe that British help could not be expected before the 15th, and on the 11th ordered the garrison to capitulate.

The British had lost the trick in spite of the Rodell Mission's bold play with poor cards. The Cs.-in-C. decided that they could do no more about Rhodes for the present, yet that they would not do nothing at all. Then on the 13th September the Prime Minister, who was en route to Halifax to embark for England in H.M.S. *Renown* and therefore not abreast of events, signalled to Wilson—

'The capture of Rhodes by you at this time with Italian aid would be a fine contribution to the general war. Let me know what are your plans for this. Can you not improvise the necessary garrison out of the forces in the Middle East? What is your total ration strength? This is a time to think of Clive and Peterborough and of Rooke's men taking Gibraltar.'

The Prime Minister liked to address individuals rather than committees, and to hear from them. Because he chose Wilson to receive most of his signals does not mean that Wilson was acting as a Supreme Commander. The Cs.-in-C. were a joint body of equals.

Wilson, who had seen many Churchillian telegrams during four years of high commands in the Mediterranean theatre, could easily recognize that the Prime Minister was uttering war-cries and was ready to 'kick, spur, and practise' in pursuit of his aims.

The Cs.-in-C. indeed were now proposing to occupy Cos, sixty miles north-west of Rhodes and to use its airfield, Antimachia.

¹ 234th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier F. G. R. Brittorous) had been formed in Malta in May 1942. Its battalions were: 4th The Buffs, 1st King's Own Royal Regiment, 2nd Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, 1st Durham Light Infantry, 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers. The Brigade left Malta for Egypt in June 1943, and was successively under command of G.H.Q. M.E.F. and of 10th Indian Division, and from 16th September at the disposal of Force 292.

Leros, thirty-five miles further to the north-west, was to be occupied also. It had a sheltered, defended anchorage and some port equipment, but was too rugged to be the site of an airfield.¹ Samos, forty miles north of Leros, separated from the Turkish mainland by a narrow channel, and situated on the sea-route to Smyrna, was to be occupied as well. These three islands were to become bases of 'piratical war on enemy communications in Aegean'. Small parties were to land in other islands to gather information and to encourage Italian garrisons to resist German encroachments. However, if British domination of the Dodecanese was to be established and then extended in the Aegean, Rhodes must be taken. And so 'hope to reduce island by methods eventually adopted by Turks in 1522, though in less time' signalled Wilson to Churchill, historical Roland for Oliver.

The Cs.-in-C. submitted, on 21st September, proposals to capture Rhodes, and on 1st October the Chiefs of Staff authorized them to plan once again, in consultation with Eisenhower, the capture of Rhodes, before the end of October. They were to use the partly equipped 10th Indian Division and 9th Armoured Brigade. Eisenhower had already offered four warships, three L.S.I., and a group of transport aircraft, and the Cs.-in-C. believed that they could scrape up what other ships and craft they needed. Intelligence affirmed that the German Air Force in Greece and the Aegean was being strengthened and no one doubted that the enemy's air force must be neutralized if Cos and the other islands were to be held. Short-range fighter cover for 'Accolade' could come from Cos alone.

The occupation of Cos began on 14th September and by the 17th the island had acquired a garrison. This amounted to 1st Durham Light Infantry with small arms and mortars but without motor transport; No. 2909 Squadron R.A.F. Regiment with light A.A. weapons; and seven Spitfires of No. 7 (S.A.A.F.) Squadron with a maintenance party. General Anderson decided that this garrison would have to suffice, although later more Spitfires flew in, including a flight of No. 74 Squadron R.A.F. Besides the British there were some 3,600 wavering Italian troops with four coast-artillery guns and a few obsolescent A.A. guns. Leros was in possession of a detachment of 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers, and there the port was in good order, and the Italians were disposed to help, although dispirited and poorly organized. Liaison missions were set up on Leros and Samos.

It is convenient at this point to tabulate the naval and air forces of which the Cs.-in-C. disposed as shown overleaf.

The tasks of the Naval Co-Operation Group were: anti-submarine

¹ The Prime Minister's belief that Leros was a 'fortified Italian naval base with powerful permanent batteries' could not have been derived from the information at his disposal.

NAVAL

Fleet destroyers 6.
 Hunt class destroyers 2.
 Submarines, First Flotilla.
 Motor Launches 6.
 A.A. Landing-Craft 4.
 Sundry caiques of the Levant Schooner Squadron.¹
 A few R.A.F. high-speed launches.

ROYAL AIR FORCE (at 8th September)

Under operational control of Air Vice-Marshal Saul:

No. 209 Fighter Group	Haifa-Beirut	One and a half squadrons Beaufighters. Two squadrons Hurri- cans. One squadron Hurri- cans/Spitfires.
No. 219 Fighter Group	East of Alexandria	Half squadron Beau- fighters. Two squadrons Hurri- cans. Two squadrons Spitfires.
Detachment, No. 201 Naval Co-Operation Group.	Limassol (Cyprus)	Two squadrons Beau- fighters.

Under operational control of Air Chief Marshal Sholto Douglas exercised through Naval C.-in-C. Levant:

No. 201 Naval Co-operation Group, less detachment.	Misurata; then in October at Berka near Benghazi. Cyrenaica, Egypt, Palestine.	One squadron Beauforts. Four squadrons Balti- mores and Hudsons. One squadron Wellington torpedo-bombers. One P.R. Squadron.
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Under operational control of Air Chief Marshal Sholto Douglas:

No. 216 Transport and Ferry Group.	22 Dakota air transports.
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¹ Levant Schooner Squadron: a force of caiques and schooners, formed under Com-
 mander, Coastal Forces, Eastern Mediterranean, and manned by picked officers and
 men. Many vessels were fitted with tank-engines which gave a speed of 6 knots and
 endurance of 2,000 miles. Vessels, with masts down, could be brilliantly camouflaged
 when lying up close inshore.

patrols, attacks on the enemy's shipping and air bases, and general reconnaissance over the Aegean.

British aircraft allotted to Aegean operations numbered 282, excluding air transports. Advanced Air Defence Headquarters (Air Commodore W. H. Dunn) was set up at Nicosia in Cyprus, and Group Captain Max Aitken was attached to supervise fighter operations in the Aegean. On 18th September No. 243 (Fighter) Wing R.A.F. (Wing Commander R. C. Love) was formed on Cos, where more Spitfires arrived on the 20th, to control operationally and to administer all R.A.F. units in the Aegean except those on Castelrosso.

The naval and air forces were covering and contributing to the intrusions on the Aegean islands, and trying to interfere with the enemy's traffic between Piraeus and Crete and the islands of the Cyclades and Dodecanese. By 28th September ships ranging from destroyers to caiques had landed 2,700 men, 21 guns, 7 vehicles, and 450 tons of stores, mainly in Cos, Leros, and Samos but also in islands ringing Cos—Calino, Stampalia, Simi—and in some of the Cyclades. Some successes were gained against German shipping although local German air superiority, owing mainly to conveniently situated airfields, restricted the destroyers' movements. These ships usually could advance into the Aegean only by night, and in daytime were forced to retire to the southward or to lie up in Leros. Later the naval forces made clever use of Turkish territorial waters, without provoking diplomatic action, and to the Germans' extreme annoyance. On 17th September eight Beaufighters sank a merchant ship south of Naxos, and on the 18th the destroyers *Faulknor*, *Eclipse*, and the Greek *Queen Olga* sank two merchant ships north of Stampalia, and damaged their escort. On 28th September the *Eclipse* sank the 2,500-ton S.S. *Donizetti* south-east of Rhodes and drove her escort ashore, there to be destroyed by the R.A.F. But now occurred a lamentable diversion of naval force. On 1st October all available Fleet destroyers were sailed from Alexandria to Malta to escort the battleships *King George V* and *Howe* which were required to return to the United Kingdom. At this moment indeed general naval affairs ran contrariwise to Aegean interests because of wider issues. The German battleship *Tirpitz* had just been disabled in a Norwegian fiord and the pocket battleship *Lützow* had returned to the Baltic. The moment was opportune to modify the four battleships of the *King George V* class for service in the Pacific, and on 30th September the Prime Minister himself asked Sir Andrew Cunningham to return the *King George V* at once. Moreover at this time the First Sea Lord, Pound, lay dying, and Cunningham, his successor designate, was called to England until 6th October. Willis answered for him in Algiers, but Sir John Cunningham had not yet been appointed to

relieve his namesake. It is permissible at least to wonder whether any of the three admirals, if undistracted by other cares, could not have deduced from perplexing intelligence that a German sea-stroke was impending, and so might have delayed the *Howe* and *King George V*, and thus have freed the Fleet destroyers for action in the Aegean? As things were three Hunts, two of them Greek, remained available. The speed and endurance of these ships made it difficult for them to sweep far into the Aegean and still to be clear by daylight.

We have referred to intrusions on the Aegean islands, and by 22nd September raiding forces were busily at work. G.H.Q. M.E.F. exercised a general control but until 11th November the raiding forces to all intents directed themselves under Turnbull as de facto chieftain. The raiding forces were:

Long Range Desert Group (Lieutenant-Colonels G. L. Prendergast, J. R. Easonsmith), about 200 strong; hitherto specialists in distant reconnaissance on land.

Small Boat Section (Major the Earl Jellicoe), about 100 strong; specialists in raiding.

30 Commando, a handful of specialists in amphibious reconnaissance.

Their transports were three caiques of the Levant Schooner Squadron and a Royal Air Force launch. Turnbull, Jellicoe, and parties of the L.R.D.G. and S.B.S. reached Cos ahead of the more formal forces, and by the end of September other parties had spread out to Leros, Calino, Simi, and Stampalia, setting up observation posts and striking up acquaintance with the inhabitants and with any Italian troops encountered. On 12th October a S.B.S. party was withdrawn from Simi after a battle with encroaching German troops, and on the 24th the L.R.D.G. attempted to capture Levinthos and lost 43 of their strength of fifty. On 11th November G.H.Q. M.E.F. designated Turnbull as Commander Raiding Forces in the rank of Brigadier with the wide task of instant readiness to operate in south-east Europe and in the islands of the Aegean, the Adriatic, and the Mediterranean. His forces were to include the L.R.D.G., the Special Raiding Squadron, the S.B.S., the Raiding Support Regiment, the Greek Sacred Squadron, and a number of strong-arm men, guides, and scouts officially known as Kalpaks, but unofficially as the enthusiastic thugs. Space, however, decrees that we leave the Raiding Forces and pass to the German side.

On 8th September (one day before the Prime Minister's '... play high. Improvise and dare') OKW doubted whether any Aegean

islands could be held because of the difficulty of finding troops to disarm and replace Italian garrisons. But as in Italy so in *O.B. Südost's* command things went well. In the islands serious fighting broke out only in the Ionian Corfu and Cephalonia, and in Cephalonia the massacre of General Gandin and 4,000 of his troops was ghastly evidence of the Germans' resolve to dominate. Rhodes proved easy to secure.¹ As we have mentioned, Hitler decided to defend the Aegean in order to deny to the Allies island stepping-stones towards the South-East mainland; to counter Allied influence upon Turkey; and to block Allied attempts, in which Turkey might connive, to create a supply route to Russia via the Marmara and Black Sea. But Hitler's directives could not conjure up ships, troops, and aircraft, and the Germans in the South-East were pinched for all three.² On 23rd September *OKW* informed von Weichs that no extra land forces could be provided for 'cleaning up the Aegean' but that he might employ temporarily for this purpose part of 22nd Infantry Division, garrisoned in Crete, and part of 3rd/440th Grenadier Regiment, garrisoned in Mytilene and Chios. On the other hand aircraft were transferred to the South-East from the West, from Austria, and from Russia. And so a strength, excluding air transports, of 479 aircraft in the South-East at the beginning of September was increased by about 70 arrivals during that month. 215 of these 479 aircraft were in Greece and Crete, including 29 single-engine fighters but no bombers.³ The few bombers in the South-East at the beginning of September were in Dalmatia, but were later sent to Greece. Steady reinforcement of Greece and the Aegean increased the bombers to 94 and the single-engine fighters to 69 by 10th November. Towards the end of September neither von Weichs nor the naval staff believed their land and sea forces to be adequate. von Weichs moreover thought that the eastern coast of the Adriatic was the most immediately threatened quarter although danger to Rhodes was possible. He took his first tasks to be 'pacification' of the Ionian islands and of Dalmatia, and he and Dönitz, C.-in-C. of the German Navy, urged

¹ Andros, Tenos, Mykonos, Paros, and Naxos—all in the Cyclades west of the Dodecanese—were easily disarmed.

² By 10th September the Germans had seized, in the Aegean, 2 Italian destroyers, 4 torpedo boats, 5 motor torpedo boats, 6 minesweepers, and 14 small naval auxiliaries, to which 20 merchant vessels were added by the 20th. 280,000 tons G.R.T. of miscellaneous shipping were seized in the Adriatic. It was very difficult to man ships, and the German armies in Italy made large claims on shipping. The Aegean may have received in September reinforcements of 3 minesweepers, 1 motor torpedo boat, and 7 merchant vessels.

³ S.E. Fighters (Mc. 109) 29.
T.E. Fighters (Ju. 88) 13.
Dive-bombers (Ju. 87) 75.
Tac. R. (Mc. 109) 29.
Strat. R. (Ju. 88, 86; Mc. 109) 23.
Coastal (Ar. 196, B.V. 138) † 6.
Total: 215.

on Hitler 'timely evacuation of our outposts on the islands in the Aegean Sea including Crete'. Hitler flatly refused this, and later, similar advice. von Weichs had reluctantly to concern himself with Aegean islands. Possible sites for Allied air bases were the first objects of action and Cos headed the list.

Already, on 18th September, the German Air Force had begun to attack Cos, twenty-six miles long by from six to eight miles wide, mainly with Ju. 88s. The airfield at Antimachia, and then the strips at Lambi and Pili were set upon with catastrophic results for the R.A.F. Airfields and strips were shattered by 1st October and the Flights of No. 7 (S.A.A.F.) and No 74 Squadrons lost eight pilots killed and twelve aircraft destroyed. Four serviceable Spitfires remained but these, harried from the air, were as good as grounded. Beaufighters from Cyprus came to the rescue without success and with heavy loss. On 26th September eight Ju. 88s sank the Fleet destroyers *Intrepid* and *Queen Olga* (Greek) at Portolago in Leros. Meanwhile General Müller, commander of 22nd Infantry Division, formed a battle group to assault Cos.¹ This expedition was a venture in the dark because the Germans knew nothing about the strength and equipment of the island's garrison. The battle group sailed from Piraeus and from Suda and Heraklion in Crete on 1st October, and made a rendezvous west of Naxos on the 2nd. British intelligence had not detected the Germans' preparations, and now sheer chance favoured their enterprise. The only three British destroyers available had been patrolling in the Kaso Strait and southwards of Rhodes to intercept a suspected German convoy, and had withdrawn to refuel. Some aircraft were searching for another convoy which Leros had vaguely reported but failed to spot the little Cos expedition. At 6 a.m. on 3rd October the German force landed on the north and south coasts of Cos, and at 6.30 a.m. the Brandenburg parachutists dropped near Antimachia airfield. The Durham Light Infantry, 534 strong, was disposed in three groups: one including the R.A.F. Regiment's squadron at the airfield, one at Cos town, and one south of it. In three groups they fought and had the worst of it, and by the early hours of 4th October the survivors had withdrawn into the hills overlooking the southern coast. At about 6 a.m. Colonel Kenyon, Fortress Commander, sent his last wireless message. The disaster was complete. About one hundred of the garrison of 1,600 eluded capture and were gradually rescued by the navy. The rest were killed or captured. The Germans executed the Italian commandant and a number of his officers. Their own casualties were 85 men and

¹ 2nd Battalion, 16th Grenadier Regiment; 2nd Battalion, 65th Grenadier Regiment; a company of assault-engineers and a parachute company, Brandenburg Division; two troops artillery; one A.A. troop; one company engineers. There were four transports and a few naval ferries and landing craft.

two landing-craft, and the expedition, leaving a garrison on Cos, was safe home by 5th October.

On 4th October the Prime Minister minuted the Chiefs of Staff 'In view of the Italian collapse, a forward policy of audacity and improvisation was enjoined upon General Maitland Wilson and the Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East . . .' He thus unconsciously explained the downfall of Cos as well as much evil to come, but was at that moment demanding reasons for the disaster. The Cs.-in-C. had none to offer except the facts: uncertain intelligence, an access of enemy's air strength too slowly apprehended, a lightly equipped garrison, an absence of reinforcements unavoidable because of the campaign in Italy, and sheer bad luck at sea and in the air owing to the fog of war.

In Mr. Churchill's view 'Everything must now be done to retrieve the position,' and he sketched the possible recapture of Cos as a prelude to the capture of Rhodes, with the aid of certain powerful measures which he fancied that Eisenhower and Tedder were taking. But in fact Eisenhower, on 5th October, reported to the Combined Chiefs of Staff that to divert resources to the Aegean would prejudice the campaign in Italy where the Germans had clearly resolved to engage in major battles. The United States Chiefs of Staff agreed with Eisenhower's view although they did not exclude the possibility that some crumbs might fall to the Aegean from the Italian table. Mr. Churchill now turned to the President and argued strongly that a Balkan landslide might follow the capture of Rhodes. 'I believe', he wrote, 'it will be found that the Italian and Balkan peninsulas are militarily and politically united and that really it is one theatre with which we have to deal. It may, indeed, not be possible to conduct a successful Italian campaign, ignoring what happens in the Aegean . . .' To capture Rhodes one division and a complement of assault shipping would be required for six weeks.¹ He offered to fly to Eisenhower's headquarters to discuss ways and means. The President was not impressed and said so on 9th October, remarking 'Strategically, if we get the Aegean Islands, I ask myself where do we go from there, and vice versa where would the Germans go if for some time they retain possession of the islands . . .' He agreed that Eisenhower and his subordinates should examine the prospects, but did not encourage Mr. Churchill to be present. On the same day Eisenhower, Sir Andrew Cunningham, and the Middle East Cs.-in-C., meeting at La Marsa, unanimously concluded that 'We are agreed that our resources in the Mediterranean are not large enough to undertake the capture of Rhodes and at the same time secure our

¹ Perhaps 1st Division, stationed in North Africa and earmarked for Italy.

immediate objectives in Italy. We must therefore choose between Rhodes and Rome. To us it is clear that we must concentrate on the Italian campaign.' Eisenhower and his colleagues made their decisions in the light of their dawning knowledge that Kesselring intended to stand fast south of Rome.

The Middle Eastern C.-in-C. nevertheless decided to hold Leros and Samos, difficult though this might be and contingent upon Turkish co-operation. Mr. Churchill at once signalled to Wilson 'Cling on if you possibly can. It will be a splendid achievement . . .' More formally, he signalled to Wilson and Eden to examine the chances of recapturing Cos. Alternatively, at the worst, Leros and the other islands might have to be given up. Wilson must decide and Churchill would support his decision.¹ The Middle East C.-in-C. reviewed the situation on 11th October and agreed that the hold on Samos and Leros must be made as firm as possible so that the islands might be the advanced base from which to harass the enemy throughout the Aegean and in Crete. They accepted the risks. Next day a full conference settled the policy.² Samos and Leros were to be held, although the holding of Leros was believed to depend largely on establishing a successful supply-line by submarines, aircraft, and caiques clandestinely operating from Turkey. Simi and Castelrosso were to be held if possible and parties were to be kept in Stampalia and lesser islands. The capture of Rhodes was not dismissed but was held in suspense. The Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff approved the policy, which now may seem makeshift but was then the best that could be devised if operations in the Aegean were to go forward at all.

Meanwhile, since the loss of Cos, some reinforcements had been arriving, and there had been action at sea and in the air. In the first week of October four cruisers and five Fleet destroyers came from Malta. Mediterranean Air Command sent:

- 6th October. Two U.S. Groups of Liberators to Benghazi.³
- 6th October. Six squadrons of U.S. Lightnings to Gambut. These, however, had to be withdrawn for Italian operations after the 10th.

¹ Once again Churchill's phrasing may suggest that Wilson was a Supreme Commander. He was not. Eden was passing through Cairo to Moscow to attend a conference of Foreign Ministers.

² There were present: Eden, and Sterndale-Bennett of the Foreign Office; Sir Andrew Cunningham, now First Sea Lord; Wilson; Linnell representing Sholto Douglas; Dundas, Chief of Staff to the Naval C.-in-C., M.E. It happened that at this moment Sir John Cunningham was taking over as C.-in-C. Mediterranean from Sir Algernon Willis who was acting in that command. Willis did not take over his own next command, C.-in-C. Levant, until 14th October.

³ On 20th September M.E.A.C. had been granted the loan of No. 240 Wing R.A.F. (Halifaxes and Liberators) which, though stationed in Middle East, was under the operational control of Northwest African Strategic Air Force.

- 11th October. No. 603 Squadron R.A.F. (coastal Beaufighters) to Gambut.
- 16th October. One squadron U.S. Mitchells (75-mm cannon) to Gambut.

Between 5th and 10th October heavy bombers, and between 4th October and 18th November Mitchells, of N.A.S.A.F. attacked German airfields in Greece, Crete, and the Aegean. On 15th November the heavy bombers renewed their attacks on airfields in Greece and continued them well into December.¹ Unfortunately the attacks did not put the German airfields out of action, nor subdue the German air force.

At sea cruisers and destroyers began to patrol nightly off the Kaso or Scarpanto Straits and were ready to act on reports of the enemy. On the night 6th/7th October the cruisers *Sirius* and *Penelope* and two destroyers sank, north of Stampalia, a convoy which had been spotted by an S.B.S. patrol on Kythnos, from the air, and also by the submarine *Unruly*. The ammunition ship *Olympos*, an armed trawler and six motor ferry barges went to the bottom. On the 7th the *Unruly* sank the minelayer *Bulgaria*. The German air force then struck back. H.M.S. *Penelope* was severely damaged. On 9th October the Germans attacked the anti-aircraft cruiser *Carlisle* and four destroyers. The escorting Lightnings and the warships' guns very probably shot down the nine German aircraft lost that day, but the destroyer *Panther* was sunk, and the *Carlisle* was damaged beyond repair. The naval policy then was changed. Destroyers only would search for and engage the enemy's ships and craft, while the cruisers would give anti-aircraft fire and fighter direction during the destroyers' approach and retirement. Anti-shipping patrols and bombardments of the harbours in Cos and Calino were carried out nightly. On the night 16th/17th October the destroyers *Hursley* and *Miaoulis* (Greek) searched Cos roads, and entered Vathi harbour in Calino, engaging at close range the enemy vessels lying there. During the second half of October destroyers were called on to run supplies into Leros. This was a hard service, reminiscent of Tobruk days, for the ships were constantly shadowed and attacked by aircraft, and escaped damage in harbour only by continual and clever changes of programme. It was, however, mines which in the last week of October sank the destroyers *Hurworth* and *Eclipse* and badly damaged the Greek destroyer *Adrias*. Between 9th September and 31st October five destroyers and two submarines had been lost, and four cruisers and two destroyers damaged. Such a rate of loss was beyond reason if weighed against the objects pursued. Aircraft made large sweeps

¹ Between 8th September and the end of November bombers of N.A.S.A.F., excluding No. 240 Wing R.A.F., flew 1,118 sorties against airfields in Greece, Crete, and the Aegean. M.E.A.C. added 593 sorties, making a total of 1,711.

against shipping in the Aegean by day and night and gained many unspectacular successes against small ships and craft at a price of steady casualties from German A.A. and fighters. The 4,470-ton *Sinafra*, sunk on the night 18th/19th October, was an exceptional prize.

The higher German commanders were not much elated by the capture of Cos. On 6th October Löhr, commanding Army Group 'E', and Müller, discussed operations for the capture of Leros which were supposed to begin on the 9th. But a policy directive issued on that day for the south-east theatre by *OKW* ran counter to the ideas of the men on the spot, and reflected Hitler's obsession with holding ground for the sake of holding it. von Weichs and all below him were lukewarm about the Aegean and discounted an Allied invasion of Greece. They admitted that the Allies could perhaps outflank Greece by pushing northward through the Aegean, but their real concern was for the Balkans where, as indicated in Chapter XI, Yugoslavia was beginning to boil like a pot. However, *OKW's* directive decreed that the Ionian islands, Crete, and Rhodes must be held but their real concern was for the Western Balkans. In the Aegean a long list of islands must be held or reoccupied: from south to north Scarpanto, Milos, Cos, Leros, Samos, Chios, Mytilene, and Lemnos.¹ But the expedition to Leros was not destined to sail yet. The sinking of the *Olympos* convoy upset the preparations, and caused angry post-mortems. As the days passed the Germans began to feel that a British warship stood in the way of every enterprise. It was even difficult to sneak supplies to Cos. Hitler was asked if British naval vessels in Turkish territorial waters might be attacked, but refused permission. von Weichs reported on 23rd October that Leros could not be attacked until 6th November, unless some unforeseen tribulations should visit the British, and on 1st November that the attack, now fixed for the 7th, might have to be postponed still further, since he could not collect the necessary shipping. Collection occupied the succeeding days and on 10th November it was announced that the attack could begin on the 12th.

Meanwhile a garrison was being formed on Leros. H.Q. 234th Infantry Brigade, 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers, 'B' Company Royal West Kents, a detachment of 28th Heavy A.A. Battery R.A., and 3rd Light A.A. Battery R.A. arrived between 18th and 27th Septem-

¹ At the end of October, besides the major islands, the Germans held Paros, Cos, Stampalia, Levinthos. They had 'mopped up' Paros, Naxos, and Calchi, and were doing the same to Amorgos.

ber in destroyers and miscellaneous vessels. Destroyers brought in 4th The Buffs between 24th and 26th October, but tragically the whole of 'A' Company was lost in H.M.S. *Eclipse* when that ship sank on a mine. Towards the end of October Anderson advised G.H.Q. that the garrison should be increased by two battalions, a field regiment of artillery, and the greater part of a heavy A.A. regiment, but of these it proved possible to move in only 1st King's Own Royal Regiment by 5th November. Samos was garrisoned by 2nd Royal West Kents (less a company) from 15th September.

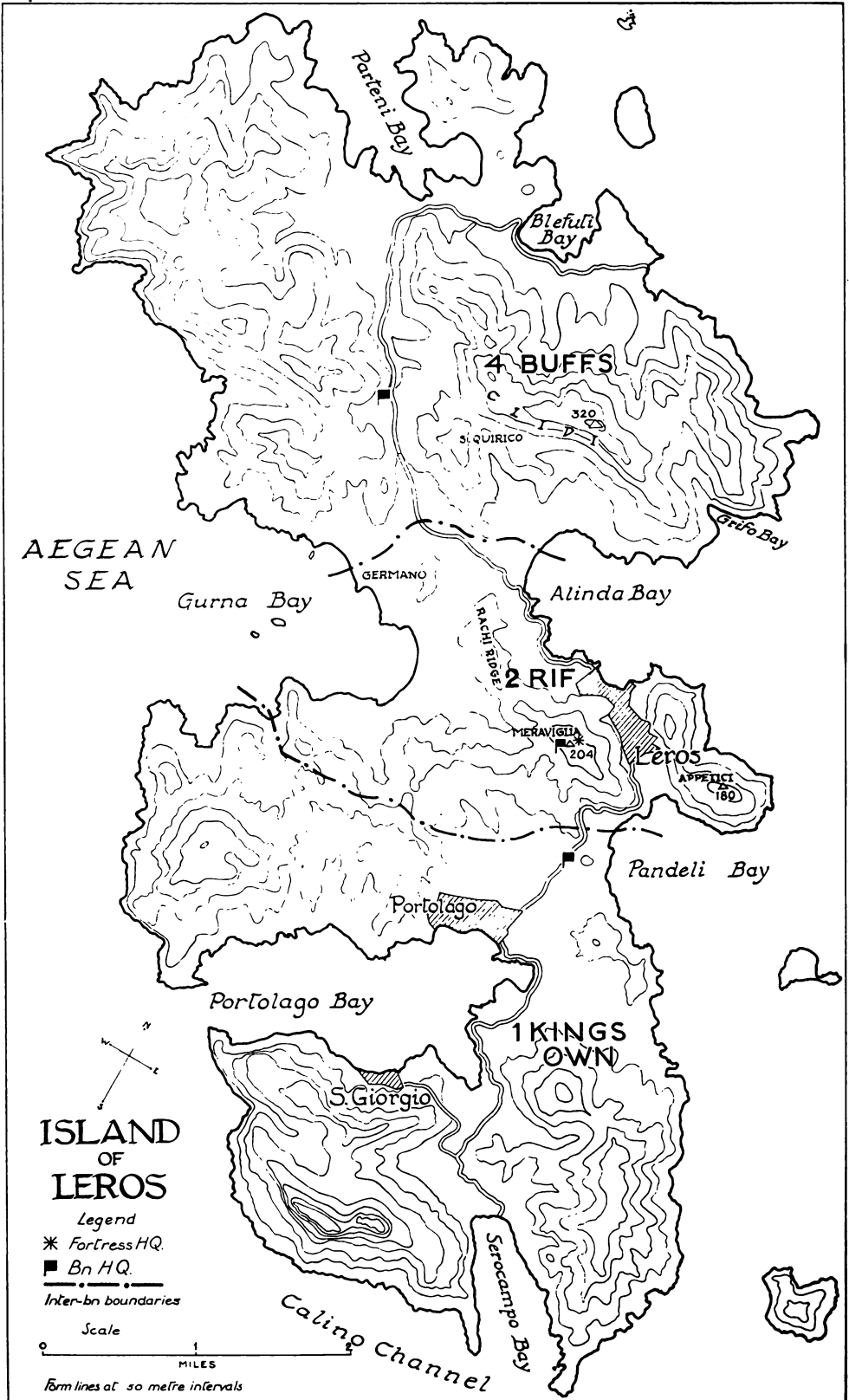
During September and October the organization to command the troops in the Aegean was being thrashed out. It will be remembered that Force 292 was a planning staff, whose army members were drawn mainly from H.Q. 3rd Corps in Persia and Iraq. This Corps H.Q. was not fully operational. Because Force 292 was a planning staff and because G.H.Q. M.E.F. was at the centre of things, it was natural that G.H.Q. should assume increasingly the direction and control of land forces in the Aegean, and this in fact occurred through the Operations section of the staff, headed by Brigadier G. M. O. Davy, Director of Military Operations. Yet this arrangement was unsatisfactory because a section of the General Staff, distant from the scene of action, was not a substitute for an operational headquarters. In an attempt to improve matters Anderson, on 11th September, was placed in command, and a little later Brittorous, commanding 234th Infantry Brigade, was rather emptily designated G.O.C. British Troops Aegean. This expedient satisfied no one, and when operations against Rhodes were suspended it seemed that the scale of operations remaining did not call for the employment of a Lieutenant-General and a Corps H.Q. even if there had been available such a H.Q. in immediate operational readiness. Various solutions were discussed and then towards the end of October Davy and an administrative colleague, Brigadier G. F. H. Stayner, and Commodore P. Todd, commanding the destroyers of the Levant Command, took passage to Leros in the ill-fated H.M.S. *Eclipse* to look into things on the spot.¹

As a result of their enquiries Davy and Stayner submitted an urgent report to General Wilson indicating grave dissatisfaction with the situation in Leros and recommending a complete reorganization of the command arrangements.

Resulting from this report a new H.Q. Aegean Command came into being on the 1st November. Major-General H. R. Hall, a former artillery officer, was appointed commander and arrangements were made to establish his H.Q. and Staff in Samos. Lieut.-Colonel R. A. Tilney, previously commanding 154th Field Regiment

¹ When the *Eclipse* sank Davy and Stayner were rescued and landed on Leros. Todd was lost.

Map 33



R.A. (The Leicestershire Yeomanry) relieved Brigadier Brittorous, who was suffering from ill health, in command of 234th Infantry Brigade and became Fortress Commander Leros.

Hall and Tilney arrived in Leros on the 5th November and considered urgently how to amend the defence and to incorporate the Italian garrison troops in a revised scheme, while General Hall's staff began to assemble in Samos. Hall himself left for Samos on the 11th November. In the event the time allowed Tilney to complete his preparations to receive the German assault amounted to under a week because the invasion began on the 12th November.

The Cs.-in-C. on 11th October had thought that the Aegean garrisons could hold out for a month. They became well aware, as the month went on, that the Germans intended to attack. The chances of intercepting attacking forces by sea and air were not bright for several reasons. Distant British airfields, German air power, and variable weather ruled out close and continuous air observation. Naval surface patrols by day would incur prohibitive losses from air attack. The need to refuel was an ever-present limitation on ships which were forced to operate at high speeds. It was unlikely that reports of enemy forces at sea would be received early enough to enable cruisers and destroyers to be sent to intercept with much chance of success. On 1st November the Cs.-in-C. told the Chiefs of Staff that if the Germans attacked Samos in force they would probably take it. The tactical situation on Leros was precarious but should become secure if another battalion, two groups of heavy bombers, and a group of long-range fighters could be provided. Reinforcements could reach Leros only in warships or in caiques, unsatisfactory transports, particularly for heavy weapons and vehicles. The Cs.-in-C. had considered evacuation but had ruled it out because preparations would occupy a week and a 'dark' moon was essential. The operation therefore could not begin until 26th November by which date the Germans probably would have attacked. The Cs.-in-C. took full account of the enemy's difficulties, but they asked how important was the holding of Leros in higher British strategy. This question was not answered.

See Map 33

In fact Müller had already assembled a force—the same that had captured Cos, reinforced by nearly three battalions.¹ The main

¹ In outline 2nd Battalion 16th Grenadier Regiment; 2nd Battalion 65th Grenadier Regiment; one company assault engineers and a parachute company Brandenburg Division; part 3rd Battalion 440th Grenadier Regiment (on Cos); one battalion 11th

convoy left Piraeus on 3rd November, and all crept stealthily along to Paros. From there the route was by Naxos, Amorgos, Stampalia, and Levinthos to Cos and Calino which were reached on the evening of 11th November. The British were quite unable to intercept the expedition, although destroyers had bombarded the harbours and roadsteads of Cos and Calino on the night 10th/11th November.

On Leros the Badoglio Government had placed Admiral Mascherpo and his garrison under Tilney's command, without conditions. But the Italians' morale was understandably low, they were unreliable, and relations with them were delicate. Moreover their guns, impressive on paper, were in fact museum pieces, without instruments for fire control, and badly sited. Tilney had three battalions, four defective British 18/25 pdrs, spoils of the African campaign which had been discovered on Samos, and very few A.A. guns. He had no transport other than a few Jeeps, and no aircraft because there were no airfields.¹

Leros is about ten miles long from north to south, and about five miles across at its widest. There are nearly sixty miles of coastline indented by nine principal bays, and an isthmus between Alinda Bay and Gurna Bay, and another between Pandeli Bay and Portolago Bay, divide the island into three parts. In the central part, between Alinda and Pandeli Bays on the east coast, Leros town lies in a valley. The six hundred-foot Meraviglia hill stands west of the town, and east of the town the high, rugged Appetici peninsula juts into the sea. North-west of Meraviglia hill lies the north-south Rachi-Meraviglia ridge. Whoever holds the Alinda-Gurna isthmus and the Rachi ridge cuts the island in half, and can dominate either part or the whole. A single north-south road, and some tracks branching from it, exist. Steep hills rising to nine hundred feet or so, ravines, and small stone-walled fields make cross-country movement toilsome. Satisfactory digging-in with pick and shovel is generally impossible because of the rocky sub-soil.

In October Anderson, after a visit to the island and thinking of a

G.A.F. Field Division (from Greece); 1st Battalion 2nd Parachute Regiment (from Italy). There were in all 25 landing-craft, 13 escorts, and a covering force of 2 destroyers, and 4 torpedo-boats. 300 aircraft were in support, and some 90 Ju. 52s were at the service of the parachute troops.

¹ *Garrison of Leros. Main Units.*

234th Infantry Brigade:

2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers

4th The Buffs (less one company)

1st King's Own Royal Regiment

2nd Royal West Kent Regiment (from Samos, night 14th/15th November)

Part 3rd Light, and detachment 28th Heavy A.A. Batteries R.A.

9th Field Company I.E. (less two platoons)

Italian Troops (4-5,000 strong)

1st Battalion 10th Infantry Regiment

One Coastal M.G. Company

Naval artillerymen and administrative units

garrison of four battalions and a field regiment, had recommended that three battalions should defend the beaches while the fourth remained in central, mobile reserve. Tilney, with three battalions and four guns, made a rather similar plan. He reasoned as follows. The Germans had local air superiority. They possessed in Cos, Calino, and Levinthos points d'appui, at no great distance, from which to launch their attacks. German air superiority and their short sea-haul made successful British naval intervention doubtful, and therefore a quick build-up was likely to follow German landings. Reinforcements for his garrison were not in sight and his ammunition amounted to $1\frac{1}{2}$ million rounds and four hundred rounds for each field-gun. If he attempted to destroy the Germans after their landings had become manifest, the longer the battle lasted the greater his disadvantages would become. It seemed wiser to meet and defeat the Germans on the beaches or in their beachheads, and to prevent them landing supporting arms. It was the classic problem of coast-defence: either to attack the enemy while he comes ashore, or hold the beaches lightly, hold back the main force, and with it attack when the enemy's main thrusts are disclosed.

Tilney therefore divided the island into three sectors: north, held by the Buffs; centre, by the Royal Irish Fusiliers and 'B' Company Royal West Kents; south by the King's Own, less one company held by Tilney as central reserve. Each battalion was disposed in company sectors, and a reserve to cover the most likely of the many landing places.¹ Thirty medium machine guns had been sent to Leros and these were distributed to battalions and manned by scratch crews. The four field guns were placed in the centre sector. Tilney's Headquarters were on Meraviglia hill. Hall approved the plan before he moved to Samos on 11th November.

This plan suffered from several weaknesses which the enemy were quick to exploit. The wide dispersion of the garrison in small detachments to attempt to guard a twenty-four mile perimeter made them weak everywhere and strong nowhere. Apart from one infantry company of the King's Own there was no central reserve in the hands of the Fortress Commander with which he could influence the battle. The vital central sector of the island, including the dominating tactical feature of the Rachi ridge, was apparently not organized for defence at all. Certainly this ridge was neither fortified nor even occupied, despite its immense significance for the control of communications between the northern and southern sectors. In these circumstances the defence plan possessed no stability, was deficient

¹ The coast-lines of the main bays, from the north clock-wise measured very roundly in yards:

Parteni 8,000, Blefuti 3,000, Alinda 6,000, Pandeli 4,000, Serocampo 4,000, Portolago 10,000, Gurna 8,000.

In all 43,000 yards or 24 miles.

of anything in the shape of a firm base and lacked the flexibility that a strong central reserve might have offered.

The Germans formed an Eastern (Major von Saldern) and a Western (Captain Aschoff) Battle Group. The Eastern Group consisted of two battalions and a third as follow-up; the Western Group of one battalion. The parachute troops formed a third group, to drop as required. In all the force was some 2,730 strong. On 10th November 357 aircraft (283 serviceable) were available in Greece, Crete, and the Aegean.¹ At 4.45 a.m. on 12th November M.L. No. 456 reported craft approaching Leros from the north over a calm sea and in clear weather. This was the Eastern Battle Group which then passed along the island's north-east coast in search of landing places.

From British discussions on the plan of defence there had emerged a belief that the naval and air forces could help best by intercepting and destroying the German follow-up convoys during their short passage between Cos or Calino and Leros. In the event no convoys were intercepted before 15th November and the following circumstances may explain the reason. Because of complete German air superiority the Allied destroyers had been ordered not to leave their lying-up positions in Turkish waters by day except at the behest of the Naval Commander-in-Chief. Naval sweeps therefore occurred at night but unfortunately the good moonlight enabled German aircraft to spot and report warships' movements, and the Germans were therefore able to take evasive action in their own sea movements. More in particular, when the destroyers were retiring after bombarding Cos and Calino on the night 10th/11th November one had been damaged by bombing. Another destroyer had towed her into the Gulf of Doris and the senior officer of Destroyers had moved to cover the tow. Very early on 12th November an air report reached this officer of what were in fact the German assault convoys for Leros, but he then calculated that he was too distant to be able to engage them before daylight, while his orders restricted him from

¹ *Eastern Battle Group*

2nd Battalion 65th Grenadier Regiment

2nd Battalion G.A.F. Field Regiment

Two companies 22nd Engineer Battalion

One company Assault Engineers, Brandenburg Division

3rd Battalion 44th Grenadier Regiment (Follow-up)

Western Battle Group: 2nd Battalion 16th Grenadier Regiment

<i>Aircraft</i>	<i>Strength</i>	<i>Serviceable</i>
Tac. R.	8	5
S.E. Fighters	69	65
T.E. Fighters	16	10
Dive-bombers	28	24
Bombers	94	70
Coastal	50	34
Air Transports	92	75

Some Strat. R. aircraft were based in Dalmatia.

moving in daylight. A sweep after dark on the 12th found no enemy. The luck was with the Germans and so continued, because when a fresh group of destroyers entered the Aegean on 13th November H.M.S. *Dulverton* was sunk by air attack. With her died the group's senior officer with consequent disorganization of command and delay. In a tale of might-have-beens it is important that the British had calculated that the Germans could not be ready to attack Leros as early as 12th November.

As regards the air, on 12th November German aircraft, excluding air transports, flew 252 sorties against Leros of which the bombers made 122 and the dive-bombers 48. On 13th November there were 166 sorties, on the 14th a few more, and on the 15th 261 sorties. There was no effective British air defence against these attacks. The Beaufighters were operating at the extremity of their range, continuous cover was impossible and they were in any case no match for the German Me. 109s. Nevertheless, as many sorties as possible were flown over the island, for example 48 sorties on the 13th. To add to M.E.A.C.'s difficulties the bad weather prevented N.A.S.A.F. from attacking German air bases in Greece during the four days 11th-14th November.

The German Eastern Battle Group, to which we may now return, tried to land at several points and was repulsed by the Buffs everywhere except at Grifo Bay below the precipitous Clidi hill. This hill, because of its very precipitousness, was not held, and Iggulden, commanding the Buffs, did not know that the Germans had come ashore there until by Tilney's order the central reserve, 'C' Company of the King's Own, arrived to counter-attack, without avail. The rest of the Eastern Group passed southwards down the east coast and began landing at intervals in the northern corner of Pandeli Bay whence, swarming up, they seized the Appetici hill-peninsula. A company of the Royal Irish Fusiliers attacked this feature and contained the enemy, and Tilney sent orders for the Royal Irish Fusiliers' reserve company, 'C', to attack there as well. This order never reached Colonel French, and a slim chance of containing the main landing disappeared for ever. Meanwhile the German Western Group, making for the south-west coast, was beaten off by the Italian coastal guns, and was ordered to reinforce the Eastern Group on the 13th. This Italian success, however, helped the garrison very little because at 3 p.m. the German parachute troops dropped near Gurna Bay. Brushing aside a couple of platoons of Royal Irish Fusiliers, they seized the northern part of the vital Rachi ridge.

Thus 234th Brigade at nightfall on 12th November faced a dark future. The Germans had won a strong foothold in the vital centre sector, thus dividing the island into three parts. In each a British battalion fought independently because communications were

failing. Constant bombing repeatedly cut land lines and wireless was proving slow and unreliable. Tilney now asked Hall for reinforcements and Hall made ready to send the Royal West Kents from Samos. But a southerly gale on the night 13th/14th November turned back the minesweepers and motor launches which had embarked them. It was not until the night 14th/15th that the battalion arrived in Portolago Bay in three separate company groups, at different times, in H.M.S. *Echo*, *Belvoir* and a minesweeper. These companies went into separate actions and the battalion never fought as a whole.

Towards the end of the 12th Tilney had considered concentrating his whole force or moving the whole of the King's Own from the southern to the central sector. However he thought it unsound to bring the Buffs southwards, and so to abandon the northern beaches, his air supply-dropping zone, and some dumps of stores. Moreover the Buffs seemed to be doing well. Tilney decided to move the King's Own but the turn of events was to prevent him from carrying out his intention. His original plan in fact committed him to fighting dispersed, and with no Force reserve sufficiently strong to influence the battle. A rough analysis shows that in four days eleven attacks were carried out by his orders. One was of three-company strength, two of two-company strength, six of single company strength, two of two platoons or less. Two of these attacks won local successes, five part-successes, and four failed.

During 13th November the German Western Group and the follow-up battalion came ashore below Mt. Clidi and in Pandeli Bay, and some more parachutists dropped. During the night 12th/13th the *Faulknor*, *Beaufort*, and *Pindos* had bombarded Mt. Clidi, and on the evening of the 13th 'B' Company of the Buffs recaptured most of it. 'C' and 'D' Companies of the Buffs, striking south, made some ground towards the Alinda-Gurna neck and gained S. Quirico and Germano hill. The main British effort came at 2 a.m. on the 14th—an attempt by two companies of the King's Own from the southern sector, guided by Colonel French and others of the Royal Irish Fusiliers who knew the ground, to re-take Appetici. This attack, in part successful, ebbed in the face of counter-attacks during which French was killed. During these the *Echo* and *Belvoir* bombarded the peninsula. Later on the 14th Tilney attempted to regain the Rachi ridge, attacking northwards from the direction of Leros village with two companies of the King's Own and one of the Royal Irish Fusiliers. His plan was to join hands with the Buffs further north who were holding their own, but the Germans on the vital ridge could not be dislodged, and the plan failed.

The next plan, for the 15th, was that a company of the Royal West Kents, followed by the King's Own, would attack generally

northwards to meet the Buffs striking southwards. During the night 14th/15th the Royal Air Force dropped ammunition and supplies, and at dawn on the 15th the *Echo* sank three landing-craft filled with Germans off Alinda Bay. On the 15th, however, the attack had no success, apart from local gains here and there. Breakdowns in communications were again a cause of failures in co-operation. On the 16th Tilney once again made very great efforts to unite scattered units in clearing the Rachi-Meraviglia ridge and in securing a corridor on the shore of Alinda Bay. But communications had almost collapsed and the day passed in sporadic attacks and growing confusion, for which none could be blamed. The weary troops fought as best they could, doggedly, and without success. Then during the afternoon von Saldern's Battle Group, now reinforced by 3rd/1st Regiment of the Brandenburg Division, made a sudden stroke from the direction of Appetici, overran and captured Tilney and his headquarters on Meraviglia hill. This was in effect the end for Tilney realized that to prolong resistance was to sacrifice men uselessly. There were no reinforcements in sight other than the Greek Sacred Squadron on Samos. In Cairo Wilson had in fact just arranged an evacuation by caiques for the night 16th/17th but no executive order reached Leros, and even if it had, the chances of success were negligible since the German air force controlled the air. At 5 p.m. Leros surrendered.

The sequel was not long delayed. On the 18th the Cs.-in-C. in Middle East ordered all troops to be withdrawn from the Aegean, except for a small garrison on Castelrosso. Caiques accomplished the withdrawal on the nights 19th/20th, 20th/21st, and 22nd/23rd November. Less than a hundred men escaped from Leros, some with Lieutenant-Commander Ramseyer R.N.V.R. in a caique, and others in other craft. German casualties amounted to 1,109 men, five motor ferry barges, a Siebel ferry, and five assault craft lost, and four damaged.¹ Hitler sent his forces compliments which they had earned well, but thereafter the Aegean occupied very little German attention except as a rather annoying competitor for scarce shipping to maintain the island garrisons.

The British lost a dangerous gamble in their Aegean operations. The forfeits were twenty-six naval vessels, 113 aircraft, and on land some 4,800 men. The Germans, between late September and the middle of November, lost 35,000 tons of merchant shipping and 21 war vessels, mostly small, in the Aegean Sea. 92 German aircraft were destroyed by Allied action, and 64 did not return from operations. Besides the 1,184 Germans who fell on Leros and on Cos, a number, how many we do not know, perished at sea.

¹ 15 vessels lost or damaged from a total of 44 or 45 used.

Until 10th October the Prime Minister used all his powers to further an aggressive and expansive policy in the Aegean. On that date he committed the decision whether to hold or abandon Leros to the men on the spot, but on no occasion thereafter did he give any directions to indicate that he doubted whether his original policy was the right one. The President and the United States Chiefs of Staff based their views upon the decisions taken by the Allies at Washington and Quebec. They held consistently that no diversion of force should be made from Italy that would jeopardize the security of the allied armies there, and that no action towards any minor objective should prejudice the success of Overlord. Operations in the Aegean were a minor objective in their eyes. The British Chiefs of Staff never opposed an aggressive and expansive policy in the Aegean although on several occasions they fairly represented its risks to Mr. Churchill. Their directions to the Cs.-in-C. Middle East can be epitomized as 'Do all that you can. We will do all that we can to help.' Eisenhower and his principal commanders on 9th October expressed unambiguously their conclusion that they must concentrate solely on the Italian campaign. The Middle East commanders, or their representatives, who attended the conference at La Marsa concurred in this conclusion. The Commanders-in-Chief Middle East did their loyal best to carry out the directions which they received in the spirit of the exhortations which they received also. They pointed out several times the risks that they were running and stated the reinforcements which they believed necessary to enable them to overcome the risks. But they never, as a body, recommended that operations should be abandoned, a course that was open to them after 10th October.

We look back, then, on a period when nothing was clear-cut in the field of policy. The Prime Minister's 'Good. This is a time to play high. Improvise and dare' is as good a description of the atmosphere as may be found. Yet some of the circumstances of 1943 may explain why risky policies, full of incalculable factors, were adopted and persisted in. The year had brought astonishing successes in the Mediterranean theatre: first the destruction of the Axis forces in Africa, then the capture of Sicily, then the breaking of the Berlin-Rome Axis, then the early successes of the campaign in Italy. These events gave every encouragement to act boldly, and to think that if hopes might be dupes fears surely might be liars. It is a commonplace of military teaching and preaching to recommend boldness, improvisation, and daring, but these qualities as a rule are commended only when they succeed.

None the less the price in terms of men lost on land, in ships, and in aircraft or made captive, must be mourned. The saddest fortune, perhaps, befell the Buffs, the King's Own, and the Royal Irish

Fusiliers. These fine battalions had done their whole duty, which was exacting and monotonous, in Malta under siege. It was cruel that when at last they met the enemy in the field their fate should be captivity. The Durham Light Infantry, who met this fate on Cos, could at least look back to a happier war in the Western Desert and in Syria. The officers and men of all three Services in the Aegean deserve their laurels, won not by victory but by faithful obedience to orders.

(ii)

See Maps 12 and 22

We turn now to the general maritime war in the Mediterranean and at first to its defensive aspects from the Allied point of view. During the closing months of 1943 the principal task of the Allied maritime forces continued to be to protect the flow of shipping to and from ports in North Africa, Italy and the Middle East, and the steadily increasing number of ships passing through the Mediterranean. This number during November exceeded for the first time the number of those sailing in convoy in the Atlantic.

If we take into account the great volume of Allied shipping, losses from enemy action in the last two months of 1943 were small: 67,846 G.R.T. in November and 83,480 G.R.T. in December. Aircraft accounted for 58,047 of the November and 75,471 of the December tonnage. Both figures were weighted by exceptional happenings: in November by the loss from torpedo-bomber attack of the 19,335-ton Dutch *Marnix van St Aldegonde*, and in December by the air raid on Bari on the 2nd/3rd (described on a later page) in which were sunk all but one of the ships lost from air attack during that month. The successful torpedo-bomber attack on the big Dutchman off the Algerian coast was followed by others during November, which will be described later.

U-boats were more successful in sinking warships than in sinking merchant ships. At the beginning of November there were thirteen U-boats in the Mediterranean of which as a rule about nine were based on Toulon, and the remainder at Pola and Salamis. Their activities were reduced by a heavy air raid on Toulon on 24th November which damaged five. Such successes as they had came either from mine-laying or from a new acoustic, homing torpedo, the Gnat.¹ Mines laid by *U.453* off Brindisi and Bari caused the loss of the destroyer *Quail* on 15th November and of the minesweeper *Hebe* a week later. *U.407* torpedoed the cruiser *Birmingham* off the hump of Cyrenaica on the 28th November, but the ship reached

¹ The counter to the 'Gnat' was a noise-making apparatus towed astern and known as a 'Foxyer'.

Alexandria under her own power. The destroyers *Tynedale* and *Holcombe* were sunk on the 11th and 12th December and the frigate *Cuckmere* was seriously damaged on 11th December by acoustic torpedoes fired by *U.593* north of Djidjelli. On 13th December this U-boat became the first victim of a new method of combined search by surface vessels and aircraft. When a submarine had been detected the air above was 'saturated' or 'swamped' by aircraft, and the submarine was thus forced to remain submerged until anti-submarine craft could gain or regain contact and make a kill. This method also sank *U.73* three days later off Oran. Air Vice-Marshal Sir Hugh Lloyd (Northwest African Coastal Air Force) would have preferred to use 'Swamp', the name of the method, rather than air escort to protect all except the most important convoys, but shortage of aircraft prevented this development. An earlier joint success by the Navy and Wellingtons, equipped with Leigh Lights, of No. 179 Squadron R.A.F. from Gibraltar, was sinking *U.340* in the straits on 1st/2nd November. Three U-boats, however, passed into the Mediterranean during November and December, and the total at the year's end in that sea thus stood at thirteen boats.

If we return to German air attacks on Allied convoys we find three in November, all off the Algerian coast, which were successful. The first was against the KMF 25A convoy off Cape Bugarin at dusk on 6th November in weather which ruled out effective fighter protection. Thirty-five enemy aircraft attacked in four waves, and while *Do. 217s* harmlessly released *HS. 293* glider bombs, *He. 111s* dropped torpedoes which sank a destroyer and two transports. The naval gunners shot down five aircraft and another failed to return to base. On 11th November 48 German aircraft attacked the east-bound convoy KMS 31 off Bougie. Ground radar did not work well and six *Airacobras*, and two *Beaufighters* equipped with A.I., which were covering the convoy failed to make any interceptions during the raid. Three transports were sunk by torpedoes. The naval gunners shot down three enemy aircraft, and a *Beaufighter* chased and destroyed another on its way home while two others failed to return to base. On the 26th November the east-bound convoy KMF 26 was attacked at 4.40 p.m. off Bougie by a mixed force of enemy aircraft including *Do. 217s*, a few *Ju. 88s*, a few *F.W. 200s* and some *He. 177s*.¹ Fourteen Fighting French *Spitfires*, four U.S. *Airacobras* and three R.A.F. A.I.-equipped *Beaufighters* were covering the convoy, and another *Beaufighter*, on its way from Sardinia to North Africa, joined in the mêlée. The enemy formations were broken up,

¹ This was the first appearance in the Mediterranean area of the *He. 177* long-range bomber. Its four engines were installed in pairs, each pair driving one airscrew, thus giving the appearance of a twin-engine aircraft, and it was understandably reported as such.

and though the aircraft sank one transport they paid heavily for this small success. The fighters claimed eight, and the naval gunners one, enemy aircraft destroyed. German records show that two He. 111s, two Ju. 88s and six of the new He. 177s failed to return to base, and two long-range reconnaissance Ju. 88s were missing. In December there was only one air attack on an Allied convoy. This was on the 21st when eight Ju. 88s from the South-East, of a force of 32 which set out, found a convoy 140 miles south-east of Malta and sank one merchantman.

German air attacks on ports in November were mainly against Naples. Of the several raids on this port the more important were: on the night of the 5th/6th by 102 German bombers, four of which were destroyed presumably by A.A. gun-fire; on the 9th/10th when about 30 bombers took part and sank one merchantman for the cost of two aircraft destroyed by A.A. gun-fire and three which failed to return to base; and on the 26th/27th from which raid nine German bombers failed to return. There were two attacks against the port at Maddalena, the second of them, on the 24th/25th, coinciding with an attack on Bastia and eleven German bombers failed to return to base that night. There were three enemy raids on Allied ports in December. The first, against Bari on the 2nd/3rd, had devastating effects. A force of 105 German bombers set out and 88 found and attacked the target. Bombing and mine-laying began at 7.30 p.m. and lasted for an hour. Early in the raid a bomb struck an ammunition ship which blew up and set fire to three other ships. One of these also was an ammunition ship which blew up and set fire to the harbour installations and damaged in one way or another the remainder of the shipping in the crowded basins. Seventeen ships of a total gross registered tonnage of approximately 62,000 tons were lost, and 39,000 tons of cargo in 14 of them destroyed. 7,500 tons of cargo were salvaged from the remaining three. Six other ships were damaged, the bulk petrol pipeline pierced, and heavy casualties caused mostly among Allied seamen and soldiers, and among civilians. The enemy aircraft used 'Window' and succeeded in foiling the four Beaufighters which attempted to intercept. Two Ju. 88s were shot down by A.A. gun-fire. A later enquiry revealed that besides the enemy's successful use of 'Window' a contributory cause of his success had been the discounting at Bari of his ability to stage a large-scale raid. The great risk run in working the port to capacity was not appreciated, the co-ordination of air defences was poor, and the exposure of coast defence searchlights to frustrate enemy mine-laying was a highly dangerous practice. Not until the 23rd was the port restored to its former capacity. A second raid on Bari took place on 13th/14th, beginning at 6.28 p.m. This time the South-East supplied the force of 21 Ju. 88s, based in Greece, which used

airfields in Yugoslavia as staging posts. No serious damage was done and two Ju. 88s were destroyed by A.A. gun-fire. On the last night of the year 17 Ju. 88s, also from the South-East, attacked the port at Augusta in Sicily and a single aircraft the port at Catania. Little damage was done and four more Ju. 88s were destroyed by A.A. gun-fire.

In the raids on Allied convoys and ports just described the Germans lost 61 aircraft, 23 of which were destroyed and 38 which failed to return to base. A remarkable feature concerning those known to have been destroyed is that 22 were destroyed by A.A. gun-fire.

Notwithstanding the devastation in the port of Bari, German attempts to interfere with the sea routes which maintained the Allied forces in Italy had very little effect on the campaign. Far more serious were the handicaps imposed by the Allies' own local shortage of coasters and craft to carry requirements from North Africa and Sicily to ports in the Bay of Naples and on the east coast of Italy. This shortage was one of the reasons which led to incessant demands for the administrative services of the L.S.T., those maids of all work which have so often appeared in our narrative as objects of contention because they were so desirable for so many purposes. In November these assault-ships made 97 trips, and in December 79, disembarking cargoes mainly in satellite ports in the Gulf of Naples. All types of ships and craft discharged in Naples itself, during November, 224,600 tons of general cargo and 14,350 vehicles; and during December 313,750 tons and 18,360 vehicles. In the satellite ports the figures were 84,000 tons and 7,840 vehicles, and in December 89,340 tons and 5,230 vehicles. An interesting, if very rough and ready comparison of administrative growths can be seen if we tabulate the figures for Naples, a single though main Italian port, at the beginning of the campaign, and those of (a) a group of North African ports, (b) a single port during the height of the campaign in Africa:

		<i>Tons</i>	
Naples	November 1943	244,600	
	December 1943	313,750	
(a) Algiers	}		
Bougie		March 1943	385,000
Philippeville		April 1943	426,000
Bône			
(b) Tripoli	March 1943	106,000	
	April 1943	109,000	

As a measure of the changed nature of the maritime war it is useful to recall that by November 1943 the Mediterranean had been open to regular through traffic for only six months, and that in November 1942 it had been possible, without being faint-hearted,

to view as temerity the landings of Allied forces inside the Mediterranean at Oran and Algiers.

Attack, like defence, had undergone some change. Whereas from January to May 1943 supplies of the Axis armies in Africa had lain much at the mercy of Allied maritime forces on the sea routes, the German communications in Italy could be strangled only by a grip on roads and railways as well. Yet as before the maritime forces worked in concert. There were the occasional successes of Allied submarines off the French and Italian rivieras, of the destroyers, motor torpedo-boats, P.T. boats, and aircraft off the coast of Tuscany and on both coasts within the Adriatic. Ahead of the armies aircraft of all types were tightening the grip by destroying roads and railways and the traffic on them in Italy and in Alpine passes and beyond. The warships which operated against the German lines of communication were of course also at call to support the Allied armies.

On the west or Tyrrhenian coast of Italy destroyers, usually of the 24th Flotilla, were called upon to bombard targets at or near the mouth of the Garigliano on several occasions. On the night of the 12th/13th December a feint landing was staged with the object of diverting attention from 5th Army's thrust towards Cassino. This feint seems to have had little effect on the enemy, but on 29th/30th December a flurry was caused when, after the area had been cleared of mines, 9th Commando was put ashore some two miles north of the mouth of the Garigliano in a subsidiary operation. From their bases at Maddalena and Bastia, British M.T.B.s and American P.T. boats were at sea, whenever weather permitted, hunting for targets on the coast of Tuscany between Leghorn and the Giglio Islands. Among their successes were a 5,000-ton ammunition ship and a 4,000-ton tanker.

On the Adriatic coast of Italy destroyers of the 4th Flotilla bombarded or made feint landings at 8th Army's request and attacked German coastal traffic, which on this coast consisted of smaller fry. A number of Siebel ferries, F-lighters and schooners were sunk or damaged. Coastal towns, roads and bridges were periodically bombarded to block the German coastal supply route.

On the Dalmatian coast the destroyers *Quilliam* and *Quail*, by the light of flares dropped from aircraft, bombarded Durazzo harbour on the night of 2nd/3rd November, and on the 9th *Quilliam* and *Raider* blew up a petrol and ammunition carrier south of Valona and drove two escorting E-boats ashore. On 30th November/1st December 84 shells were fired into Durazzo and Dubrovnik which had been illuminated with starshell, although no suitable targets were disclosed. On 18th/19th December a Siebel ferry was blown up

and two German schooners captured. The most important success came four nights later when M.T.B.s 298 and 226 scored hits with three out of four torpedoes and disposed of the former Yugoslavian cruiser *Dalmacija* (originally the German *Niobe*) which had run aground near Silba Island. Besides their continuous patrols, M.T.B.s bombarded Dalmatian coast towns in the hope of diverting attention while Partisan forces were being landed elsewhere on the mainland coast of Yugoslavia after they had been obliged to evacuate Korcula and other islands. It was a type of warfare, usually waged at high speed, in which the young men who manned the coastal craft were in their element: a war of hair-raising navigation through narrow channels; sudden sightings of darkened ships of unknown identity; approaches to shores which might have just changed from friend to foe or vice versa. In fact, a gorgeous life, with sudden death, risked or suffered, as a sombre background to violent colour.

If a great deal of activity by destroyers and coastal craft resulted in only small returns this, at this time, was even truer of Allied submarines. Patrols in the Adriatic and off the Tuscan coast, where so many of our surface craft and aircraft were operating, were no longer practicable for that reason and so the submarines turned to the waters off southern France and in the Aegean. Targets were few and weather bad. Among the more notable successes was *Torbay's* sinking, on 22nd November, of a valuable, 15,000-ton, floating dock on tow from Volos to Salonika. On 6th December, *Uproar* torpedoed the 11,720-ton liner *Vergilio* off the French coast near Cannes¹ and, for contrast in size, eight days later, *Untiring*, with a persistence worthy of her name, stalked what she suspected correctly to be a small minelayer. When her quarry entered the tiny harbour of Monaco and berthed alongside a quay the clearance through the harbour entrance at 500 yards was only two degrees, but *Untiring's* torpedo blew up not only minelayer and mines but several large trees on the nearby Boulevard Albert Premier.

Aircraft of the Tactical, and later the Coastal, Air Forces flying along the Italian seaboard, and bent like their naval comrades on interfering in every possible way with the German supply lines, soon found that it was a war against small ships and small ports. Success in evacuating Sardinia and Corsica had strengthened the German belief in the advantages of small ships when faced with superior enemy forces. And small ships enabled supplies to be spread over a number of small ports. Hence, on the Adriatic side, harbours like Giulianova and S. Benedetto which also had the advantage of being nearer the front line, were used in preference to Ancona. The effect of these operations was that the greater the success of Allied inter-

¹ Subsequently scuttled in Toulon.

ference with German rail and road traffic the more important to the enemy became supply by sea. The smallness of the targets required the Allied aircraft to be re-armed with rockets instead of torpedoes. The hazards of a difficult task were increased by diminishing daylight, winter weather and strengthened anti-aircraft defences.

Seven German ships of over 500 G.R.T. were sunk by Allied aircraft during November and December, six in port and one at sea. In November the largest was the S.S. *Ramb III* (3,667 tons) sunk on the 5th at sea by Beaufighters of No. 39 Squadron with torpedo and cannon. Another success of that month, this time in port, was the sinking on the 18th of the S.S. *Balcic* (3,494 tons) by U.S. Kittyhawks of the Desert Air Force at Sibenik in Yugoslavia. Of the two ships lost to the enemy by air attack in December, the largest was the S.S. *Mar Bianco* (8,446 tons) reduced to a total loss, while at anchor off Zara in Yugoslavia, by U.S. Mitchell and R.A.F. Boston bombing attacks on several dates culminating on the 30th. Since the number, and size of enemy ships to be found and attacked had grown much smaller the destruction of the S.S. *Mar Bianco* was a noteworthy success.

There was a great increase in the bombing of enemy ports by aircraft of N.A.A.F. during November and December, as compared with the previous two months. Of nearly 1,500 sorties flown by N.A.A.F. against ports, almost 700 were against those in Italy, well over 500 against those in Yugoslavia, some 220 against Toulon and Marseilles in France, and a few against ports in Albania and Greece. Only the heavy bombers were used against the French ports. In addition to the raids described in the foregoing paragraph there were others which resulted in considerable destruction and damage on the evidence of German records. The most devastating were the raids on two French ports. On 24th November the naval base at Toulon was attacked by 103 Fortresses which dropped 281 tons of bombs. Subsequent air reconnaissance confirmed that 17 vessels including a cruiser, destroyer and torpedo boat, were sunk and that five submarines were damaged. The other heavy raid was by 118 Fortresses on a U-boat shelter which was being built at Marseilles. Here seepage from direct hits caused much delay and it is doubtful if the shelter was ever brought into use. In Italy Civitavecchia suffered considerably from repeated attacks. To mention a few which caused verified destruction and damage at this place: on the night of the 13th/14th November eight Bostons set fire to the S.S. *Lorenz L. M. Russ* (1,448 tons) which eventually sank, sank two patrol boats and damaged port installations; on 21st November and 7th and 8th December Marauders and Mitchells progressively extended the damage; on the 10th Mustangs so damaged the railway station that repairs were not expected to be complete until 1st January 1944, and

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in another attack on the 28th the Mustangs sank a minesweeper. Ancona suffered heavily, too: on 1st November 36 Mitchells from the Tactical Bomber Force caused much damage to the town and rail and harbour installations and virtually destroyed the docks; next day the Mitchells of the Strategic Air Force sank the ex-Italian cruiser *Augusto* and forced the S.S. *Savoya* to run aground.¹ S. Stefano was another of the targets bombed by Fortresses. On 8th December 21 of them attacked the port, sinking two motor vessels and five barges, badly damaging harbour installations and blocking the harbour. Piraeus in Greece was also one of the Fortresses' targets. On 14th December 27 of these aircraft damaged the jetty and fuel tanks and sank three motor vessels and a coal-lighter. Of those ports in Yugoslavia which were much attacked German records give the results of three raids on Zara: on 28th November when 24 Mitchells sank three ships including the minesweeper *Cigno*; on 16th December when the port and radio station were badly damaged by 51 Mitchells and the S.S. *Mar Bianco* received its first battering; and on the 30th when 24 Mitchells badly damaged several vessels, destroyed telephone communications and blocked all access roads. All these Mitchells were from the Tactical Bomber Force. Sibenik also suffered heavily. German records show that when on 3rd December 48 Mitchells attacked the port they caused widespread devastation, the jetty and arsenal being destroyed, and several naval and other boats sunk. It is probable that a small force of Bostons which followed up the attack that night contributed to these results. During the mission against Sibenik on the 3rd December the same Mitchells sank the M.S. *Giovannini* (carrying fuel), a Siebel ferry, and a harbour defence vessel in convoy 15 miles west of Split. Split itself was raided several times, and on 1st November 24 Bostons and Baltimores of No. 3 (S.A.A.F.) Wing caused considerable damage to the port and sank the S.S. *Marco* (1,487 tons). A feature of the attacks on ports in Yugoslavia was the contribution made by the fighter-bombers of the Tactical and Coastal Air Forces, whose fighters also did considerable strafing of targets of opportunity, not least the radar stations. Ports in Albania were also plagued by these dagger thrusts, which came in at high speed from sea level and by the time the dust had settled the aircraft were nowhere to be seen.

The sorties flown by Mediterranean Air Command during November and December in finding and attacking ships, including submarines, at sea and in attacking ports are given in the table at the end of this chapter.

The total effort by M.E.A.C. against ports in Crete, Greece and the Aegean during November amounted to no more than 55 sorties. In December the figure rose to 85 sorties mainly against ports in Crete.

¹ Full name *Ottaviano Augusto* (3,362 tons).

As regards repairing the damage caused by Allied air attacks on Balkan ports, the Germans suffered the same handicap as they had in Tunisia. Continuing air attacks created chains of difficulties in making good physical damage and restoring capacity with a native labour force which became more and more frightened. For example, on 18th November after the fighter-bombers had raided Sibenik and damaged the S.S. *Milano* and S.S. *Rennella*, the efforts of the port workers were recorded as 'practically nil'.

Joint efforts by the Allied maritime forces during November and December greatly harassed the German naval commands in Italy and the Adriatic, and caused the volume of military supplies carried along Italy's eastern coast to fall well below requirements during December. Moreover many of the very useful Siebel ferries were sunk or damaged, and a shortage of mines and minesweepers hampered German offensive and defensive measures among the narrow channels off the Dalmatian coast.¹ Only five motor minesweepers had reached Venice via the river Po by Christmas.

Losses of German and German-controlled merchant-ships of 500 G.R.T. and over during November and December 1943

Month	Surface	Submarine	Air	Other	Total
November	2—3,034	3—20,750*	5—13,183	4— 6,701	14—43,668
December	—	5—21,688	2— 9,436	3— 6,943	10—38,067
Total	2—3,034	8—42,438	7—22,619	7—13,644	24—81,735

* Includes a Floating Dock of 15,000 tons.

(iii)

Our short summary of Balkan affairs in Chapter XI dealt with Yugoslavia; its two parties—Mihailovic's Serbian Cetniks and Tito's Partisans—which fought the Germans and each other; and the growing concern of the Germans which led them to launch their so-called Sixth Offensive against the Partisans. We touched on the activities of the British emissaries to this 'resistance', Major Deakin, Brigadier Maclean, and Colonel Armstrong, and the minor help which was all that could be provided through the S.O.E. organization in Cairo. We must now continue the summary.

The directive for the South-East which was issued by Keitel on

¹ Siebel Ferry. 137—170 tons, 7½ knots. For transport and landing of troops and equipment; minelaying. Armament—one 4-cm A.A., one 2-cm A.A. twin, two rocket dischargers.

6th October, and to which we have already referred in connection with the Aegean, also embodied Hitler's decree that the whole area was to be defended, whether against attack by the Allies or internal convulsions. On November 1st *O.B. Südost*, von Weichs, gave *OKW* his opinion that 'Our most dangerous enemy is Tito,' that the 'resistance' was to be treated as an enemy in the full sense and not as the activity of mere insurgents, and that to quell it was more important than to take measures to repel Allied attacks which he did not believe to be likely. On 10th November *OKW* agreed that the Allies were unlikely in the near future to launch a major assault on the Balkans from the Adriatic. They already believed that Tito was trying to extend his influence into Serbia and Greece. Hitler so far agreed with his advisers as to authorize von Weichs to devote a large part of his ground forces to quelling the Partisans. From these deliberations there emerged a pattern of German affairs in the Mediterranean which was that operations in Italy and in the South-East proceeded independently and were not subjected to a unifying control. The Germans sensed the strategic disadvantages of this state of affairs, and it is curious that it should have occurred at a time when the Allies, as the fourth section of this chapter tells, were on the point of setting up a single high command in the Mediterranean theatre to secure unified control. The next feature in the German pattern was that their ground forces in the South-East became absorbed in operations against the Partisans, and in exacting and uneasy garrison duties. This commitment aggravated the problem of finding reinforcements for Germany's other theatres of war, and as a third feature the shortage of coastal shipping was made all the more pinching by the need to occupy, garrison and supply the islands and mainland of the Dalmatian coast.

The German offensive against the Partisans expanded to occupy about five or six German and three satellite divisions. The main offensive consisted of two phases—a preliminary six-week campaign in outlying areas of Slovenia and Macedonia, followed by main operations in the mountains, which began at the end of November. The chief aim of the offensive appeared to be to contain the Partisans in Bosnia and at all costs to prevent them making contact with their forces in Serbia. By the end of the year all key points on the Adriatic coast had been captured by the Germans and the islands had been picked off one by one, leaving only Lagosta and Vis in Partisan hands. In December the main area of fighting moved to Eastern Bosnia and in January 1944 the campaign ended with a final drive against the Partisans in Central Bosnia.

Throughout this offensive the Partisan forces were continuously harried by the Germans, and suffered greatly from shortages of food, clothing, arms and equipment. Yet although many Partisans

were killed or captured, the Germans gained no settled results. The coastal regions and the islands were again in German hands, and the main L. of C. secured, and with that they had to be content. von Weichs announced there would be no relaxation. He intended to harry the Partisans uninterruptedly through the winter in order to cut them off from their supply bases and thus eventually to wipe them out. But the Partisans were masters of the mountainous areas of the country, and in March Maclean told the Prime Minister 'The recent 6th Offensive failed in its object and only enabled the Partisans to capture further quantities of arms and equipment. It seems unlikely that any future German offensive will prove much more successful, for by undertaking any large-scale deployment of their forces, they expose themselves to Partisan raids and ambushes, while in the face of any frontal attack the Partisans withdraw into the woods and mountains, only to reappear in force elsewhere.'

Almost no material help from the Allies reached the Partisans during the four months of the Sixth Offensive. S.O.E. had 32 aircraft for work in the Balkans during the last quarter of 1943, but only 125 tons of supplies were dropped into Yugoslavia during this period. Bad weather and the consequent difficulties of navigation were the chief causes of failure to supply 350 tons a month, which was the aim. Supply by sea was greatly handicapped when the Germans regained control of the Dalmatian coast, and Partisan forces which were near the sea were more interested in guerrilla warfare than in administration. Accurate information of where it was best to land supplies for distribution inland was hard to come by, and though 2,050 tons of supplies were sent to Yugoslavia by sea between October and December, very little reached the Partisans in the interior. The Partisans managed nevertheless to hold out. Their Cetnik rivals showed little activity, and Colonel Armstrong was convinced that Mihailovic thought only of how to overcome the Partisans. An attempt in December to encourage him to attack railway bridges resulted in nothing being done, and the British missions to him were then recalled. In November Tito summoned a political congress of his movement at which it was decided to forbid King Peter to return to the country until after the liberation. The Yugoslav Royal Government in Cairo was formally deprived of all its rights.

No mention has been made in this history so far of resistance movements in Greece. Here a British mission had arrived in October 1942 but for some time it proved impossible to control the quarrels and independent activities of the various guerrilla bands. The principal rivals, the left-wing *Elas* and the Republican *Edes*,

commanded by General Zervas, engaged in constant fights. At length, in July, a National Band Agreement was drawn up to divide the whole country into area commands and to control all guerrilla activities under a G.H.Q. Under this co-ordinated command widespread and successful attacks on Axis communications were made before and after the invasion of Sicily, but when the Allies invaded Italy the Greeks realized that the liberation of Greece would not be immediately attempted. They relapsed into civil war in which *Elas* sought to destroy all other bands so that they might ultimately claim to be the sole liberators of Greece. During this civil strife no more supplies were sent to *Elas*, but *Zervas*, the Allies' most loyal ally, was kept supplied. By 19th December both parties were exhausted and ready to come to terms and after an appeal by *M. Tsouderos*, the Prime Minister, negotiations to renew the National Band Agreement were begun.

(iv)

In November and December 1943 the highest Allied leaders met in conference at Cairo, then in Teheran, and again in Cairo. *Mr. Ehrman* has fully described the circumstances, deliberations, and decisions of these conferences in his volume, the fifth of the 'Grand Strategy' series.¹ There is therefore no need for us to cover much of the same ground. It will be enough if we make clear who of the principal personages took part in each conference, and the general matters discussed at each, and if then we summarize the decisions which applied to the Mediterranean and Middle East theatre. At the first conference the problems were considered, at the second decisions were taken, and at the third details were reconsidered.

The first conference (Sextant) began at Cairo on 22nd November and continued until the 26th.² The main participants were the President, the Prime Minister, Generalissimo *Chiang Kai-shek* from China, and the U.S. and British Chiefs of Staff. The U.S. and British Chiefs of Staff followed the established practice of meeting separately in their national committees to discuss business and to advise separately their respective chiefs the President and Prime Minister, and of meeting together as the Combined Chiefs of Staff to deliberate as Allies and to advise the President and Prime Minister sitting together. The Chinese were invited in when business required their presence. The main general subjects discussed at this conference were the over-all objective and strategic concept of the war, and its basic undertakings; operations in South-East Asia; and *Overlord* and the Mediterranean. At this conference no great decisions were taken.

¹ H.M.S.O. 1956. See Chapters II and IV, which we follow.

² Some administrative details are in the appendix to this chapter.

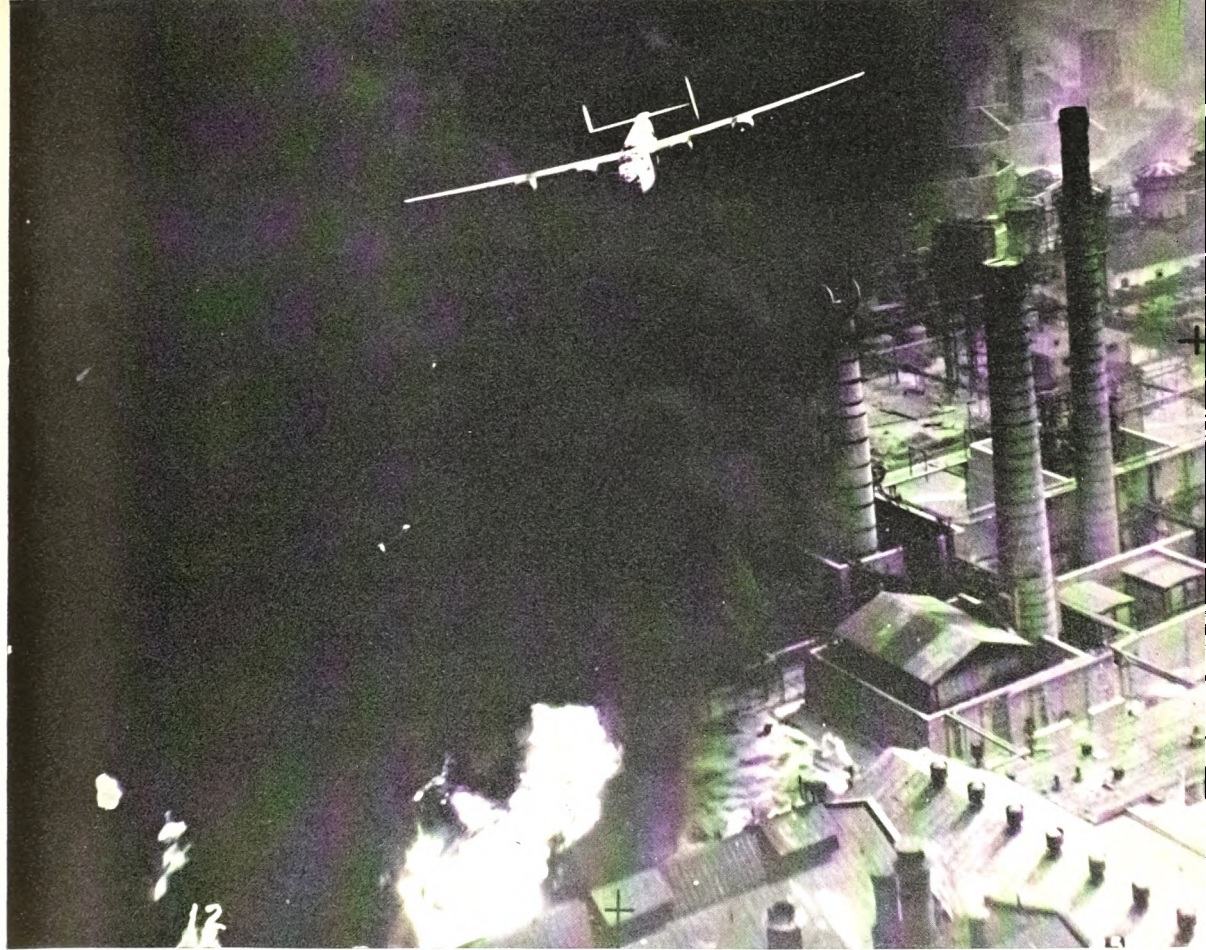
The reason was that the epoch-making meeting between the President, the Prime Minister, and Marshal Stalin lay ahead, and if that conference was to bear acceptable fruits it was impossible for the Americans and British to do anything that might justify even a suspicion in the Russians' minds that they were 'ganging up' beforehand. This principle was especially dear to Roosevelt for, to quote Ehrman, 'While the Prime Minister had first sustained the correspondence with Stalin for a meeting, Roosevelt may be regarded, in a particular sense as its sponsor, "Eureka" [i.e. the meeting] to him was indeed of crucial importance, for it provided the greatest challenge and the greatest opportunity that had yet faced the foreign policy of the United States, in its transition from isolationism to an active intervention in world affairs.' Roosevelt therefore was determined that the meeting should succeed and believed himself to be the agent of success. The Americans and the British then laboured in Cairo chiefly to become clear upon the points on which they agreed and on which they differed. The result was a little surprising because it seemed that the Americans might accept British strategy for Europe if the British would accept American strategy for South-East Asia. The two sets of strategic proposals were, in a nutshell, as follows. British: in Italy to press on to Rome; to gain control of the Aegean; to bring Turkey into the war; to supply equipment to the Partisans in Yugoslavia; to prepare strenuously for Overlord in 1944 but not to ordain a date on which to launch it to which every other project must bow. American: a sea-borne expedition to capture the Andaman Islands as a preliminary to ambitious operations in northern Burma. The reason why these strategies, apart from their merits as strategies, had to be fitted together was chiefly the workaday, everlasting puzzle of how to find assault ships and craft for operations world-wide in space but close together in time. There was too a factor which quietly became known. The President had promised Chiang Kai-shek that the operation in South-East Asia would be carried out.

The second conference was at Teheran and lasted from 28th November to 1st December. The principal personages at this meeting were the President, the Prime Minister, and the American and British Chiefs of Staff; Marshal Stalin, Marshal Voroshilov, and Mr. Molotov. The Chinese did not attend. The appearance outside Russia of the mighty Georgian despot of a triumphant Revolution was almost a portent. For even sophisticated Western observers were still a little dumbfounded at the appearance which Russia at war presented. It was so unlike a quarter-century's picturings of that country as one filled with backward sans-culottes. The President's tabernacle, by what seems now an ironical whim of Security, came to rest inside the precincts of the Soviet Embassy.

When this conference ended, again to quote Ehrman, 'the shape of operations in Europe over the next six months had been settled, and the context provided within which their final balance, the detail of their command, and the shape of the operations in South-East Asia could be determined over the following weeks . . .' The Russian say in the deliberations was decisive and Stalin expressed it in three statements which can be summarized. Soviet forces would join in the war against Japan at the moment of Germany's collapse but not earlier. Overlord should take place in May 1944, and should be supported by a landing in the south of France two or three months earlier, or coincident, or a little later, in that descending order of preference. The capture of Rome and other operations in the Mediterranean could only be regarded as diversions. A Commander-in-Chief for Overlord should be appointed at once. The Combined Chiefs of Staff, with these statements in mind and after much discussion with Voroshilov were able to frame military conclusions which were approved by the President, the Prime Minister, and Marshal Stalin. The principal were as follows. Overlord would be launched during May 1944 in conjunction with an operation against Southern France which would be undertaken in as great a strength as the available landing-craft permitted. The Partisans in Yugoslavia should be supported with supplies and equipment to the greatest possible extent, and also by commando operations. It was most desirable, from a military point of view, that Turkey should join the Allies before the end of the year. The military staffs of the three Powers were henceforward to keep in touch as regards the impending operations in Europe.¹ These few and very broad conclusions defined certain problems but, satisfactorily it seems, left others open. For Overlord the phrase 'during May' was more elastic than a date. Operations in Italy and the Aegean did not appear in the conclusions, nor did those in South-East Asia, although the Russian purpose in the war against Japan was now clear.

The third conference was in Cairo between 3rd and 7th December with the same participants as the first, which it continued. The pressure was extreme. There was a very wide difference between coming to certain conclusions at the statesmen's level and transforming these and the others yet to be arrived at, into military realities. Moreover the President was constitutionally obliged to leave Cairo on 7th December to return to execute his Office in the United States. There were two main groups of problems. The first was to settle the distribution of assault shipping between: Overlord and the landings in southern France, two operations which were agreed; and operations in the Aegean which the British desired and

¹ Stalin stated that Soviet forces would launch an offensive at about the same time as Overlord to prevent the Germans from transferring forces from the East to the West.



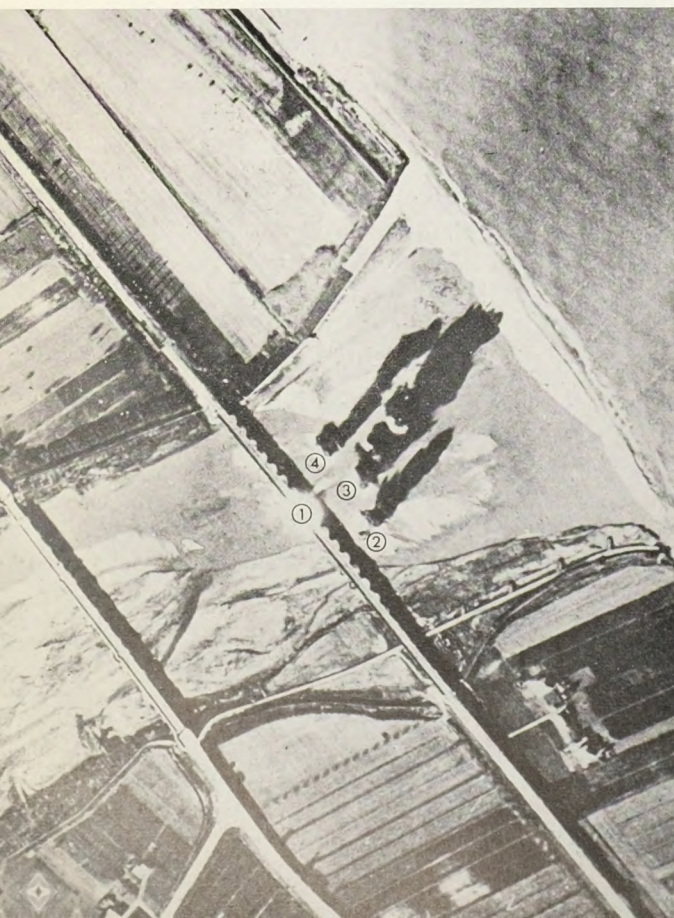
30. Ploesti Oil Refineries. U.S.A.A.F. Liberator emerges from the inferno as it completes its low-level bombing run.



31. R.A.F. Spitfires near Vesuvius.



32. Allied bombers obliterate a runway on an Axis airfield. Sicily.

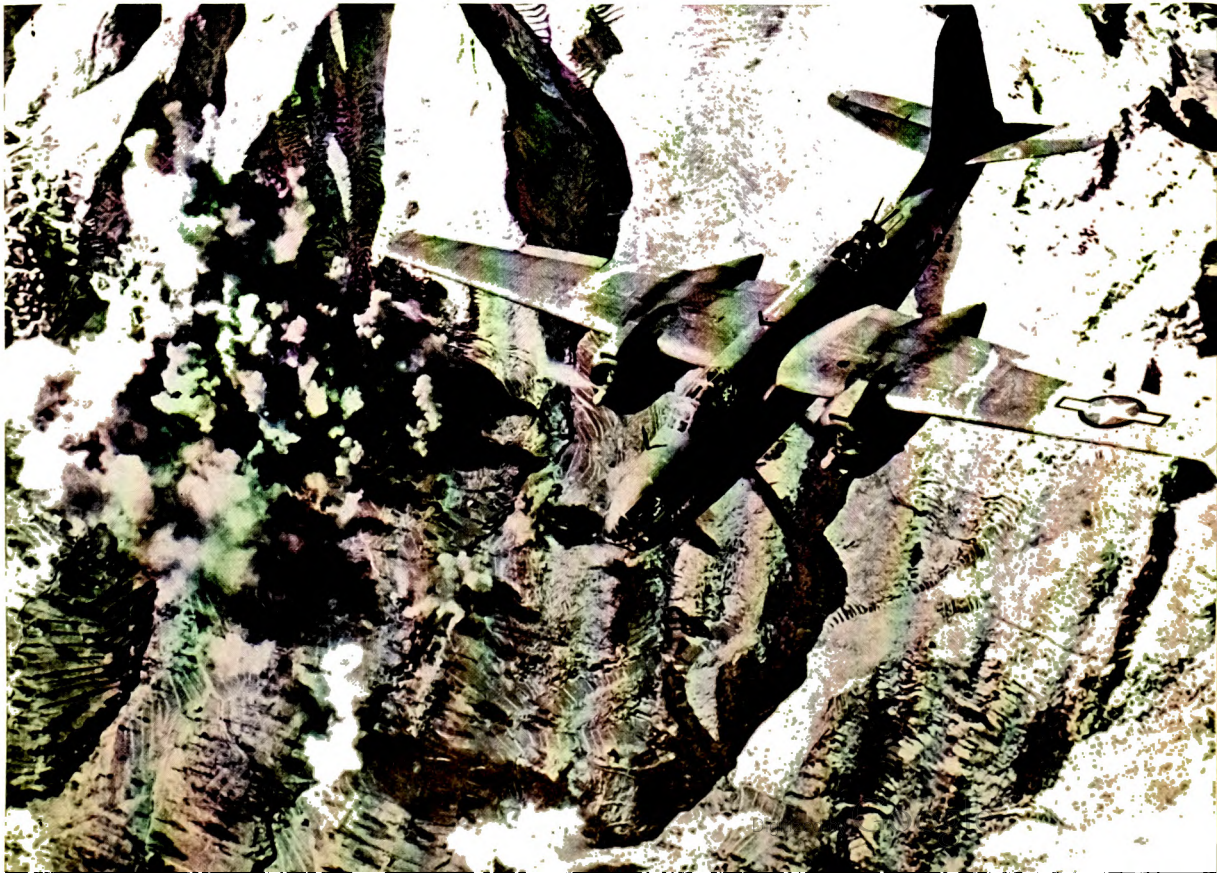


33. Direct hit on railway bridge near Fano by U.S.A.A.F. Marauder medium bombers. (1) Direct hit. (2), (3), (4), near misses. Black shadows cast by smoke and dust of explosions

34. The end of a German ammunition dump near Spezia.



35. U.S.A.A.F. Boston light bomber over Terelle.

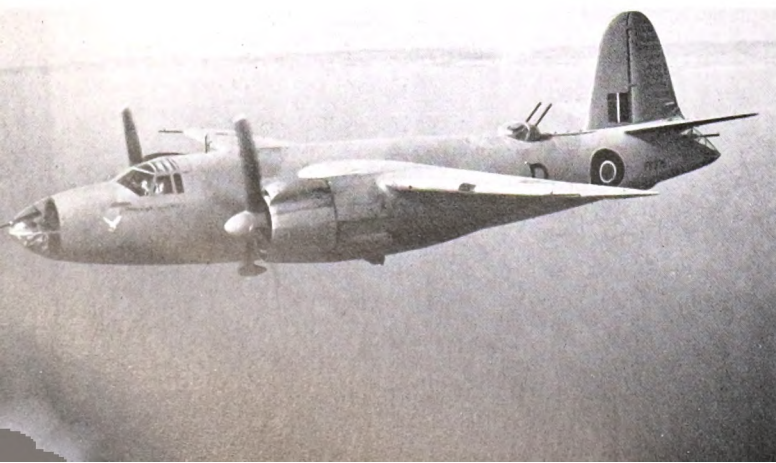




36. R.A.F. Beaufighter
over Malta.



37. R.A.F. Wellington
medium night bomber
taking off.



38. R.A.F. Marauder.

the Americans rather disliked; and operations in South-East Asia which the President had accepted and the British had not. In this group of problems the validity of plans depended upon close calculations of shipping, and these calculations could scarcely be close until valid plans existed upon which to calculate. The Combined Chiefs of Staff addressed themselves to producing eggs and chickens simultaneously. The second group of problems was to settle the organization of high command in Europe, and in the Mediterranean. As regards Europe the Americans canvassed the idea of a Supreme Commander in all operations against Germany. The British resisted this for they believed that such a commander would be either so great a potentate that he would traverse the functions of the Chiefs of Staff, Combined and nationally separate, or would be a dummy. The problem became reduced to the command in Overlord, and here until 6th December Roosevelt was unable to announce a decision which it had been agreed that he should make. It had been expected that Marshall would go to Overlord, Eisenhower to Washington, and a British officer to the Mediterranean. But on the 6th the President announced that Marshall would remain in Washington and Eisenhower would go to Overlord.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff endlessly assembled the pieces of their jig-saw puzzles of operations and assault shipping without being able to produce solutions to which all agreed. At length the President proposed that all should, indeed must, agree to the following proposals in the hope that the means would somehow be created. Nothing was to be allowed to hinder Overlord or the landings in Southern France; assault shipping must be scraped up for Aegean operations if Turkey entered the war; the operations in the Bay of Bengal must go ahead. But Mr. Churchill would not accept the Bay of Bengal unless the assault shipping for Overlord, Southern France, and the Aegean were guaranteed, and Mr. Roosevelt would not give up the Bay of Bengal. Admiral King's gift to Europe of the American output of assault shipping for March 1944 did not ease matters much.¹ But both sets of Chiefs of Staffs now, for the first time officially, pointed out a most compelling military factor. This was that the proposed scale of the assaults in Overlord and Southern France, pared to the bone, fell below a reasonable margin of safety. The President, whether specially impressed by this advice or not we do not know, now acted decisively and magnanimously. He revoked his undertaking to Chiang Kai-shek that an operation would be launched in the Bay of Bengal. The President's decision so greatly eased matters that a series of decisions became possible. The main effort against Japan was to be made in the Pacific. Operations

¹ 25 LST and some 66 landing-craft.

in the Bay of Bengal were to be postponed and the assault shipping allotted to them would be given to Overlord and Southern France, the supreme operations for 1944. The assault in Southern France was to be made at the same time as Overlord, and assault shipping for at least two divisions would be given to it. In Italy the advance should be continued to the Pisa-Rimini line. As regards Turkey and the Aegean a rather intricate set of contingent proposals was agreed. In brief if Turkey seemed disposed to enter the war, specialist units would be infiltrated to prepare airfields and signals systems. On 15th February 1944 Turkey would be asked if she would admit aircraft. If she refused, no more would be said. If she agreed, seventeen squadrons of the Royal Air Force would move in, and the British would attack Rhodes or Cos or Leros in March.¹ The future of operations seemed now to have been decided in a manner that was acceptable to all. Yet, as regards the Mediterranean, the intransigent question of assault shipping was to reappear almost at once as the last section of this chapter tells.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff then proposed, and the President and Prime Minister agreed, to unify the high command in the Mediterranean theatre. The British Chiefs of Staff had been thinking of this measure since September and proposed it to Mr. Churchill on 11th November. The clear advantage was that a single Commander would be able to see the Mediterranean theatre as a geographical whole and to match strategy with resources better than the present Supreme Commander at A.F.H.Q. and his colleagues the Cs.-in-C. in the Middle East. For a time however the U.S. Chiefs of Staff advocated a Supreme Commander for all operations against Germany from the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and for so long the British proposal for the Mediterranean hung fire. Then the idea of a super-Supremo faded before its huge complications, Overlord acquired a Supreme Commander and the Mediterranean a single commander. On Eisenhower's appointment to Overlord, Sir Henry Maitland Wilson was appointed to the Mediterranean, on 27th December 1943, effective from 8th January 1944, under the style Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces, North Africa.²

The directive to the new C.-in-C. was approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 5th December 1943 and was issued to Eisenhower.

¹ Mr. Churchill discussed these proposals with President İnönü, whom he had invited to Cairo, between 4th and 7th December. Diplomatic and military discussions continued thereafter, but Turkey did not see her way to agreeing and the schemes lapsed at the end of January 1944.

² 7th-9th March the titles of the principal commanders in the Mediterranean became: Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theatre (Wilson). Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theatre (Devers). Commander-in-Chief, Allied Armies in Italy (Alexander).

The title of the H.Q. of land forces in Italy changed three times. On 11th January 1944 it became Allied Forces in Italy, on 18th January Allied Central Mediterranean Force, and on 9th March Allied Armies in Italy.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff did not intend to change the existing organization and arrangements more than was necessary to ensure unified command, and they wrote their directive in terms of exceptions to things as they stood. The C.-in-C. was to recommend changes in the light of experience. The C.-in-C. now acquired the added responsibility for operations in:

Greece	Crete
Albania	The Aegean Islands
Yugoslavia	Turkey
Bulgaria	
Rumania	
Hungary	

and for guerrilla and subversive action, including supplies for it, in all territories in his Command. The Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East would be under the orders of the C.-in-C. for operations in all areas except Africa, Palestine, Syria and the Lebanon where they would remain directly responsible to the British Chiefs of Staff. The British Chiefs of Staff would allot British forces, the U.S. Chiefs of Staff U.S. forces, to the C.-in-C., and he was at liberty to transfer these forces from one part of his Command to another to conduct the operations which the Combined Chiefs of Staff had agreed.

The special case of the United States Strategic Air Forces which were operating in the C.-in-C.'s area but not under his command required special provision. The case concerned the air operations of these forces in the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany. For the time being the British Chief of Air Staff was to remain responsible to the Combined Chiefs of Staff for co-ordinating the operations of this offensive, including those of the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force which was situated in the C.-in-C.'s area. The C.-in-C. was to provide U.S. Strategic Air Forces so situated with 'the necessary logistical and administrative support' to perform their part in the Combined Bomber Offensive, which was signified as air operations of the first priority. In a strategical or tactical emergency the C.-in-C. might use the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force 'for purposes other than its primary mission' and he was to inform the Combined Chiefs of Staff of his action.

There remained the question of political guidance for the C.-in-C. which was clearly complex and a little delicate. The Combined Chiefs of Staff did not attempt the question except to say that in respect of the new territories in his Command the C.-in-C. would obtain for the moment political advice from the C.-in-C., Middle East through the channels which that officer used. In fact the C.-in-C. would obtain political advice from Mr. Duff Cooper, Ambassador to the French Committee of National Liberation in Algiers, as regards

French affairs; from Mr. Harold Macmillan, Minister Resident at A.F.H.Q., for all affairs other than French or Turkish; and from Mr. R. G. Casey, Minister of State in the Middle East, for Turkish affairs.

There now followed a whole series of changes among Mediterranean Commanders and Staff Officers. Air Chief Marshal Tedder was to become Deputy Supreme Commander for Overlord and to be succeeded as Commander Mediterranean Allied Air Forces by Lieut.-General Ira C. Eaker, hitherto commanding U.S. Eighth Air Force in England. General Montgomery was to hand over 8th Army to Lieut.-General Sir Oliver Leese, in order to become C.-in-C. of the British 21st Army Group in Overlord, and Air Marshal Coningham was to become A.O.C.-in-C. of Second Tactical Air Force. General Carl Spaatz, commanding Northwest African Air Forces was to command the American strategic air forces in Europe. Lieut.-General Jacob L. Devers was appointed as Deputy Supreme Commander in the Mediterranean and Commander of American forces in that theatre. Major-General Walter Bedell Smith was to continue as Eisenhower's Chief of Staff in Overlord, and to be relieved in the Mediterranean by Lieut.-General James Gammel, who was to be Wilson's Chief of Staff. Wilson himself was relieved as the Commander-in-Chief Middle East land forces by General Sir Bernard Paget. Air Marshal Sir John Slessor would be General Eaker's deputy and Commander of all R.A.F. forces in the Mediterranean and the commanders under Eaker of U.S. Twelfth and Fifteenth Air Forces would be Major-Generals John K. Cannon and Nathan F. Twining.

So far as the Royal Navy was concerned the Levant command was to be abolished and the whole Mediterranean placed under Admiral Sir John Cunningham but with four sub-commands at Gibraltar and Mediterranean Approaches, Western Mediterranean (at Algiers) Central Mediterranean (at Malta) and Levant and Eastern Mediterranean (at Alexandria).

Sir Arthur Tedder's appointment as Deputy Supreme Commander for Overlord ended his three years of most distinguished service in the Middle East and Mediterranean. The saying that 'Still waters run deep' well describes the man and the commander whose unostentatious personality and cool and collected style of command almost disguise his great achievement. This was nothing less than to transform a small air force of some 550 aircraft of the Royal Air Force and its Commonwealth brethren into a great Allied air force of more than 4,650 operational aircraft. The titles of Tedder's appointments indeed are like inscriptions which record his great achievement. In June 1941, after six months as Deputy to Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Longmore, Tedder succeeded him as Air Officer

Commanding-in-Chief, Royal Air Force, Middle East. In February 1943 he became Air Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Air Command, and in December 1943 Air Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Allied Air Forces. Tedder was always a Commander-in-Chief, that is to say that he was not simply an organizer engaged in creating an air force in conditions far removed from war. He was also the commander who daily interested himself in the direction of his air force, as it grew, in continuous operations against the enemy. To balance organization, training, and fighting demanded great knowledge and superb judgment, and Tedder, the brilliant airman, had both.

Tedder possessed in the highest degree a power which is exceedingly rare although its frequent and mistaken attribution to men who pass for great may suggest something commonplace. He was able always to understand what was the heart of any matter and to translate his understanding into words and actions which were simple, convincing, and commanding. When he entered upon high command 'Comparatively few' (the words are his own) 'even in the military professions, appreciated what the advent of air power was to mean . . . to the conduct of war as a whole'. The war which he found in the Middle East and Mediterranean was one in which land, sea, and air power were interlocked and interdependent. Tedder grasped this fact and all its implications but also knew that (his words again) 'Air warfare cannot be separated into little packets; it knows no boundaries on land or sea other than those imposed by the radius of action of the aircraft; it is a unity and demands unity of command.' He believed that air power was extraordinarily flexible and that therefore air forces must be flexible and mobile if they were to concentrate at the right time, in the right area, and for the right purpose. These truths are not the whole heart of the matter of air warfare but are sufficient to illustrate Tedder's convictions. He had to uphold these on three particularly important occasions.

In the Middle East and Mediterranean in mid-1941 several naval and army commanders were not satisfied with the actions of the air forces. If they saw no aircraft over their heads they believed themselves to be unprotected from the enemy's air force; they did not understand what the air force was doing when it operated out of their sight; they demanded its support in mistaken and useless ways. They argued that their forces should contain air components permanently under their operational control. Again, in mid-1942 when the land forces were divided into the Middle East and the Persia and Iraq Commands, some argued that the air forces should be similarly divided. Yet again, when the Allied Expeditionary Force landed in North Africa in November 1942 advocates appeared for the creation of separate air forces at each end of the Mediterranean

and a coastal air force in the middle under joint control. Tedder played a chief part in extinguishing all these heresies. He fought for his convictions openly, stubbornly, and with uncompromising determination, yet more effectively because he believed that the heretics were reasonable men who had a common purpose and could be persuaded to see where truth lay. The creation of Mediterranean Air Command and its complete success in operations proved him to be right in every particular.

When the United States Army Middle East Air Force came into existence in June 1942 Tedder faced the task of combining his own independent (the Royal Air Force had been an independent Service since 1918) and operationally seasoned air force with an air force which was a part of the U.S. Army and had no operational experience. And now his long experience of training, his knowledge of every aspect of air forces, his unpretentious but evident authority, and his ability to understand other men, led to a surprisingly quick yet enduring success given visible shape in Mediterranean Air Command and later in Mediterranean Allied Air Forces which were formidable instruments of air power and not just grandiose names.

A summary of Tedder's services and achievements can here be only selective and compressed, yet something must be said of him as a commander of air forces. He based his actions upon attention to the factors of serviceability, reserves, supply, training, offensive action, and morale. Although morale entered the interaction of every other factor it also arose from them and, when created, was self-perpetuating provided that it was cherished. To this end he visited his front line squadrons whenever the opportunity offered. In the vast business of command Tedder, who knew neither jealousy nor the fussiness of timidity, knew how to let able subordinates use their talents to the full in freedom. When he left the Mediterranean theatre, as unobtrusively as when he entered it, he left the sole memorial to his services which he would have desired: an Allied air force which was supreme in the theatre's enormous skies, and was the almost impenetrable shield of the Allied forces beneath them.

(v)

Scarcely had the great affairs of the Allies been arranged in a manner which Mr. Churchill expected that military historians would find 'fully in accordance with the classic articles of war',¹ than the lesser affairs of the Italian campaign came into star-crossed conjunction with those vessels of wrath the tank landing-ships.²

¹ Cairo. Fifth Plenary Meeting. Closing Remarks.

² Chapter VI, pp. 202-204 and Chapter XI, pp. 384-86 will recall to the reader the general problem of assault ships and craft, and why the L.S.T. were its most intractable part.

Mr. Churchill, on his way to England, fell gravely ill in Carthage and on 27th December went to Marrakesh to convalesce. In Carthage he felt the time to be one of the climaxes of the war. 'The mounting of Overlord was the greatest event and duty in the world. But must we sabotage everything we could have in Italy, where the main strength overseas of our country was involved? Were we to leave it a stagnant pool from which we had drawn every fish we wanted?'¹ Was this the best way to serve Overlord?

As we have indicated in Chapters XIII and XIV, the prospects in Italy were not promising. 15th Army Group was struggling to break through the Bernhardt Line, but slowly, so that on 18th December Alexander cancelled his projected landing by a division near Anzio. Yet an amphibious left hook seemed to all the superior Allied commanders to be the main means of breaking the deadlock which threatened the armies and, in turn, the early capture of the area of Rome. It now seemed clear that a force of a Corps, assaulting with two divisions and having adequate follow-up troops, would be required to accomplish a hook. But it was evident also that it would be impossible to mount this venture before the dates on which 68 vital L.S.T. were to sail from the Mediterranean for England and Overlord. These dates had been fixed by the Cairo conference as on or about 15th January 1944. Worse still not 68 but 88 L.S.T., besides other ships and craft, would be required for the force now proposed.

Mr. Churchill's feeling that the campaign in Italy was stagnating was shared by Sir Alan Brooke who visited him in Carthage after visiting Italy. The feeling did no discredit to those in Italy. It was just another example of the commonplace that every battle requires at some time someone 'to push it over the hump'. When the battle is very big, as in Italy, this someone must be the man or men at the top because 'At the top there are great simplifications' as Mr. Churchill has remarked. As a beginning of a push, Mr. Churchill demanded a list of all types of landing-craft in the Mediterranean.

When the 68 L.S.T., 56 British and 12 American had left for the United Kingdom, there would be 37 L.S.T. left in the Mediterranean of which ten were refitting, and ten employed in the build up of an air base in Corsica from which would come support for the landings in southern France. There remained but 17 L.S.T. until ruthless analysis suggested that the Corsican air base could stand over until an expedition to Anzio had been launched, and could then be pushed ahead twice as fast as before. Another source from which some L.S.T. could be obtained was now the Indian Ocean because operations in the Bay of Bengal had been postponed. The likely total from this source however was only 15 L.S.T. and none could arrive

¹ *The Second World War, Volume V, Closing the Ring*, Winston S. Churchill; Cassell and Co. Ltd., London 1952; Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, p. 377.

in the Mediterranean in time. These ships indeed were unlikely even to provide an easement in the general situation because they had been earmarked for operations in the Aegean which had not yet aborted.

The Prime Minister saw that the only way to find the 88 L.S.T. was to hold back some or all of the 68 whose departure had been fixed. The Chiefs of Staff were more cautious. They remembered that a stern argument over L.S.T. had subsided little more than a month previously, and they were sure that their American colleagues would strongly resist a fresh attempt to secure more L.S.T. for the Mediterranean. The Prime Minister on the other hand felt no compunction in approaching the President, perhaps because he guessed that he might find, and knew that he could impose, a means of escaping from the difficulties which need not prejudice operations agreed to be sacrosanct. This means soon appeared through the help of Captain M. L. Power, R.N. of the staff of the C.-in-C. Mediterranean. This nowadays would be termed a 'crash programme' for docking, refitting, and training for the tidal and turbulent Channel all the craft due from the Mediterranean. For the length of time thus to be saved in the future, the departure of such craft from the Mediterranean could presently be delayed.

The Chiefs of Staff nevertheless remained cautious because they believed that Power's programme might not contain enough margin to guarantee Overlord against slips between cup and lip. It was the tension, common in planning when resources are limited, and well illustrated in one of the signals which during eight or nine days skimmed between Mr. Churchill and his Chiefs of Staff like shoals of flying-fish. Said the Chiefs of Staff:

- '(a) We have throughout approached the problem on the basis that nothing is done to jeopardise the execution of "Overlord" and "Anvil" [Southern France] at the agreed and most appropriate date. Subject to this consideration, as many landing craft should be provided for "Shingle" [Anzio] as is practicable at the earliest possible date.
- (b) Your approach appears to have been that the first requirement is to produce sufficient landing craft for what the Allied Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean regards as the minimum assault force for a successful "Shingle"—i.e. 2 Divisions in the assault requiring 88 L.S.T.—and that this must be done in such a way as to make sure that a May "Overlord" is not prejudiced thereby.'

The Chiefs of Staff concluded that the Prime Minister was cutting things too fine if a postponement of Overlord and the landings in southern France was not accepted as probable, and they repeated their misgivings about difficulties with their American colleagues.

But Mr. Churchill had already conferred, on Christmas Day, with Eisenhower, Alexander, Wilson, Bedell Smith, Tedder and (John) Cunningham. All except Eisenhower agreed that nothing less than two divisions would suffice for Anzio. Churchill then sent a signal to Roosevelt, asking that the departures of the 56 British L.S.T. from the Mediterranean should be delayed yet again to take part at Anzio around 20th January. On 28th December he was overjoyed, perhaps a little surprised, to receive Roosevelt's agreement that the ships should be delayed to take part at Anzio, *on* 20th January, provided that Overlord remained paramount and would be carried out at the agreed time. Mr. Churchill replied 'I thank God for this fine decision which engages us once again in whole-hearted unity upon a great enterprise.' The staffs now pressed rapidly on with preparing the new assault at Anzio. Yet even now Anzio and indeed Overlord were not assured because no one knew whether or not Eisenhower and Montgomery would demand a bigger assault in Normandy. If they did, the melting pot would boil once more. Churchill and Roosevelt agreed to face that trouble when it came, and to say nothing to Stalin.

'At the top there are great simplifications' indeed. Yet the foregoing summary does much less than justice to the deep and troubling issues which might so easily have produced discord—almost incredibly because of a handful of L.S.T. How important was the problem and how difficult it was to solve is best realized by reading between the lines of the Prime Minister's thanks to the President.

APPENDIX

ADMINISTRATIVE
BACKGROUND TO THE
CAIRO CONFERENCE
November–December 1943

IT was no small task to provide for such a large party, a total of 500 of which 360 were Delegates. It was entrusted to a small Working Committee headed by the D.A.G., Major-General Moorhead, who acted under the Minister of State and General Wilson. All had to be accomplished within three weeks.

The Mena area outside Cairo was chosen as the site of the conference. Here over 25 villas and a large hotel were hired, the latter to be used mainly for office accommodation. An extensive telephone system, 54 miles of cable were laid, was provided by the Royal Signals, a special General Transport Company was formed and a permanently staffed Medical Post was set up on the croquet lawn of the hotel. Both hotel and the chief villas were wired in. (The Americans provided their own security guard.) For protection against air and parachute attack, the equivalent of an infantry brigade and a mixed armoured regiment was stationed in the area. A special operations room was set up to co-ordinate air and A.A. defence which consisted of 1 night-fighter, 3 Hurricane and 6 Spitfire squadrons, together with 54 L.A.A. and 48 H.A.A. guns and 18 searchlights.

The first cover plan had to be scrapped when a leak occurred on 13th November: 'Swank Mena House Hotel subshadows Pyramids . . . will close publicwards soon . . . in anticipation visits conversations of great portent to held Cairo.' (It had been thought that a press 'Stop' would only confirm rumours.) It was then decided to push spoof plans for alternative meeting-places. Preliminary bookings were made at Luxor and very extensive arrangements at Jerusalem, including the move of the Household Cavalry for guard duty.

It was the turn of Great Britain to play host, which Mr. Churchill had asked 'should be interpreted liberally'. This proved not so easy. Flowers and meat (butchered by the Sergeant Butcher at the Field

Butchery) could be delivered daily but requests by the Americans for clams and pretzels and by the Chinese for fresh grape juice proved more difficult; liquor still more so. The Navy transported from the U.K. and Gibraltar a pleasing load of bottles: 720 Scotch whisky, 360 gin, 144 sherry, 120 champagne, other wine, liqueur brandy and 400 dozen of pale ale; also 50,000 cigarettes. Alas consumption per day, over about 18 days, was reported as 80 bottles of whisky, 34 gin, 12 brandy, 528 beer and a round 20,000 cigarettes. The gap had to be filled locally, at a price.

Stories of shopping with an open cheque book and orgies on eggs (home consumption was 1 per head per month) caused some heart-searching at home. Yet the final opinion of the Treasury was that the costs had been reasonable, only regarding liquor had orders for liberality been given 'a much more liberal interpretation than was intended'. Total expenditure by G.H.Q. M.E. was in fact under £40,000.

TABLE

Sorties flown by N.A.A.F. and M.E.A.C. in searching for and attacking enemy ships (including submarines) at sea and against enemy ports November–December 1943

Month	Target	N.A.A.F.	M.E.A.C.	Totals on targets each month
		R.A.F. and U.S.A.A.F.	R.A.F. and U.S.A.A.F.	
November	Ships at sea	1,253	524	1,777
	Ports	663	55	718
December	Ships at sea	1,414	870	2,284
	Ports	836	85	921
Totals: November–December 1943				
	Ships at sea	2,667	1,394	4,061
	Ports	1,499	140	1,639
	Grand Totals	4,166	1,534	5,700

Notes

The sorties flown by Malta Air Command are included in the N.A.A.F. figures.

The sorties flown by N.A.A.F. have been arrived at by deduction from a variety of sources, some contradictory, but they are considered reasonably accurate for our purpose.

CHAPTER XVI
THE FIRST BATTLE FOR ROME:
ALLIED OPERATIONS IN
EASTERN ITALY; AND ACROSS
THE RIVERS GARIGLIANO
AND RAPIDO IN THE WEST
(January 1944)

(i)

See Map 13

TOWARDS the end of 1943 and during January 1944 high German personages began to speculate upon almost every imaginable Allied operation in the Mediterranean theatre. Some causes of the speculation seem to have been reports of the Allies' deliberations at Cairo and the information, casually attended to at first, purveyed by Elyesa Bazna, the valet of the British ambassador to Turkey, especially about British intentions in Turkey and the Aegean.¹ The Allies too were having some success in deceptions and rumour-mongering, and German Intelligence became shaky in its knowledge of the Allied Order of Battle in the Mediterranean, and rather credulous. And so although the insatiable demands of the Russian front lay in the background of all German thinking and although Allied cross-channel invasion seemed probable, large Allied operations against the Iberian peninsula, southern France, the Balkans, and the Aegean were constantly discussed. The Balkans, once again, were for a little while considered to be a more likely Allied objective than southern France or the west coast of Italy.

The Germans believed that the Allies' main stroke, wherever it fell, would occupy most of the Allied resources, and that related operations in much strength would be unlikely. On 20th December Hitler confirmed *OKW's* plans for the possible transfer of forces from their several theatres to reinforce at need the existing garrisons

¹ Bazna's cover-name was 'Cicero', and under it he became a well-known figure in post-war tales of espionage.

in Scandinavia, France, Italy, the South-East, and Bulgaria. To consider only plans most relevant to the Mediterranean theatre, we find that if France were invaded, Italy stood to contribute a Corps H.Q. and a division. But if Italy became the scene of a big Allied amphibious operation, that country was likely to gain two infantry divisions from *O.B. West*; two infantry or Jäger divisions from *O.B. Südost*; and five independent regiments and eleven single battalions from C.-in-C. Replacement Army.¹ On 4th January Jodl gave Kesselring little hope of reinforcements to meet possibilities other than a big landing.

In early January there were 21 German divisions in Italy.²

¹ We mention only the larger formations and units; there were lesser units as well. The whole plan for reinforcing Italy was named 'Marder', and 'Marder 1' provided for the west coast, 'Marder 2' for the east coast.

	<i>AOK 10</i>
<i>14th Panzer Corps</i>	
5th Mountain Division.	
15th Panzer Grenadier Division.	To be relieved by 94th when this was relieved by 71st Infantry Division (<i>AOK 14</i>).
44th Infantry Division.	
94th Infantry Division.	
<i>76th Panzer Corps</i>	
1st Parachute Division.	
3rd Panzer Grenadier Division.	En route from central Italy.
90th Panzer Grenadier Division.	Under orders to leave Italy in February; parts en route to Rome area.
334th Infantry Division.	Relieving 65th Infantry Division (en route to <i>AOK 14</i>).
26th Panzer Division.	To refit after arrival of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division.
<i>Korpsgruppe Hauck</i>	
305th Infantry Division.	
<i>Army Reserve</i>	
Hermann Göring Panzer Division.	
<i>1st Parachute Corps</i>	Under Kesselring's direct command.
29th Panzer Grenadier Division.	Refitting.
90th Panzer Grenadier Division.	Parts assembling near Rome.
4th Parachute Division.	Forming near Perugia.
	<i>AOK 14</i>
65th Infantry Division.	
71st Infantry Division.	Under orders for <i>AOK 10</i> .
162nd Turkestan Infantry Division.	
188th Reserve Division.	
356th Infantry Division.	
278th Infantry Division.	Forming.
362nd Infantry Division.	Forming.
16th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Division.	Forming.
114th Jäger Division.	In Balkans under orders for Italy.

There were 18 German divisions in the Balkans. The table shows a state of chop and change, but not every planned move was to happen. For example, Hermann Göring Panzer Division, as well as 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, became earmarked to reinforce the West, but neither division left Italy. 114th Jäger Division did not reach Italy until February 1944 after delays. H.Q. 1st Parachute Corps (General der Flieger Schlemm) replaced *Fliegerkorps XI* on 28th December as a static H.Q. for miscellaneous troops in the area of Rome, but in January 1944 took the field in operations.

Continual staff-work went on to prepare for various contingencies and for actual or projected chains of reliefs. Perhaps because plans existed for so many situations Kesselring was able to marshal forces very quickly at the point of danger when the need arose.

In the tactical field Hitler and *OKW* increased, during December and January, their capricious attention to Italian operations. On 4th January Jodl and Kesselring, in conference, settled priorities in constructing defences. Jointly first came the sector of the Cassino defences in the area Piedimonte-Cassino-Mt. Cairo (the *Führerriegel*), and the Foro River line which was to cover Pescara on the Adriatic coast; then came the area north and south of Ostia, and the areas Leghorn-Viareggio and Rimini-Ravenna. Others followed. Hitler was particularly interested in his name-line and ordered *Osttruppen* battalions to be sent to labour on it, and to the Foro. On 19th January he announced that the previous day's attack on 94th Infantry Division very probably heralded a major Allied offensive, and he decreed that 14th Panzer Corps' Gustav positions were to be 'decisively fought for' even to the extent of committing all available reserves. He pronounced that a successful defence was important politically, would help to confound whatever larger plans the Allies were making, and would in the end win a respite for the front-line troops. He threatened to degrade officers who fell short of their duty, and put the men on their military honour to hold or to recapture every inch of ground.¹ Kesselring had already, on 6th January, enjoined unyielding defence everywhere except on *AOK 10*'s left wing where gradual withdrawal to the Foro line might be countenanced if 8th Army increased its pressure. On 11th January *AOK 10*'s right wing was allowed to withdraw step by step to the Gustav positions from outlying positions. Kesselring expected the Allies to continue their frontal attacks but he did not expect them to undertake large amphibious operations in the near future. Kesselring's Chief of Staff and Wentzell of *AOK 10*, on the contrary, speculated on 13th January that amphibious operations might be imminent but soon laid such thoughts aside.²

Kesselring nevertheless put in hand plans to meet Allied landings in the neighbourhoods of Rome, Leghorn, and Genoa, and between

¹ In this winter of 1943-44, German commanders showed concern about occasional desertion. British commanders noticed marked physical and mental weariness among their own front-line troops. Although desertions were not many when compared with the number of troops in the field—in 8th Army 878 cases in nine months of 1944—they were sufficient to make prevention of desertion, rather than its punishment, a subject of much thought and action.

² Speculation and suspicion were aroused by reports of the movements of Allied ships and were then written down because a very small number of landing-craft had been identified. It is true that Kesselring, on 6th January, credited the Allies with enough ships in North African ports to lift eight or nine divisions, but he may have given this estimate to strengthen his case for reinforcements.

Rimini and Venice. If landings threatened the neighbourhood of Rome, the static H.Q. 1st Parachute Corps was to become operational. The following formations would join it in stages:

From AOK 14

114th Jäger Division, if in Italy.
 Part 362nd Infantry Division, forming at Rimini.
 A regiment of 356th Infantry Division, Genoa.
 A regiment of 65th Infantry Division, Genoa.
 4th Parachute Division, forming near Perugia.
 16th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Division, forming at Laibach; one regiment near Lucca.

From AOK 10

One division, as yet unnamed, from reserve.

All this, however, was just one of the plans to meet the unknown future although much of its detail was worked out. At the beginning of January 14th Panzer Corps had in the line from the coast inland:

94th Infantry Division,
 15th Panzer Grenadier Division,
 44th Infantry Division,
 5th Mountain Division,

and as a possible reserve:

Hermann Göring Panzer Division, in fact in Army reserve,
 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, re-fitting south of Rome.

(ii)

On 19th December Mr. Churchill, who was lying sick with pneumonia in Carthage, signalled to the British Chiefs of Staff:

‘ . . . There is no doubt that the stagnation of the whole campaign on the Italian front is becoming scandalous. The C.I.G.S.’s visit confirmed my worst forebodings. The total neglect to provide the amphibious action on the Adriatic side and the failure to strike any similar blow on the west have been disastrous . . . ’

The Chiefs of Staff replied:

‘ . . . We . . . are in full agreement with you that the present stagnation cannot be allowed to continue. For every reason it is essential that something should be done to speed things up. The solution, as you say, clearly lies in making use of our amphibious power to strike round the enemy’s flank and open up the way for a rapid advance on Rome . . . ’

‘Stagnation’ was not a fair description of the situation in Italy. Towards the end of October Alexander had written a better descrip-

tion, and Mr. Churchill had done likewise on November 8th. Alexander's words were:

'It would therefore appear that we are committed to a long and costly advance to Rome, a "Slugging Match", with our present slight superiority in formations on the battle-front off-set by the enemy opportunity for relief:¹ for, without sufficient resources in craft no outflanking operation of a size sufficient to speed up our rate of advance is possible . . .'

Mr. Churchill's words were:

'There has been no lack of effort on the Italian front but progress has been slow because of the withdrawal of landing craft in preparation for transit to England in order to set up the Second Front as arranged for Overlord. This has meant that General Alexander has not been able to carry out the outflanking operations on which a rapid advance on this narrow peninsula so largely depends . . .'²

Whatever words might have been used to describe the situation in Italy, all the Allied leaders were agreed that a powerful descent from the sea behind the German western flank was the best, in fact almost the only means of restoring momentum to the offensive and of reaching Rome during January 1944 or early in February. The outline plan for a two-divisional landing at Anzio linked with the continuing offensive by the 5th and 8th Armies has been described in the survey of Allied strategy given in Chapter XI, and the difficulties of providing assault shipping at pp. 384-86 of the same chapter and in Chapter XV (pp. 579-81). It remains to add three comments. The single-division landing at Anzio, first proposed, had been a complement of 5th Army's attack up the Liri valley to Frosinone. In the Christmas Day plan the two-divisional landing at Anzio was a self-sufficient operation to resolve the deadlock into which 5th Army was falling. The difficulties that arose over assault shipping were beyond the powers of Eisenhower and Alexander to solve because they were rooted in the distribution of scarce vessels between operations in north-west Europe, in the Mediterranean, and in south-east Asia. Only the highest Allied authorities could solve the difficulties and the competent men had dispersed in early December after the Cairo and Teheran conferences. Intricate problems had therefore to be solved by telegrams between Carthage, Whitehall,

¹ ' . . . An examination of the enemy position has shown that his lines of communication enable him to build up in Italy, mainly in the North, to the order of 60 divisions, should they be available, and maintain them there in the winter months, despite our air superiority . . .'

The examination of the enemy's power to reinforce was theoretical, but while its surprising conclusion was heavily discounted, it could not be simply disregarded.

² From a telegram for communication to Stalin.

Washington, Algiers, Caserta, Cairo, and Ceylon.¹ Concerning Italian operations in general since September 1943 it is surprising that the Allied leaders expected them to progress so quickly—Rome and beyond in January. Most of the leaders had seen fighting in World War I, and the circumstances of the Italian campaign were coming to resemble those of static warfare on the Western Front a quarter of a century ago. Yet the leaders were now assuming that a rate of progress was possible in Italy that was unrealistic in the light of the experience of the earlier war.

We now return to the 5th and 8th Armies, but first must notice three large formations which were joining 15th Army Group. These were 1st Canadian Corps, 2nd Polish Corps, and the French Expeditionary Corps.

In August 1943 Canada's Minister of National Defence, Colonel the Hon. J. L. Ralston, proposed to the British Prime Minister and Sir Alan Brooke to form a Canadian Corps in the Mediterranean theatre. The objects were to give battle-experience to more Canadian troops, and to enhance the morale of the First Canadian Army in the United Kingdom and of the Canadian people. There were obstacles to the proposal, for example the difficulty of finding shipping at a time when the Allies' sea-trooping programme was so crowded (see Chapter VI (v)), doubts whether the Canadian troops, if sent to the Mediterranean, could return in time to take part in Overlord as intended, and whether detachment of a Corps would not dismember First Canadian Army. However, H.M.G. and the Government of Canada agreed to the proposal. In consequence upwards of 39,000 Canadian troops were to be sent to the Mediterranean, between October 1943 and January 1944, to form a balanced Corps.² Eisen-

¹ ' . . . A three cornered flow of telegrams is gradually resulting in utter confusion . . . ' Field-Marshal Sir Alan Brooke's diary 7th January 1944. Bryant: *Triumph in the West*, p. 131.

² The main formations in the trooping programme were:

H.Q. 1st Canadian Corps (Lieut.-General H. D. G. Crerar until 19th March 1944).

5th Canadian Armoured Division (Major-General G. G. Simonds from 1st November 1943 to 29th January 1944, then Major-General E. L. M. Burns).

5th Armoured Brigade (Brigadier G. R. Bradbrooke to 22nd February 1944, then Brigadier J. D. B. Smith):

3rd Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment, the Governor-General's Horse Guards.

2nd Armoured Regiment, Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians).

5th Armoured Regiment, 8th Princess Louise's (New Brunswick) Hussars.

9th Armoured Regiment, The British Columbia Dragoons.

11th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier G. Kitching to 13th February 1944, then Brigadier T. E. D'O. Snow):

The Perth Regiment

The Cape Breton Highlanders

The Irish Regiment of Canada.

1st Army Group Royal Canadian Artillery

1st, 2nd, 5th Medium, and 11th Field Regiments R.C.A.

Besides the above there was a component of Royal Canadian A.A. and anti-tank artillery, of Royal Canadian Engineers, Signals, and ancillary Corps and Services.

Part of the troops disembarked, initially at Augusta and Palermo for onward transit, and part at Naples.

hower and Alexander, who had not been consulted, were taken aback by the decision, for Eisenhower suspected that political pressure might be used upon him to hurry the new troops into battle, while Alexander felt that he had already as much armour as he needed. He remarked to Sir Alan Brooke 'I shall be grateful if I can be consulted in future before matters of such importance are agreed upon. These decisions upset my order of battle which in turn affects my plans for battle.'

2nd Polish Corps sprang from 1st Carpathian Infantry Brigade (Brigadier-General Stanislaw Kopanski) which had distinguished itself in the Desert in 1941 and 1942, and from something like the exodus of a people. After the campaign in Poland in 1939 large numbers of Polish troops entered Russia, and existed miserably there. Political negotiations resulted in Russian agreement that a large number of the Poles might leave Russia and, beginning in August 1942, some 44,000 officers and men and 26,000 women and children journeyed to Iraq and came under British auspices in Persia and Iraq Command (Generals Sir Henry Maitland Wilson and later Sir Henry Pownall) and 26th British Military Mission. Further governmental negotiations led to the constitution of a Polish Army in the East under Lieutenant-General Wladyslaw Anders who was by name an Army Commander, in fact commander of a Corps, and by fitting courtesy Commander-in-Chief of an Allied contingent.¹ The new force in fact mustered as a Corps with a Base organization.² Training and equipment were according to British principles, establishments,

¹ In October 1943 the Polish Government sent a Minister of State to Cairo to take charge of political questions, a task which had until then rested upon Anders.

² It is convenient to give the outline order of battle as it stood on 2nd May 1944.

2nd Polish Corps (Lieut.-General Anders):

3rd Carpathian Division (Major-General Duch):

1st Carpathian Rifle Brigade (Colonel Pessek):

1st, 2nd, 3rd Carpathian Rifle Battalions.

2nd Carpathian Rifle Brigade (Lieut.-Colonel Syznanski):

4th, 5th, 6th Carpathian Rifle Battalions;

and 12th Podolski Reconnaissance Regiment; 1st, 2nd, 3rd Carpathian Field and 3rd A/Tk and Lt. A.A. Regiments; 1st, 2nd, 3rd Carpathian Field Companies, 3rd Field Park Company; 3rd Carpathian M.G. Battalion.

5th Kresowa Division (Major-General Sulik):

5th Wilenski Infantry Brigade (Colonel Kirsk):

13th, 14th, 15th Wilenska Rifle Battalions.

6th Lwowska Infantry Brigade (Colonel Sawicki):

16th, 17th Lwowska Rifle Battalions

and 15th Poznanski Reconnaissance Regiment; 4th, 5th, 6th Kresowa Field and 5th A/Tk and Lt. A. A. Regiments; 4th, 5th, 6th Kresowa Field Companies, 5th Field Park Company; 5th Kresowa M.G. Battalion.

2nd Polish Armoured Brigade (Major-General Rakowski):

1st Polish Armoured Cavalry Regiment, 4th Polish Armoured Regiment, 6th Lwowska Armoured Regiment

Corps Troops included 3rd Carpathian Lancers (armoured cars); 7th and 9th Polish Field; 10th, 11th Medium, 7th A/Tk, 7th Lt. A.A., 8th Heavy A.A. Regiments; three Field and one Field Park companies of engineers.

Strength was about 56,461. 3rd Carpathian Division moved to Italy in December 1943, Corps H.Q. in January 1944, 5th Kresowa Division in February, and 2nd Polish Armoured Brigade in April-May.

and materials. 26th British Liaison Unit (as the Military Mission was renamed) played fairy godmother to the Poles in training and later in battle, although G.H.Q. P.A.I.C. was the first British parent-headquarters. When the Corps moved to Middle East in July 1943 for advanced training G.H.Q. M.E.F. became its British parents. The task for the Poles, helped by their mentors, was to change themselves into up-to-date soldiers of the war's fourth year. Mechanization was part of the change, and another was to foster in Polish commanders an interest in administration to match their liking for plain fighting. Polish officers were inclined to regard administration, and even training, as the concerns of subordinates. Rehabilitation was a great problem because it included the women and children. An understanding existed that the Polish Corps should be used as a complete formation, but in September 1943 General Sosnkowski, who had become C.-in-C. of the Polish forces after General Sikorski's death, agreed that the Corps might move into action part by part provided that it was re-united at the first opportunity.

We will not try to describe the growth in the Mediterranean of the forces of *Le Comité Français de la Liberation Nationale*. Suffice it to say that the French, American, and British leaders decided at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943 to organize about eleven divisions. The Americans gave almost all the help required in equipping and training the French forces. The first-fruits for the campaign in Italy was General Juin's French Expeditionary Corps, whose main formations were 2nd Moroccan Division, 3rd Algerian Division and 3rd and 4th Groups of Tabors.¹ These French fighting men, like

¹ French titles and ranks are given English equivalents. The French Expeditionary Corps was named 1st Army but the French authorities forebore to assert this title and status so that the formation, in fact a Corps, might fit into the Order of Battle in Italy and that Juin, a full general, might fit into the military hierarchy there.

The outline Order of Battle was—

2nd Moroccan Division (Brigadier-General Dody):

4th, 5th, 8th Moroccan Infantry Regiments

4th Group of Tabors.

3rd Algerian Division (Major-General de Goislard de Monsabert):

3rd Algerian, 4th Tunisian, 7th Algerian Infantry Regiments

3rd Group of Tabors.

This order of battle was to change in February and again in May. Corps H.Q. and the Moroccan Division arrived in Naples towards the end of November 1943, and the Algerian Division towards the end of December. Juin assumed command in the field on 3rd January 1944. The strength of the F.E.C. was about 65,000.

The men of the Moroccan and Algerian Divisions were natives of the territories indicated by the regimental titles, under French officers. A Group of Tabors was the equivalent of a brigade of irregular infantry; a Tabor was the equivalent of a battalion; a Goum the equivalent of a company. Goum is derived from the Arabic word qum = a band or troop. The Goumier was a Moroccan irregular soldier, usually recruited from the Berber mountaineers of the Atlas, and commanded by French officers and non-commissioned officers. A Tabor usually included Headquarters, one Heavy Weapons Goum (mortars and m.g.s), and three Goums. Its strength was about 65 French officers and N.C.O.s, and 859 Native N.C.O.s and men, with 247 horses and mules. A Group was composed of H.Q. and three Tabors, strength about 3,100. In February 1944 the Goums Marocains, under Brigadier-General A. Guillaume, was composed of 1st, 3rd, and 4th Groups of Tabors, in all about 10,000 men.

those of the Indian Army, had characteristics which were unlike those of the British, Americans, or Germans. The most marked perhaps was a ruthlessness in combat, possibly produced by a mental attitude which valued life cheaply, and regarded the killing of enemies as an honourable and agreeable duty to be undertaken with zest. The Germans noticed this characteristic and, for example, in January Ringel, commander of 5th Mountain Division, reported that in one action the Moroccans, who 'fought much more ruthlessly than the English or the Americans', had inflicted casualties, amounting to 80%, on the troops who opposed them.

During the last fortnight of December 1943 it became clear that 15th Army Group's best prospects of reaching the neighbourhood of Rome lay on the front of 5th Army and on the west coast of Italy. On the Adriatic side the coastal plain led on from 8th Army's front for a hundred miles to Ancona, a place not important except as a port, and on 8th Army's left rose the central Apennines snow-clad and impassable for large forces. Eighth Army's plans to help the battle for Rome by reaching Pescara, Popoli, and Avezzano had become impracticable. As soon therefore as the new amphibious operations against Anzio had been settled, Alexander issued fresh instructions, on 2nd and 12th January. 5th Army was to thrust as strongly as possible towards Cassino and Frosinone to attract German reserves which might otherwise be used against the force landing at Anzio, and was to breach the German front in order to take every opportunity of linking up with the landing. 5th Army's 6th U.S. Corps was to land at Anzio on or about 20th January to cut the German L. of C. and threaten the rear of 14th Panzer Corps. General Clark was to conduct his operations so as to force the Germans to withdraw north of Rome and in so doing to inflict the greatest losses on the German forces south of Rome. The objective of his united army was the line Civitavecchia-Viterbo-Terni. 8th Army was to press sufficiently hard to prevent troops being transferred from 76th Panzer Corps to reinforce those opposing 5th Army. Leese was to take any opportunity of advancing, to conform with 5th Army's progress. In general Alexander believed that the enemy had lost heavily in recent weeks and was likely to be rather unbalanced and disorganized while refitting his formations. But he expected the Germans to fight for their positions and to counter-attack fiercely.

Mediterranean Allied Air Forces took its general objects to be to reduce the German air forces in Italy to the greatest possible extent before the landing at Anzio, and to cut the German L. of C. from northern Italy. Its method was to attack the Rome group of airfields, the main air reconnaissance field at Perugia, and other airfields in the

Po valley and in southern France. Marshalling-yards at Florence, Pisa, Arezzo, and Terni became particular targets on the L. of C. as did the bridges on the western and central railway systems. Air operations during January were greatly affected by two circumstances. The first was that on 5th Army's fronts the Allied and German troops were often fighting at close quarters in very rugged country. Therefore large attacks often broke up into large numbers of small combats which meant that direct air support was very difficult to give. The second circumstance was that the weather was on the whole bad for flying. This meant that programmes of air support had often to be cancelled, postponed, or altered. As a result of these two circumstances it is not often possible to relate particular operations in the air to particular operations on the ground. And so, in the narrative, it has seemed best to review air operations in January in Section vii of this chapter, apart from incidental references in earlier sections. This treatment may give the mistaken impression that the air forces played a very small part in operations, whereas the true picture to be borne in mind is that air operations were the constant accompaniment of operations on the ground.

Alexander's new plan, and an appraisal by Leese of 8th Army's tasks called for regrouping in 8th and 5th Armies. The details are intricate and it seems best to give the general results in two simplified tables. Alexander wished to reinforce 5th Army mainly from 8th Army, and to refill 8th Army with formations which were arriving in Italy. First he diverted to 5th Army 1st British Division (Major-General W. R. C. Penney) which had arrived from North Africa in early December. This division joined 6th U.S. Corps. Next he transferred 5th Division to 10th Corps (5th Army), and then the New Zealand Division to Army Group Reserve. 5th Canadian Armoured Division, 4th Indian Division from Middle East, and 3rd Carpathian Division gradually moved into 8th Army's line to replace the above. H.Q. 1st Canadian Corps replaced H.Q. 5th Corps on 31st January, and H.Q. 2nd Polish Corps entered the field on 13th February. In 5th Army the French Expeditionary Corps took the field as a whole on 3rd January. Alexander decided to use 6th U.S. Corps, composed of 3rd U.S. and 1st British Divisions, at Anzio. To use a new, homogeneous United States or British Corps was considered, but there was no time to form either, while to withdraw a whole existing American or British corps from the Army Group's line was tactically undesirable and might be a give-away. H.Q. 6th U.S. Corps had gained experience of amphibious work at Salerno; 3rd U.S. Division had been chosen on 13th December for the single-division landing; 1st Division was readily available near

Cerignola. The criss-cross movements of regrouping in both armies, over bad roads, were a notable piece of staff-work.¹

8th Army

31st December 1943	15th January 1944	31st January	13th February
<i>Right 5th Corps</i>	<i>Right 5th Corps</i>	<i>Right 1st Canadian Corps</i>	<i>Right 1st Canadian Corps</i>
1st Canadian Division	1st Canadian Division, with part 5th Canadian Armoured Division	1st Canadian Division	1st Canadian Division
8th Indian Division	8th Indian Division	8th Indian Division	5th Canadian Armoured Division
<i>Left 13th Corps</i> 5th Division ¹	<i>Left 13th Corps</i> New Zealand Division ²	<i>Left 13th Corps</i> 78th Division	<i>Centre 13th Corps</i> 78th Division
New Zealand Division	78th Division	4th Indian Division ³ with part 5th Canadian Armoured Division	8th Indian Division
78th Division	Part 4th Indian Division	3rd Carpathian Division ⁴ H.Q. 5th Canadian Armoured Division	<i>Left 2nd Polish Corps</i> 3rd Carpathian Division
<i>Army Troops</i> 4th Indian Division	<i>Army Troops</i> H.Q. 1st Canadian Corps	<i>Army Troops</i> H.Q. 2nd Polish Corps	<i>Army Troops</i> H.Q. 5th Corps
H.Q. 5th Canadian Armoured Division		Part 5th Canadian Armoured Division	4th Indian Division

¹ 5th Division moved out of 8th Army between 5th–11th January, passing under command of 10th Corps (5th Army) on 6th January.

² New Zealand Division moved into Army Group Reserve between 13th–20th January, passing under command of Army Group on 17th January.

³ 4th Indian Division moved into 13th Corps between 13th–20th January, and moved out again beginning 1st February.

⁴ 3rd Carpathian Division began to move into 13th Corps 31st January and passed under command of 2nd Polish Corps on 13th February.

5th Army

<i>Right.</i>	<i>French Expeditionary Corps (General Alphonse Juin)</i> 2nd Moroccan Division (Brigadier-General André Dody). 3rd Algerian Division (Major-General de Goislard de Monsabert).
<i>Centre.</i>	<i>2nd U.S. Corps (Major-General Geoffrey T. Keyes)</i> 1st U.S. Armoured Division (Major-General Ernest N. Harmon). 34th U.S. Division (Major-General Charles W. Ryder). 36th U.S. Division (Major-General Fred J. Walker). Special Service Force (Colonel Robert T. Frederick). 1st Italian Motorized Group (Brigadier-General Vincenzo di Pino).

¹ A usual route for 8th Army's formations to the west coast was Termoli–S. Severo–Lucera–Cancello. See Map 20.

<i>Left.</i>	<i>10th Corps (Lieut.-General R. L. McCreery)</i>
	5th Division (Major-General G. C. Bucknall; from 22nd January Major-General P. G. S. Gregson-Ellis)
	46th Division (Major-General J. L. I. Hawkesworth).
	56th Division (Major-General G. W. R. Templar).
	23rd Armoured Brigade (Brigadier R. H. E. Arkwright).
<i>For Anzio.</i>	<i>6th U.S. Corps (Major-General John P. Lucas)</i>
	3rd U.S. Division (Major-General Lucian K. Truscott).
	1st Division (Major-General W. R. C. Penney).
<i>Army Reserve.</i>	504th U.S. Parachute Regiment (Colonel Reuben H. Tucker).
	45th U.S. Division (Major-General William W. Eagles).

See Maps 27 to 29

American and French artillery consisted of some 47 Field Artillery battalions; British artillery of 10th Corps of 12 Field, 5 Medium, and 1 Heavy Regiments.

At the beginning of January 1944 8th Army's front became static, and was so to remain until the 8th Army began to move in March and April to the Liri valley. The German 76th Panzer Corps held an opposing line from, roughly speaking, Torre Mucchia on the Adriatic coast to the neighbourhood of Alfedena, 50 miles inland. 1st Parachute Division lay nearest the coast; then came 26th Panzer Division from Crecchio to Arielli; then 334th Infantry Division in the sector Orsogna-Guardiagrele; and then 305th Infantry Division (the ad hoc *Korpsgruppe Hauck*) in the sector Palena-Alfedena. The plateau lying between the coast and the Orsogna ridge-wall was cut across by three small rivers, Arielli, Dentolo, and Foro, separated by rugged, well-cultivated ridges. Germans and British used the scattered, stone-built farm buildings as the core of their defensive positions and surrounded them with mazes of slit trenches and fox-holes to cover the approaches. The true mountains, six thousand feet high, began south-west of Guardiagrele in the great Maiella massif and stretched south-west to Mt. Greco (Pt. 2283) above Castel di Sangro, and beyond. Here the high-lying villages formed the framework of each side's defences, and sangars dotted the rocky crests and spurs. The weather was abominable. On New Year's Eve a great blizzard covered the land with snow. When a thaw came a week later men all along the front had to suffer a succession of snowfalls, rain, drizzle, soaking mist, icy winds, and sharp frost at night. Roads lay deep in mud when they were not coated in ice. Mud was a scourge. The numbed and mud-plastered soldier cleaned his weapons, made almost useless by this clogging filth, and then had to clean them all over again and again. The toil of metalling roads and tracks was endless.

The offensive spirit could scarcely be said to exist, yet there was little 'live and let live', and much local fighting because he who dominates an area has the best chance of keeping alive in it. The

fatalism of prolonged trench warfare had not set in. There were almost nightly fights between patrols. Near Poggiofiorito, to take one example from dozens, 2nd Parachute Brigade captured eleven prisoners in seven small forays spread over ninety-six hours. To take prisoners and identify their formations was important to both sides. The Germans wished to find clues to an Allied offensive; the British to find clues to withdrawals, especially towards 5th Army's front. Both sides exchanged daily and nightly as much harassing fire as reduced scales of artillery and mortar ammunition allowed.

Leese at first planned to take, before 19th January, some high ground overlooking the Arielli north of Ortona, using the Canadians, and thereafter to turn part of 13th Corps against Orsogna, Guardia-grele, and S. Martino. 5th Corps was to prepare to continue the advance along the coast to Pescara. The 'Arielli Show', as the Canadians call it, was begun on 17th January by 11th Canadian Brigade but was soon called off to avoid useless loss of lives.

At this time Intelligence discovered that Kesselring was sending to 14th Panzer Corps, 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, which had begun to leave the area of Rome on 3rd January to join 76th Panzer Corps. Leese now summed up the situation again. He considered that 8th Army was not giving the Germans the impression that a big thrust along the Adriatic coast was imminent, and he believed that small attacks would not help 5th Army. He foresaw a long battle for the Gustav Line, and thought that his Army could best intervene after mid-February when his new formations would have settled down. Alexander, on 23rd January, agreed in principle but nevertheless required Leese to be ready to make a big effort at short notice from 26th January. Leese, however, stuck to his opinion that it would be best if 8th Army attacked in force in mid-February in conjunction with operations by the regrouped 5th Army. Alexander meanwhile had made up his mind further to reinforce 5th Army, and on 30th January told Leese to send 4th Indian Division to join it, and to hold 78th Division ready to follow from 7th February. And so large operations by 8th Army in the near future were gradually eliminated. However the northward move of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division in early January, and the move of 26th Panzer Division to Avezzano on about 23rd January had not escaped notice. 8th Army's task of containing 76th Panzer Corps was still alive, and provided the main reason for an attack launched by 1st Canadian Brigade (Brigadier D. C. Spry) on 30th January to gain part of the road Villa Grande to Tollo. But this attack, like that of 11th Canadian Brigade, met a fierce defence and was called off to avoid useless casualties. The 8th Army for the time being made no more big attacks.

The only call for direct air support of any significance made on the Desert Air Force during January by 8th Army was on the 16th, when

215 R.A.F. and U.S. Kittyhawk fighter-bombers attacked enemy positions, AA posts, slit trenches and machine-gun nests in the Chieti area to soften up the enemy north of Arielli before 11th Canadian Brigade's attack on the 17th. A call of a different nature had been made on the 6th when troops of the 78th Division in the Agnone area found their supply lines blocked by heavy snowfalls and had rations in hand for 48 hours only. The weather prevented air supply that day but on the 7th 12 Dakotas managed successfully to drop food to the marooned men, and the drop was repeated on the 8th.

(iii)

See Maps 26 and 32

At this point we must describe in general terms the terrain on which the battles would be fought during January, with attention in particular to the entrance to the Liri Valley. Highway 6, the Via Casilina, ran up the valley which Alexander had described as 'the gateway to Rome'. The name may or may not have been apt but is owing to the fact that the country north and south of the valley offers no field of manoeuvre for large mechanized forces. The Liri valley on the contrary provides fair going from its eastern end, where the rivers Liri and Gari meet, to its western end where the rivers Liri and Sacco meet. This stretch of fair going is about twenty miles long and from four to seven miles wide, and includes pasture, corn-land, and woodland. The Liri valley, at its western end, leads into the Sacco valley through which Highway 6 continues towards Rome.

Since November 1943 the Germans had been making a belt of defences in depth which ran from near Alfedena south and south-west through Mt. S. Croce and Mt. Belvedere, then south to Mt. Cassino, S. Angelo, and S. Ambrogio, and then west of the Garigliano river to Mt. Scauri (Pt. 125) on the coast of the Gulf of Gaeta. This whole defensive belt was known generically as the Gustav Line. From Mt. S. Croce to the coast near Minturno the defensive belt included in its natural protective features a system of rivers. The river Rapido rises east of Mt. Rotolo (Pt. 1120), flows south-west for some miles, then turns south towards Cassino town. It then continues across part of the entrance to the Liri valley. The river Gari joins the Rapido about a mile and a half south of Cassino town. The united rivers Rapido and Gari receive the Liri south of S. Angelo. The union of the Rapido and Gari causes confusion in contemporary maps and documents because sometimes the two rivers are distinguished but more often the united rivers are called simply the Rapido. We adopt the second and more frequent usage. When the Rapido, so described, has received the Liri south of S. Angelo, it

becomes the Garigliano which flows south and then south-west to the sea.

The Liri valley is dominated by mountain masses on both its flanks. On the north is the massif of Mt. Cairo, five thousand feet high, and itself a spur jutting out from the Central Apennine mountain range. This spur ends abruptly in the high promontory of Mt. Cassino, which stands over Cassino town. On the south flank of the Liri valley rise the Aurunci mountains, a jagged mass of great ridges, running generally in a north-south direction, and split by the Ausente stream which is born near the village of Ausonia and runs southwards into the Garigliano river south of Minturno. Mt. Majo rises to three thousand feet between the Liri and the Ausente valleys, and with its sister peaks Mt. Faito and Mt. Fuga, dominates the southern part of the entrance to the Liri valley and the lower reaches of the Garigliano.

Besides Highway 6 only one road approaches the Liri valley. This is the secondary road which passes up the Ausente valley from Minturno, climbs over the mountains near Ausonia, and then debouches through many defiles into the Liri valley near S. Giorgio.

Highway 7 runs north-westwards near the sea coast. It is separated from Highway 6 and the Liri valley by the Aurunci and Ausoni mountain ranges and passes through many defiles between mountains and the sea until it leads into the Pontine marshes south of Rome. We must consider for a moment the Garigliano plain through which Highway 7, and a secondary, metalled road a little south of it, approach Minturno. The plain is about ten miles wide, seamed by small streams and water channels, and is generally impassable, off the roads, to vehicles during wet weather. The two roads which cross the plain meet at the Garigliano and cross it by a bridge near Minturno. Railways pass over the Garigliano and the Ausente by bridges at points up-stream from the road bridge. The Garigliano is from three to four hundred feet broad, runs between high, muddy banks and is not fordable. At Minturno a group of hills rises to about fifteen hundred feet, and there is another group of about the same height at Castelforte. The Germans were able to view the whole Garigliano plain from the high ground.

The Germans well understood that the main Apennine mountain range which runs down the centre of the Italian peninsula would form, in winter, an impenetrable barrier to any attempt by 8th Army, on the Adriatic side, to turn the Gustav line from the north. They understood also that offensive operations by the Allies in the mountain mass immediately north of the Liri valley would be very difficult, and equally difficult south of it among the defiles of the

Aurunci mountains. Therefore they placed their strongest defences in the entrance to the Liri valley and on the buttresses on both of its sides.

Since the war of positions had set in, air reconnaissance and photography, patrols, and Intelligence had produced a very good picture of the German positions and Order of Battle. It appeared that the main body of 5th Army had no practicable alternative to frontal attack. On 12th January Alexander had directed that

‘The momentum of our advance must be maintained at all costs to the limits of our resources. The enemy will be compelled to react to the threat to his communications and rear, [i.e. from Anzio] and advantage must be taken of this to break through his main defences, and to ensure that the two forces operating under command of the 5th Army join hands at the earliest possible moment.’

On 16th December Clark had expected Phase II of his operations to end about 20th December. 10th Corps would have consolidated positions on Mts Camino, La Difensa, and Maggiore and would be developing operations on the Garigliano; 2nd U.S. Corps would have captured Mt. Sambucaro; and 6th U.S. Corps would have advanced some distance along the roads Colli-Atina and Filignano-S. Elia towards the ‘hill mass north and north-west of Cassino’. Broadly speaking Clark’s expectations were fulfilled (see Chapter XIII), but it became evident that, before the main attack into the Liri valley could be opened, there was more to be done. 2nd U.S. Corps would have to capture Mts Porchia and Trocchio on the south of Highway 6, and north of the road a series of peaks and hills: S. Vittore, La Chiaia, Cervaro and Mt. Majo (Pt. 1259). Besides these operations H.Q. 6th U.S. Corps and 3rd U.S. Division had to be withdrawn for the Anzio landing, and had to be replaced by the French Expeditionary Corps. 34th U.S. Division passed from 6th U.S. Corps to give a respite to 36th U.S. Division, and there were other, lesser regroupings besides. The renewal of the attack was fixed for 5th January.

During the night 6th/7th January the Special Service Force, on the right of 2nd U.S. Corps, began a two-pronged attack against Mt. Majo on the right and Mt. Vischiataro (Pt. 1109) on the left. Mt. Majo fell on the 7th but two battalions of the German 44th Infantry Division regained the western slopes, and Germans and Americans remained within a grenade’s throw of each other. Mt. Vischiataro fell, on the 8th, to a wide hook from Mt. Majo. Meanwhile 34th U.S. Division attacked La Chiaia and S. Vittore which also were in 44th

Infantry Division's sector. The 168th Infantry struck towards Cervaro and by the 8th were half way to it. On 168th Infantry's left the 135th Infantry cleared S. Vittore by 6th January, but had harder work to capture La Chiaia by the 7th. On the left of 2nd U.S. Corps the 6th Armoured Infantry forced its way on to Mt. Porchia by the afternoon of the 6th, was driven back by counter-attack, but took the hill early on the 7th. As the attack on Mt. Porchia began, 138th Brigade of 46th Division crossed the Peccia stream on the night 4th/5th January and advanced towards Cedro Hill, south of Mt. Porchia and commanded by it. The attack failed with a loss of over 250 men and 138th Brigade was relieved by the 139th. The brigade renewed the attack on 7th January but it soon became clear that until Mt. Porchia was cleared, Cedro Hill could not be won except at a price which was not justifiable in an attack which was intended to be diversionary. General Hawkesworth therefore halted 139th Brigade.

The effect of all this fighting on von Vietinghoff and von Senger was to make them think that the outlying positions of the Gustav Line could not be held for very much longer. On the 9th von Senger told his divisions that although they must hold their forward positions for as long as possible they must not do so at a cost which would jeopardize subsequent defence in the Gustav Line. On the night 9th/10th von Vietinghoff signalled to Kesselring that if the Allies attacked again in force 14th Panzer Corps would begin a phased and fighting withdrawal into the Gustav positions. At this moment Cervaro seemed to be the most threatened point. The judgment was correct. On the 9th 34th U.S. Division's 133rd Infantry began an encircling move directed towards Capraro hill from the neighbourhood of Mt. Vischiataro. The Special Service Force struck towards Pt. 298 just north of Cervaro, and 168th Infantry towards Cervaro and on the 12th the village was taken after fierce fighting. On the 13th 14th Panzer Corps withdrew towards the Gustav positions and Mt. Trocchio and Cedro Hill were abandoned. During the first ten days of January battle casualties in 14th Panzer Corps numbered 1,506 and the sick-list stood at 591. American battle casualties for the same period were 1,914.

In direct air support of 2nd U.S. Corps, between 2nd-11th January, enemy positions at Cervaro, Cassino and S. Angelo and guns at Cervaro, Piedimonte and S. Angelo were bombed by U.S. Boston day bombers and Mustang and U.S. Kittyhawk fighter-bombers. On the 5th enemy troops facing 2nd U.S. Corps at La Chiaia and Mt. Porchia suffered bombing which was most successful from the Allied air forces' point of view. U.S. XII A.S.C. operated on eight days during this period despite the fact that on only three of them could the weather be called fair at the most, and nearly 1,000

sorties were flown and nearly 300 tons of bombs dropped in support of 2nd U.S. Corps.

On 12th January D-Day for the landing at Anzio was fixed as 22nd January. Two days earlier, on 10th January, Clark had issued instructions to 5th Army to continue the offensive, now against the Gustav Line. He had three things in mind: first, to pin down the German forces in the Gustav Line and prevent the transfer of any of them to Anzio; second, to attract German reserves to the Gustav Line; third to break through the Gustav Line and to advance quickly up the Liri valley to join hands with 6th U.S. Corps striking out from Anzio. Clark's plan for 5th Army was the working out in detail of the Phase III which he had outlined in his operation instruction of 24th November (see Chapter XIV, p. 514). Clark now decided to use his three Corps—French Expeditionary Corps (right), 2nd U.S. Corps (centre), 10th Corps (left)—in four attacks in the sequence Right, Left, Centre. The F.E.C. was to lead off on 12th January by attacking along the general axes of the roads Cardito-Atina and Acquafondata-S. Elia to seize the 'high ground' north and north-west of Cassino town. On the 17th January 10th Corps would force a crossing of the lower Garigliano near Minturno, establish a bridgehead on the commanding ground between Minturno and Castelforte, and then send a division along the Minturno-Ausonia road to attack rapidly northwards towards S. Giorgio, a side entrance to the Liri valley. On 20th January 2nd U.S. Corps was to force a crossing of the Rapido river near S. Angelo, and then exploit up the Liri valley with the largest possible amount of armour (Combat Command 'B' from 1st U.S. Armoured Division). To protect the left flank of 2nd U.S. Corps, 10th Corps was to make a second river-crossing over the Liri near S. Ambrogio and then exploit westwards.

Mountain warfare was now to begin in all its severity. It has been truly said that 'Much of the real history consisted of small tactics, company and battalion actions . . .'¹ The troops had been a long time in the line. By 6th January, 56th, 46th and 5th Divisions had been in the face of the enemy for four months, and many of the American formations were in similar case; one indeed had spent in combat 115 days out of the 122 since its arrival in Italy. Very little could be done to rest and refresh the troops, although as 1944 opened great efforts were being made to this end. The continual drain of casualties led to an acute problem of reinforcements for the infantry. As concerns the British very few reinforcements were available, and in January

¹ David Hunt, *A Don at War*, London 1966, p. 237, when speaking generally of the campaign.

1944 5th, 46th and 56th Divisions received 219 against a requirement of 4,686.¹

(iv)

The French Expeditionary Corps began its attacks on 12th January, and from the start showed special aptitudes for mountain warfare.² First there was the eye for mountainous country, the ability to tackle it, and a consequent frequent choice of the worst approaches as likely to be the least defended. From this there followed the tactics of infiltration on many lines of approach and a readiness to change the direction of attacks at short notice to exploit success or unexpected weaknesses in the enemy's defence. A flexible organization helped and time and again the semi-independent actions of companies or less paved the way for a larger success.³ The moral factor entered into this independence. The French-born officers and non-commissioned officers were undoubtedly on fire to restore the name and fame of French arms and the men, engaged in the congenial activity of killing enemies, determinedly followed determined leaders. Again and again there occur examples of assaults persistently renewed and of troops, driven off a feature by immediate counter-attack, rebounding savagely to regain it. Physical endurance was very high and troops, having fed full, often began an operation with no more than a day or two's hard rations, trusting to success to bring about replenishment. 'Pas bu et pas mangé depuis le départ' ran part of a note found on a dead officer during the ferocious fighting for Mt. Belvedere. The greater part of a man's load consisted of ammunition, especially grenades, of which, and the steel, these troops were fond.

Juin gave the task of attacking along the S. Biagio road to 2nd Moroccan Division, and Dody saw that he would have to capture the rugged ridge of Costa S. Pietro and two rather lesser heights, Pts 1025 and 1029, as a prelude to thrusting towards S. Biagio itself. Further he must help 3rd Algerian Division on his left by clearing the northern slopes of Monna Casale. 3rd Algerian Division was first to take the crest of Monna Casale, and then Mt. Passero and Mt. Monna Acquafondata, before pushing on to S. Elia. The German troops ranged against the French were 85th Mountain Regiment on

¹ See also Chapter XII.

² For the F.E.C. we have followed mainly:

Le Goyet, *La Participation Française à la Campagne d'Italie (1943-1944)*.
Goutard, *Le Corps Expéditionnaire Français dans la Campagne d'Italie* (Paris 1947).

Heurgon, *La Victoire sous le Signe des Trois Croissants* (Algiers 1946).

Juin, *Mémoires, Vol. I* (Paris 1959).

Carpentier, *Les Forces Alliées en Italie* (Paris 1949).

Chambe, *Le Bataillon du Belvedere* (Paris 1953).

³ An order by General de Monsabert (3rd Algerian Division) contained the words 'Exploiter à outrance . . . sans se préoccuper des liaisons avec les voisins.'

the Moroccan Division's front, and 100th Mountain Regiment on the Algerian Division's front. These troops of 5th Mountain Division (Ringel) were young, not fully equipped, and without experience in mountains. Their journey to Italy had been slow and difficult and after a ragged arrival on the battlefield they had lost about 1,000 men in the December battles. Whatever their quality, their orders were not to withdraw into the Gustav Line until 25th January, whereas the French planned to be threatening S. Biagio and S. Elia by 20th January.

In the Moroccan Division 2nd Battalion 8th Moroccan Infantry and 5th Tabor of Goums set out on the night 11th/12th January to outflank the S. Pietro ridge from the north by crossing the snow-covered Mainarde heights. The manœuvre succeeded, the Moroccans seized their objective, and held it against three counter-attacks. Further south 5th Moroccan Infantry rushed Pts 1025 and 1029, but 4th Moroccan Infantry had a stiffer task, against 100th Mountain Regiment, in clearing their part of Monna Casale and did not gain their objective until noon on the 12th. On the Moroccans' left 3rd Algerian Division found the same tough opposition and during the 12th were still some distance below the crest of Monna Casale. 3rd Algerian Infantry, attacking Mt. Acquafondata from the east were held, but on their left the Bonjour Group (a battalion of 4th Tunisian Infantry and a squadron of the Algerian Division's reconnaissance regiment) found a gap south of Acquafondata village, and to exploit this Colonel de Linares quickly changed the east-west axis of 3rd Algerian Infantry's attack to south-north. By the early hours of the 13th Monna Acquafondata had fallen, as had Monna Casale. The effect of these successes was to make 5th Mountain Division very shaky and on the 13th Ringel reported casualties of 80% in some units and that his division was in danger of being wiped out. On the evening of the 13th *AO K 10* sanctioned a fighting withdrawal by 5th Mountain Division and by part of 44th Infantry Division on its right flank to the line (north to south) Mt. S. Croce-Vallerotonda-Portella.

The French, however, were in full cry and Juin decided to press on with 3rd Algerian Division while using 2nd Moroccan Division as a right flank-guard. On the 14th January 3rd Algerian Infantry carried Mt. Ferro and entered Vallerotonda village. On the 15th the same regiment attacked Mt. Faullo, Madonna di Raditto, and the ridge of La Migghiola. 4th Tunisian Infantry attempted to cross the great ravine, known as the Inferno, between Vallerotonda and S. Elia to capture Pt. 554. The German 100th Mountain Regiment, and all available reserves including a battalion of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division sent forward to S. Elia, fought hard to hold their positions east of the Rapido river. Nevertheless on 16th January 3rd

10th Corps attacks across the Garigliano

Showing objective of British attack on 17-1-44 —
Ground lost by Germans up to 14-2-44 - - -

0 1 2 3 4 MILES

ROADS Main Secondary Track — · — · — ·
RAILWAY — — — — —
TOWN VILLAGE FARM ● ⋄ ■
Heights in Metres



Algerian Division took all its objectives, and towards evening found that the Germans had abandoned S. Elia and the heights north-east of it. 2nd Moroccan Division was by this time echeloned south-westward from Costa S. Pietro and was overlooking the Rapido valley below Mt. S. Croce and the Arena hill. The F.E.C. now was able to pause until 21st January because it had completed the tasks which Clark had given it to perform before the next blows were delivered by 10th Corps and 2nd U.S. Corps.

Direct air support for the French Expeditionary Corps began on the 11th when twenty-four U.S. Bostons staged a preparatory operation against S. Elia in which ten tons of bombs were dropped. When the French launched their attack next day a similar number of U.S. Bostons attacked enemy positions at S. Donato. Meantime over a hundred U.S. Kittyhawk fighter-bombers bombed enemy positions in front of the French troops. The 37 tons of bombs dropped included for the first time some 100 lb phosphorus bombs which proved very effective. The light and fighter-bomber attacks were described as excellent. On the 13th U.S. Bostons bombed enemy positions at Atina and U.S. Kittyhawk fighter-bombers others at S. Elia, and the attacks on S. Elia were continued on the 14th. On the 15th 130 Mustang and U.S. Kittyhawk fighter-bombers bombed enemy positions and guns near 5th Army's bomblines, starting fires at Picinisco and also at Atina. The U.S. Bostons visited Atina again next day while U.S. Kittyhawk fighter-bombers attacked the guns at Picinisco. Altogether about 110 light and about 240 fighter-bomber sorties were flown in support of the French during which some 125 tons of bombs were dropped.

The rapid advance of the French caused important alterations in the German dispositions. The battalions of 5th Mountain Division had been reduced to a 'battle strength' of between one hundred and two hundred men in each battalion, and the Division as a whole had been shaken. On 15th January Kesselring decided to divert 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division from joining 76th Panzer Corps and to send it to relieve 5th Mountain Division. *AOK 10* on the same day sanctioned complete withdrawal by 5th Mountain and 44th Infantry Divisions into the Gustav Line. 211th Grenadier Regiment of 71st Infantry Division (*AOK 14*) was brought into the line south of Cassino town. The higher German commanders now believed that 5th Army was on the verge of an important attack, probably to break through near Cassino. Suspicions of a major landing were dismissed, but Kesselring ruled that *AOK 10*'s western flank would now receive priority in reinforcement.

(v)

See Map 34

10th Corps' main crossing of the Garigliano was to begin on the 17th/18th January. This timing was fixed in the hope that the Corps' attack would reach its highest pitch, and so attract a large share of German attention, by 20th January when 2nd U.S. Corps was to cross the Rapido near S. Angelo. McCreery had two divisions—5th and 56th—to use in the main crossing because his 46th Division was required to cover the left flank of 2nd U.S. Corps by crossing the Garigliano near S. Ambrogio, a separate operation at a later date.

McCreery intended that, as a first phase, 5th and 56th Divisions would capture a bridgehead across the river some four miles deep, measured from the river, and eight miles across, flank to flank. The bridgehead was defined by the features (east to west) Siola—Ceschito—Mt. Cerri—Mt. dei Bracchi—S. Martino—Mt. Scauri. When the bridgehead had been secured, 5th Division was to thrust for ten miles along the road leading through Ausonia to S. Giorgio, and to capture a defile two miles south-west of S. Giorgio. This stroke would open the way to exploitation in the Liri valley towards Pontecorvo and Pico.

The terrain facing 5th and 56th Divisions has already been described. The enemy facing them was 94th Infantry Division (Steinmetz) which had not yet been engaged in serious fighting. This division's sector extended from the coast to Mt. Valle Martina, where the veteran 15th Panzer Grenadier Division (Rodt) held positions from the Ausonia neighbourhood to a point near Cassino. 94th Infantry Division's 274th Grenadier Regiment's sector ran from the coast to the Ausente valley and included the Minturno group of hills. The 276th Grenadier Regiment held the area around Castelforte. The third Regiment, 267th, was watching the coast between Formia and Terracina. These three Regiments had only two battalions apiece. The second battalion of the Hermann Göring Panzer Division's tank regiment was deployed in rear of 94th Infantry Division whose main defences were sited well back from the river on the hills which ran from Mt. d'Argento on the coast to beyond Castelforte. The lower slopes of these hills were wooded with ilex and olive, dotted with olive trees, stone walls and farm buildings while the crests were usually bare and rocky. There were some German outposts on the east bank of the Garigliano, notably in the loop of the river below Castelforte, near the demolished railway bridges, and at Puntafiume on the coast. The main defences were not especially well developed and the framework was the usual German well-arranged fire plan for machine guns, light automatics and mortars which of course covered the most likely crossings. Some

24,000 anti-tank and anti-personnel mines had been laid on the division's front. The sector had been a 'quiet' one for some time, even to allowing officers of the Scots Guards early in January to enjoy excellent duck-shooting east of the river. The quiet, however, was broken on the night 11th/12th January when troops of 168th Infantry Brigade eliminated the German outposts east of the river below Castelforte. Other outposts were not disturbed lest surprise in the impending attack might be prejudiced. The British, however, now dominated the river's east bank sufficiently to enable them to carry out the reconnaissances which were necessary before the attack.

5th Division, reinforced by 201st Guards Brigade, was to be on the left. Its first objective was the high ground beyond Minturno defined by the features (right to left) S. Vito-Mt. Natale-Mt. Scauri, with exploitation to Castellonorato.¹ 13th Infantry Brigade, on the right, was to cross the river two miles above the demolished Minturno railway bridge. 17th Infantry Brigade, on the left, was to cross between Minturno and the sea and was also to land a small mixed force from the sea near Mt. d'Argento.² 5th Division's attack was to be 'silent' (without artillery preparation) in the hope of springing a surprise. The Division was provided with 45 assault boats, 497 feet of kapok footbridge, sundry heavy rafts and pontoons, and material for an 80-foot Bailey bridge.

56th Division, on the right, was to seize Mt. Valle Martina, Siola, Ceschito, and also the Damiano feature. Exploitation was to follow to Mt. Rotondo West and Mt. Cerri.³ Like 5th Division, 56th Division

¹ *5th Division*. Main formations and units.

Major-General G. C. Bucknall had been chosen for an appointment in England, and on 22nd January was succeeded by Major-General P. G. S. Gregson-Ellis.

13th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier L. M. Campbell):

2nd Bn The Cameronians, 2nd Bn Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 2nd Bn The Wiltshire Regiment.

15th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier E. O. Martin, Brigadier J. Y. Whitfield from 22nd January):

1st Bn The Green Howards, 1st Bn King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, 1st Bn The York and Lancaster Regiment.

17th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier A. D. Ward):

2nd Bn Royal Scots Fusiliers, 2nd Bn The Northamptonshire Regiment, 6th Bn Seaforth Highlanders.

201st Guards Brigade (Brigadier R. B. R. Colvin):

6th Bn Grenadier Guards, 3rd Bn Coldstream Guards, 2nd Bn Scots Guards.

Royal Artillery. 91st, 92nd, 156th, 98th Army Field Regiments; 102nd Medium Regiment; 52nd A/Tk Regiment, 18th L.A.A. Regiment, 215th Heavy A.A. Battery.

5th Reconnaissance Regiment, 50th R.T.R. less two squadrons, 7th Bn The Cheshire Regiment (MG), Belgian Troop 10th Commando.

² In DUKWs: 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers, Platoon 42nd Field Company R.E., Command Group, U.S. Naval Party, Detachment R.A.M.C. In L.C.T.: Squadron and troop 40th R.T.R., three troops 98th Army Field Regiment (S.P.) R.A.; detachment 42nd A/Tk Regiment R.A., detachments R.E.

50 DUKWs were provided and navigated by 53rd (QM) Bn U.S. Army.

³ There were two Mts Rotondo, one east and one west of Castelforte. Therefore they are named in the text Mt. Rotondo East and Mt. Rotondo West.

chose to cross the Garigliano on a front of two brigades: 169th on the right, 167th on the left.¹ 169th Brigade had one crossing-place near Petronio and two near Tibaldi. 167th Brigade had one crossing-place near Maiano di Sotto, and two in the river bend opposite Scafa Orve. Unlike 5th Division, 56th Division was to have strong artillery support in the form of barrages, concentrations and a counter-battery programme. Besides the artillery given in the outline order of battle of the two divisions, six other regiments were to take part.² 56th Division was given 72 assault boats, 500 feet of kapok foot-bridge, and the necessary rafts.

Besides the plans made by the divisions, Corps H.Q. made certain arrangements. 23rd Armoured Brigade was to create a diversion on the night 17th/18th January by raising an uproar opposite Mt. Castelluccio, while 46th Division, six miles upstream, was to do likewise to confuse the German higher command. Corps Reserve consisted of 2nd S.S. Brigade (Brigadier T. D. L. Churchill) which, less detachments, included Nos. 9, 10, 40 Royal Marine and 43 Royal Marine Commandos. Besides assault-boating and rafting in which the troops concerned carried out some practice on the Volturno, bridging was very important. The Corps Engineer plan provided for one Class 9 bridge to be built south of Highway 7, and one Class 9 north of it, and one Class 30 Bailey pontoon bridge near the demolished bridge which had carried Highway 7 across the river.³

Naval fire support was forthcoming from the cruisers *Orion* and *Spartan*, and the destroyers *Laforey*, *Faulknor*, *Jervis*, *Janus* and *Urchin*. The targets for bombardment were Mt. Scauri, Castellonorato, a road junction east of Formia, and several others. Air support was to be provided mainly by U.S. XII Air Support Command. The policy was to isolate the bridgehead and prevent German reinforcements

¹ *56th Division*. (Major-General G. W. R. Templer). Main formations and units.
167th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier C. E. A. Firth, Brigadier J. Scott-Elliott from 29th January):
 8th and 9th Bns Royal Fusiliers, 7th Bn Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.
168th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier K. C. Davidson) :
 10th Bn Royal Berkshire Regiment, 1st Bn London Scottish Regiment, 1st Bn London Irish Rifles.
169th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier L. O. Lyne):
 2nd/5th, 2nd/6th, 2nd/7th Bns The Queen's Royal Regiment.
Royal Artillery. 64th, 65th, 113th, 142nd Army Field Regiments; 51st Medium Regiment; 67th A/Tk Regiment; 100th L.A.A. Regiment; 214th Heavy A.A. Battery.
 44th Reconnaissance Regiment, squadron 40th R.T.R., 6th Bn The Cheshire Regiment (MG), Polish Troop 10th Commando.
² *2nd Army Group R.A.* 78th Army Field Regiment; 69th, 74th, 140th Medium Regiments, 56th Heavy Regiment.
Corps Troops. 146th Army Field Regiment, No. 654 Air O.P. Squadron.
 Ammunition was dumped at gun positions on the scale in r.p.g.: 25-pdr 400, Medium 250, Heavy 150.
³ Some technical details of river-crossing and the classification of bridges have been given in Chapter XIII.

moving into it; to destroy hostile batteries; and to harass the enemy's movements at night.

Administration was orthodox in principle but was to prove difficult in practice. Field Supply Depots were situated at Villa Literno, and later at Casa Reale for 5th Division, and for 46th and 56th Divisions at Casa Reale, later at Sparanise. Corps railhead for all commodities except ammunition and petrol was at Sparanise. Ammunition was drawn from Capua where a quantity of all natures sufficient for five days was maintained. A special reserve dump consisting of one day's supply for the whole Corps was formed at Mondragone. Petrol was at first obtained from Capua and later from Sparanise and Teano. Transport was not a particular problem as far as the Garigliano because Highway 7, a bad secondary road near the coast, and another as bad, running through Lauro could be used. But once across the river between Minturno and Mt. Valle Martina it was quite another matter. Here only the worst of tracks ran towards the hills. The only suitable forms of transport were Jeeps, mules, and porters. Corps H.Q. organized a Jeep column. Mules were scarce, a little more than 1,000 in the entire Corps.¹ Four Pioneer Companies were allotted to each division as porters. As the battle progressed two supply-dumps were built up west of the Garigliano but to get supplies into the hands of forward troops was a long and crushingly laborious job. In the worst places porters had to climb for as much as 4½ hours, while to carry a wounded man to an ambulance point might take 24 hours. Man-carried stretchers, wheeled stretchers, Jeeps, rafts and DUKWs were forms of transport used until the motor-ambulance was reached.

The crossing of the Garigliano by 5th and 56th Divisions began at 9 p.m. on the night 17th/18th January and was more successful than many of those engaged had dared to hope. Preparations for crossing the water had been very thorough, the lessons learned at the crossing of the Volturno in October 1943 were applied, and ideas were borrowed from the technique of landing on beaches. During two or three nights before the crossing the assault boats and rafts were brought forward to points at the most two thousand yards from the river, and there hidden. Carrying parties, often from battalions in

¹ *Mule States*

	<i>18th January</i>	<i>30th January</i>
5th Division	—	119
46th Division	307	308
56th Division	569	571
Corps Reserve	149	18

The units were 359th Pack Transport Company R.A.S.C., 1st and 4th Italian Pack Transport Companies, 14th Italian Cavalry Group. A well loaded equipment mule carries 160 lb. As a very rough rule of thumb therefore, 14 mules per ton are required.

reserve, with competent guides and leaders had been detailed and rehearsed, and these, after dark on the night 17th/18th January, carried out their duties with very little confusion and overcame the inevitable mishaps. Crossing-places were controlled by 'beachmasters' and 'beach groups' which regulated the passage of boats and rafts to and fro and the exits from water-level up the muddy, fifteen-foot river bank. As a result the assaulting troops were able, in general, to cross, form up, and move into the assault in good order. The night was dark but fortunately fine. We can now shortly review the crossings from left to right.

It was on 17th Infantry Brigade's front that the most serious mishaps occurred. Here an important part of the plan was the capture of the German position on Mt. d'Argento, a large mound near the sea-shore from which a long stretch of the river could be enfiladed. To capture it was the task of 'A' and 'B' companies Royal Scots Fusiliers, landing from the sea in DUKWs. 'C' and 'D' Companies, also borne in DUKWs, were to pass through and capture two features north-west of Minturno. These operations would help 6th Seaforths who were to cross in assault boats near Puntafiume. Unfortunately the navigational difficulties of the eleven-mile passage from Mondragone were too much for the crews of the DUKWs, who were further handicapped by 17th Brigade's delay in setting up guiding lights on shore.¹ As a result 'A' Company of the Royal Scots and some details were landed north of the river. The remainder came ashore south of the river, as did the Beach Command Group. This muddle took time to sort out, and the tank-landing-craft, following up the DUKWs, found no landing-marks and returned to Mondragone without disembarking their guns and tanks. Mt. d'Argento was not captured until shortly after daylight on the 18th, and the assaults which the Royal Scots Fusiliers, the Seaforth and the Northhamptons were to have made towards Minturno were not launched. Moreover daylight confirmed what the experience of the night had suggested, namely that the Germans had thoroughly mined the beaches and their exits north of the river mouth. The three battalions were for the time being stuck fast in a small bridge-head between Highway 7, the Garigliano, and the sea.²

5th Division's second assaulting brigade, the 13th, had better fortune. The 2nd Wiltshires by midnight 17th/18th had all but one company across the river in its bend near the Grottella farm, and were forging ahead towards Tufo. 2nd Royal Inniskillings, opposite Epitaffio, 1,300 yards on the Wiltshires' right, found that most of

¹ It should be remembered that DUKWs were simply amphibious lorries intended to work in simple conditions, e.g. in rivers, in harbours, and off clearly marked beaches. The DUKWs' crews were trained for these conditions and not for more ambitious boat work.

² The operation cost the Royal Scots Fusiliers 140 casualties.

their boats had gone astray owing to a guide's mistake. One company crossed and seized the Epitaffio farm. But surprise had been lost and German shells and mortar bombs came flailing down. Colonel O'Brien Twohig thereupon dashed down to the Wiltshires' crossing and arranged for the remainder of his battalion to cross there in the Wiltshires' boats. This switch was successful and the Inniskillings were over the river by 3 a.m., and preparing to continue their assault at 5.30 a.m.

In 56th Division's sector, in 167th Infantry Brigade, 9th Royal Fusiliers crossed without difficulty near Scafa Orve. A company of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and 8th Royal Fusiliers had the like good fortune near the Grotte farm, as did the remainder of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry near Maiano di Sotto. In 169th Brigade both 2nd/6th Queen's (left) and 2nd/5th Queen's (right) had to carry their boats a long way, an exhausting business not lightened by the need to cross an irrigation ditch about a thousand yards from the river. A vivid example of the tension of these affairs was that of a sapper with 2nd/5th whose nerve broke and who began to scream. It seemed as if every German within miles must hear until a medical officer quietened the unfortunate man with morphia. 2nd/6th however crossed almost unopposed near Petronio, but 2nd/5th a little further upstream attracted violent mortar-fire which destroyed several boats and caused many casualties. Nevertheless the battalion stubbornly persisted and by dawn on the 18th had made its crossing.

By daylight on 18th January therefore the assault battalions of 5th and 56th Divisions had crossed the river, formed up, and were everywhere attacking. The artillery was firing heavily in support, and beyond the immediate battlefield the Kittyhawk fighter-bombers and the Boston light bombers of U.S. XII Air Support Command were attacking German gun areas, and any troops that were to be seen moving in the Liri valley. Once the Germans were aroused they fought hard, and British fortunes varied along the front. Nevertheless a summary of the fighting can be attempted.

In 5th Division 17th Infantry Brigade remained stuck fast, and at about 10 a.m. was counter-attacked by tanks of the Hermann Göring Panzer Regiment which approached along Highway 7 and were driven off by the concentrated fire of five field regiments. In 13th Infantry Brigade the Wiltshires had cleared Tufo village, house to house, but were unable to gain the S. Vito ridge (Pt. 201) beyond.¹ The Inniskillings were on Pt. 156 east of Tufo. Towards evening further British attacks clashed with German counter-attacks, and

¹ Of this sort of fighting a Gunner wrote in March 1944, ' . . . an infantryman said to us when we asked how things were going in a certain village . . . "not so bad, we've captured the front of the first house and at the moment we have a patrol in the cellar." '

after bloody exchanges the Wiltshires held the east end of Tufo but the Inniskillings had lost Pt. 156. In 56th Division's sector there was sharp fighting. 167th Infantry Brigade faced the Salvatito hill and beyond it the higher Damiano feature, a total climb of thirteen hundred and fifty feet. The hill-sides were cultivated in terraces, and every ten yards or so a six-foot retaining wall had to be climbed. 8th Royal Fusiliers fought their way to the spur below the bare summit (Pt. 411) of Damiano, and 9th Royal Fusiliers reached Salvatito hill after some stinging actions in the plain below. The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry cleared and occupied Lorenzo. All this was good but fell short of possession of Mt. Rotondo West and Mt. Cerri which had been hoped for, probably with too much optimism. In 169th Brigade 2nd/6th Queen's gained the western part of the ridge running east from Sujo, and later the western part of Mt. Valle Martina. 2nd/5th Queen's took Pt. 217 on Mt. Castelluccio. 2nd/7th Queen's took Sujo village. 169th Brigade was solidly established, but had three thousand yards and more to cover before reaching the Siola and Ceschito hills.

The Royal Engineers very quickly established four heavy, cable-hauled rafts behind 17th and 13th Brigades, but work on the Class 9 bridges was held up by observed artillery and mortar fire. At the right-hand site the whole engineer reconnaissance party was wiped out, and was at once replaced by another. Behind 56th Division the Royal Engineers opened and operated one Class 40 Bailey pontoon raft-ferry. All engineer work was under heavy, observed fire.

All in all when the sun went down on the 18th January everyone concerned in crossing the Garigliano could feel well satisfied. A series of plans which grew very complex at battalion level had been executed with very few hitches. 5th and 56th Divisions had bitten out a good bridgehead and were in train to enlarge it. Yet the very high losses among the infantry could not be disregarded. Statistics are scarce but we have seen that the Royal Scots Fusiliers had lost 140 officers and men while the Seaforth and Inniskillings each lost a company and in 8th Royal Fusiliers companies were reduced to a strength of between 30 and 40. Such casualties, if continued, could become crippling in a Corps which had no greater reserve formation than one Commando Brigade.

By 8 a.m. or so on the 18th the higher German command knew that 94th Infantry Division's front was holding near the coast but that its reconnaissance battalion had been forced back to the line of the Minturno-Lorenzo road, and that the main defences had been penetrated at Lorenzo and Sujo and at the eastern end of Mt. Valle Martina. Part of 276th Grenadier Regiment was counter-attacking

at Sujo, and 94th Division's Replacement Battalion and a company of 2nd Hermann Göring Panzer Regiment were hastening forward to counter-attack near Minturno. Wentzell, Chief of Staff of *AOK 10*, described the events of the night and early morning as an unpleasant surprise when telephoning the news to Westphal, Kesselring's Chief of Staff.

An hour or so later von Vietinghoff spoke to Kesselring saying that the British forces and the direction of their main thrust had yet to be identified.¹ It was possible that the enemy was staging a demonstration. But Kesselring had already made up his mind. 'This is the greatest crisis that we have so far experienced' he said, and exceptional measures must be taken. In fact Kesselring decided, and confirmed in a telegram sent to *OKW* in the early hours of the 19th, that 10th Corps' attack represented an attempt to force a way into the Liri valley by way of the Ausente valley, and was the first step by 5th Army in an all-out effort to break the German defences south of Cassino. This appreciation, so quickly made, was absolutely correct. Kesselring at once began to put in train far-reaching arrangements to reinforce von Senger. He directed, first, that 2nd/267th Grenadier Regiment must be hurried forward from Formia, and that every clerk and driver of 94th Infantry Division was to be sent into the line. Three battalions of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, and 2nd Hermann Göring Panzer Grenadier Regiment (von Corvin) were to be used as immediate reserves. On the afternoon of 18th January Kesselring ordered Schlemm and his H.Q. 1st Parachute Corps forward from Rome to 94th Infantry Division's sector in readiness to take over 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and 90th Panzer Grenadier Division. The first of these—both were near Rome—was to move at once to the area Esperia–Ausonia and the second to Priverno. With Panzer Jäger Abteilung 525 (A/Tk) they were to constitute an Army Group Reserve. Furthermore 44th Infantry Division's 134th Grenadier Regiment and the reconnaissance battalions of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, and of 44th and 71st Infantry Divisions were to be earmarked as reserves for von Senger's southern flank. The relief of 5th Mountain Division by 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, in progress since 15th January, was now halted and the Panzer Grenadier Division's artillery was sent to 14th Panzer Corps together with that of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, and two G.H.Q. batteries of medium guns from 76th Panzer Corps. 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division which on 15th January had been ordered to relieve 5th Mountain Division at the north of von Senger's front was told to stand fast with a view to employment in

¹ It is interesting that the first identification of 5th Division came from prisoners captured on the 18th. The elaborate precautions taken to keep secret the move of the division had been entirely successful.

the south. The above were the principal re-dispositions which Kesselring ordered. At midnight 19th/20th January he told von Vietinghoff that a line running from near Mt. Scauri on the coast—Minturno—Ceracoli hill—Castelforte—Mt. Purgatorio must be held. He commented rather harshly on the tactics of 14th Panzer Corps, and remarked that it was more by good luck than by good judgment that things had not taken a worse turn. He and von Vietinghoff agreed that Schlemm was to mount a deliberate counter-attack with 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and 94th Infantry Division.

It is interesting that Kesselring, in his appreciation and orders, showed not the smallest suspicion that 5th Army might include a large landing in its plan. Westphal indeed told *AOK 14's* Chief of Staff on the evening of the 18th that a further landing might occur and that he was preparing a regiment of 16th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Division at Lucca, north of Pisa, for a quick move south. Except for this, German commanders near the scene of action seem to have put amphibious operations at the back of their minds.¹ It is tempting to see in the events of 18th January a further stage in Kesselring's development as a commander. He made his judgment of the situation with great speed, and acted decisively and on his own initiative. Contrary to some past and future occasions, Hitler did not for once interfere in tactical matters and on 19th January, in his directive which exhorted *AOK 10* to hold the Gustav Line, he confirmed Kesselring's appreciation of the strategic intentions of Fifth Army.

Nothing in the events of 18th January caused any alteration in McCreery's intention to carve out a bridgehead extending from the Siola hill to Mt. Scauri on the coast. In 5th Division Bucknall therefore ordered the third of his four brigades, the 15th, across the river during the night 18th/19th, and to capture Mt. Rotondo West and Castelforte. The units crossed as best they might by boats and rafts because the engineers' work was being impeded by the enemy's observed fire. 213th Field Company built a folding boat bridge across the river at the Grottella bend by 2 a.m. on the 19th but the first vehicle to cross exploded a mine which lay undetected under the far side ramp and to clear it was a three-hour job. Later on the 19th the bridge was damaged by shells and closed for nine hours. Three heavy rafts had moreover been sunk at various places on the river.

In both 5th and 56th Divisions the fresh troops entered a confused situation because the Germans, obeying their tactical defensive doctrine, were making local counter-attacks wherever and whenever

¹ After the war Kesselring tried to make Admiral Canaris, head of *OKW Abwehr*, bear the blame for the removal of coast-defence troops from the Rome area which was to contribute to the surprise achieved by the Allies at Anzio.

they could with whatever troops they could scrape together. British soldiers of those days in Sicily and Italy often discussed whether this German habit was disconcerting and dangerous or offered a prime opportunity to kill Germans with the Royal Artillery's crashing defensive fire. Apart from these local counter-attacks the Germans made an important decision shortly after noon on the 19th. Kesselring and von Vietinghoff then agreed that 94th Infantry Division was in sufficient danger to compel them to commit 29th Panzer Grenadier Division to counter-attack on the 20th, from the direction of Ausonia and Coreno towards Castelforte. There was no time left for Schlemm to mount his two-divisional counter-attack. Apart from 29th Panzer Grenadier Division the other main reinforcing formation, 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, was stuck at Priverno almost without petrol and under constant air attack.

On the 19th January the Inniskillings (13th Infantry Brigade) east of Tufo were counter-attacked at first light but drove off the enemy and recaptured Pt. 156. 15th Infantry Brigade then passed through and 1st K.O.Y.L.I. cleared Tufo. Later the Green Howards took Minturno. On the 20th the York and Lancaster took Mt. Natale and the Green Howards captured Trimonsuoli, while 201st Guards Brigade crossed the river.

In 56th Division's sector during the night 18th/19th patrols of the London Irish reached the outskirts of Castelforte and confirmed that it was strongly held. During the 19th nevertheless the battalion moved onwards to a point just west of Castelforte. The Royal Berkshires moved into Lorenzo. On Damiano the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry captured Pt. 411, and enjoyed some target-practice as the Germans ran down the slopes towards Ventosa. In 169th Brigade 2nd/7th Queen's had pushed two companies forward to the lower slopes of Siola, east of Castelforte while the other two Queen's battalions were improving their positions on Mt. Valle Martina. During the night 19th/20th the London Irish tried to take Castelforte and at dawn on the 20th were heavily engaged on its western outskirts. By the morning of the 20th, however, 29th Panzer Grenadier Division had assembled a counter-attacking force consisting of its own 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment on the right, von Corvin's Regiment (Hermann Göring) and 44th Reconnaissance Battalion (44th Infantry Division) in the centre, and on the left its own 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment. These troops attacked at 11.30 a.m. aiming to regain the line from Salvatito to Sujo. Their main gains were Pt. 411 on Damiano, and Mt. Natale north-west of Minturno. 14th Panzer Corps late on the 20th reported, rather in advance of the facts, that 29th Panzer Grenadier Division had reached a line from Salvatito hill to Mt. Castiello, east of Castelforte. However, the fighting was still hard and the British were attacking

from Lorenzo towards Damiano. During the afternoon von Senger had reported to von Vietinghoff that the British thrusts from Minturno might prove dangerous. If 29th Panzer Grenadier Division succeeded in its present attacks to regain the line Salvatito-Sujo, a part of it could be switched to S. Maria Infante. Nevertheless it was unlikely that the British could be thrown back over the Garigliano, unless 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was committed. After some argument Kesselring agreed, and orders were given that 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was to be available early on 21st January. 29th Panzer Grenadier Division was meanwhile to continue its attacks. Schlemm and H.Q. 1st Parachute Corps were to command the general counter-attack on the 21st. There would be two objects: the enemy was to be 'thrown out of the main line in the Minturno sector', and the general situation was to be so restored that an Army reserve of at least one three-battalion Regiment could be reconstituted near Ausonia. At this point we must turn to the misfortunes of 46th Division at S. Ambrogio and of 36th U.S. Division at S. Angelo.

46th Division's crossing of the Garigliano on the 19th/20th January was designed to protect the left flank of 2nd U.S. Corps when that formation crossed the Rapido at S. Angelo, five miles to the north of 46th Division, on 20th January. 128th Infantry Brigade was chosen to make the crossing, and its objectives were a low ridge north and south of S. Ambrogio and the village itself.¹ The crossing-places were below the meeting of the Peccia stream and the main river. 2nd Hampshires, on the right, was to launch its assault boats at two places, and 1st/4th Hampshires, on the left, at one. The Divisional artillery, augmented from Corps artillery was in support. When 128th Infantry Brigade had gained a bridgehead, 138th Infantry Brigade was to cross with a view to exploiting westwards to S. Apollinare and S. Giorgio, thus tying in with the northward thrust expected of 5th and 56th Divisions. 128th Infantry Brigade was withdrawn from the line on the night of 11th January in order to rest the troops and to give them some practice in watermanship.

At 8.30 p.m. on the 19th January a thick fog lay over the Garigliano at S. Ambrogio, sometimes penetrated by a pale moonlight. The enemy, mainly the third battalion of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division's 129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, was quiet and seemed to suspect nothing. The stream was running very fast because, as was discovered later, the Germans had opened the sluices of an irrigation

¹ 128th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier T. P. D. Scott):

2nd Bn The Hampshire Regiment, 1st/4th Bn The Hampshire Regiment, 5th Bn The Hampshire Regiment.

In Support

R.A. 70th, 71st, 72nd Field Regiments, 23rd Army Field Regiment, 5th Medium Regiment.

U.S.A. Two batteries 59th Armoured Field Artillery Battalion.

dam far up the Liri at S. Giovanni. This water swelled the Garigliano which with the confluent Peccia produced a current which was to prove fatal for 128th Infantry Brigade.

At the 5th Hampshires' left-hand crossing place a cable was passed across the river in an assault boat, but snapped when a couple more boats, holding a few men, had been hauled across. Repeated attempts to send over another cable or to paddle across resulted only in the boats being swept downstream. At the right-hand crossing the current of the Peccia, entering the main stream, swept the boats slant-wise and downstream to the far bank of the Garigliano, and a company of 2nd Hampshires crossed. The boats were either smashed in landing or could not make the return passage. At 1st/4th Hampshires' crossing attempts were made time and again to paddle a boat across, bearing a cable. All failed. Brave swimmers tried to carry a line across but none succeeded. After some time 1st/4th Hampshires were hurried up-stream to 2nd Hampshires' crossing where fresh boats were to arrive. Meanwhile the Germans had become thoroughly aroused and were attacking the 2nd Hampshires' company which was isolated on the far bank. Those on the near bank tried desperately to pass a cable across, but the approach of dawn put further crossing out of court. General Hawkesworth suspended the operation and later General Clark decided that it would not be resumed. A few survivors of 2nd Hampshires managed somehow to struggle back in water-logged boats.

Direct air support for British 10th Corps included fighter-bomber attacks on gun positions on the 17th as part of a cover plan. That night enemy positions at Pontecorvo and at S. Giorgio, which had been attacked in daylight by U.S. Bostons, were bombed by R.A.F. Bostons from D.A.F. On the 18th, a total of 60 U.S. Bostons and 151 U.S. Kittyhawk fighter-bombers attacked guns and troops at Minturno, guns at Pontecorvo and M.T. in the Pontecorvo-Atina area, dropping 60 tons of bombs in all. In pre-arranged attacks on Mts Scauri and Cerri and against enemy positions in the battle area on the 19th, very strong fighter-bomber support was given to 10th Corps, amounting to 222 Mustang and U.S. Kittyhawk sorties during which the weight of bombs dropped exceeded that of the previous day.

The repulse of 128th Infantry Brigade was good news to *AOK 10*. Yet it caused temporary anxiety also. For some not very clear reason Wentzell deduced that the attempt was the first step in an Allied attack in the S. Angelo-Cassino sector by a force of up to five divisions. It was this apprehension which caused Kesselring and von Vietinghoff temporarily to hesitate to commit 90th Panzer Grenadier Division in the Castelforte sector. The British commanders had to face the unpleasant fact that they had failed 2nd U.S. Corps. On the

other hand Clark's decision that no further crossing should be tried at S. Ambrogio meant that McCreery could use at least a part of 46th Division to reinforce 5th and 56th Divisions.

The Rapido river, south of Highway 6, was from twenty-five to fifty feet wide, nine feet deep, and fast flowing between vertical banks about three and a half feet high from water-level. The Germans had diverted enough river-water through irrigation channels to turn the eastern, or Allied, bank into a kind of marsh. The German defensive positions at the ruined village of S. Angelo and on either side of it were well developed and were sited at distances from the river bank of between two hundred and one thousand yards. These positions were held by 1st Battalion 129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and 3rd Battalion 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, both of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, backed by 3rd Battalion Hermann Göring Panzer Regiment. There were no covered approaches to the river on the eastern bank and the bank had been well scattered with mines.

36th U.S. Division's task was to cross the river and to make a bridgehead two and a half miles deep extending to Pignataro. Combat Command 'B' of 1st U.S. Armoured Division consisting of three battalions of tanks and an Armoured Infantry Regiment was to pass through the bridgehead to Piedimonte and Aquino in the Liri valley. Plans also existed for 34th and 45th U.S. Divisions to use the bridgehead in certain circumstances which never came about.

General Walker decided to use two Infantry Regiments to force the crossing, 141st north of S. Angelo and 143rd south of it. The 141st Infantry had no practice in river-crossings and replaced the better trained 142nd Infantry because Walker liked to share battle equally among his regiments. 1st Battalion of 141st Infantry was to cross in assault boats, and 3rd Battalion was to follow in boats and across foot-bridges. 143rd Infantry was to cross simultaneously in two places, 1st Battalion on the right and 3rd Battalion on the left. A company of each battalion was to use boats and the rest were to follow across foot-bridges. 19th Engineer Combat Regiment (from 2nd U.S. Corps Troops) was to provide assault boats and rafts at the correct points, and later was to build bridges of various types. 36th Division's 111th Engineer Battalion, reinforced by two companies of 16th Armoured Engineer Battalion, was to clear all mines from the chosen approaches, to mark the clear lanes, and later to build two heavy bridges.¹ But, as later appeared, there seemed to be no clear

¹ The American assault boat carried 12 men and two paddlers. It was made of plywood and weighed 3½ cwt. Inflatable rubber boats were used also. The 6-ton inflatable raft carried 24 men of whom 14 were required to paddle. Four men on shore 'steered'

division of responsibility between engineers and infantry for carrying, launching, and propelling boats and rafts. Eight Field Artillery Battalions, drawn from 34th and 36th U.S. Divisions and Combat Command 'B', with twelve others provided by 2nd U.S. Corps, were to support the river-crossing by a thirty-minute bombardment before Zero, and thereafter by observed fire. The crossing-places were to be heavily masked with smoke from generators laid by hand.

The crossings were to begin at 8 p.m. on 20th January and at that hour a heavy fog lay over the river. At 7.30 p.m. sixteen field artillery battalions began to fire their programmes. The enemy replied with defensive fire directed mostly on to the eastern river bank. Many of 1st/141st's boats were destroyed in their dumps or on the way to the river. The engineers threw four foot-bridges across, but all were quickly damaged by fire. One bridge was reconstructed from the debris of four, and by dawn on the 21st about two and a half companies had crossed. The assistant divisional commander, Wilbur, now postponed further crossings as too dangerous in daylight across one foot-bridge.

Further south 1st/143rd managed to send across a company before the tale of smashed boats and foot-bridges began to mount. Replacements were long in coming, yet the whole battalion had crossed by dawn on the 21st. It was then heavily engaged and the battalion commander judged that his position was untenable and ordered a withdrawal to the eastern bank. At 3rd/143rd's crossing place shells, fog, and mines caused complete confusion and no troops crossed.

The attempt to cross the Rapido had failed, but Walker ordered a second attempt to be made at 9 p.m. on 21st January by the same troops at the same places. However, Keyes, the Corps commander, who had come forward, insisted that the attempt should be made at once. This proved to be impossible owing to the difficulties and confusion of reorganization, nevertheless 143rd Infantry was ready by 4.30 p.m. The 3rd Battalion crossed by boats and foot-bridges and two companies of the 2nd Battalion followed. By 6.25 p.m. two companies of the 1st Battalion had crossed. Despite this success, the situation of the 143rd Infantry was unenviable. The Germans poured fire upon them and upon the eastern bank. The engineers were unable to build bridges heavier than foot-bridges, and the American artillery could not observe its supporting fire because of the thick haze of fog and smoke. On the morning of the 22nd the Regimental commander withdrew his men, except for a few unlucky groups, to the east bank.

Further up-stream 141st Infantry renewed its attempt to cross at 9 p.m. on the 21st, and by 4 a.m. on the 22nd most of the rifle companies of two battalions had crossed. Disaster awaited them. As at

the raft by lines attached to bow and stern. The foot-bridge was made of duck-board on floats, the 6 or 8-ton bridges were laid on pontoons. Heavier bridges were Baileys.

143rd Infantry's crossings, the Germans poured down fire. Boats and foot-bridges were destroyed and heavier bridges could not be built. All telephone lines were cut, and this and the haze frustrated the American artillery's efforts to support the unfortunates on the far bank. Towards evening the noise of combat on the far bank died down, and here and there a swimmer returned. All was over. This heavy repulse cost 36th U.S. Division 1,681 casualties—143 killed, 663 wounded, 875 missing—mostly among the infantry. Rodt, commanding 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, and his superiors were pleased with what they considered to be an ordinary local success which called for no special notice.

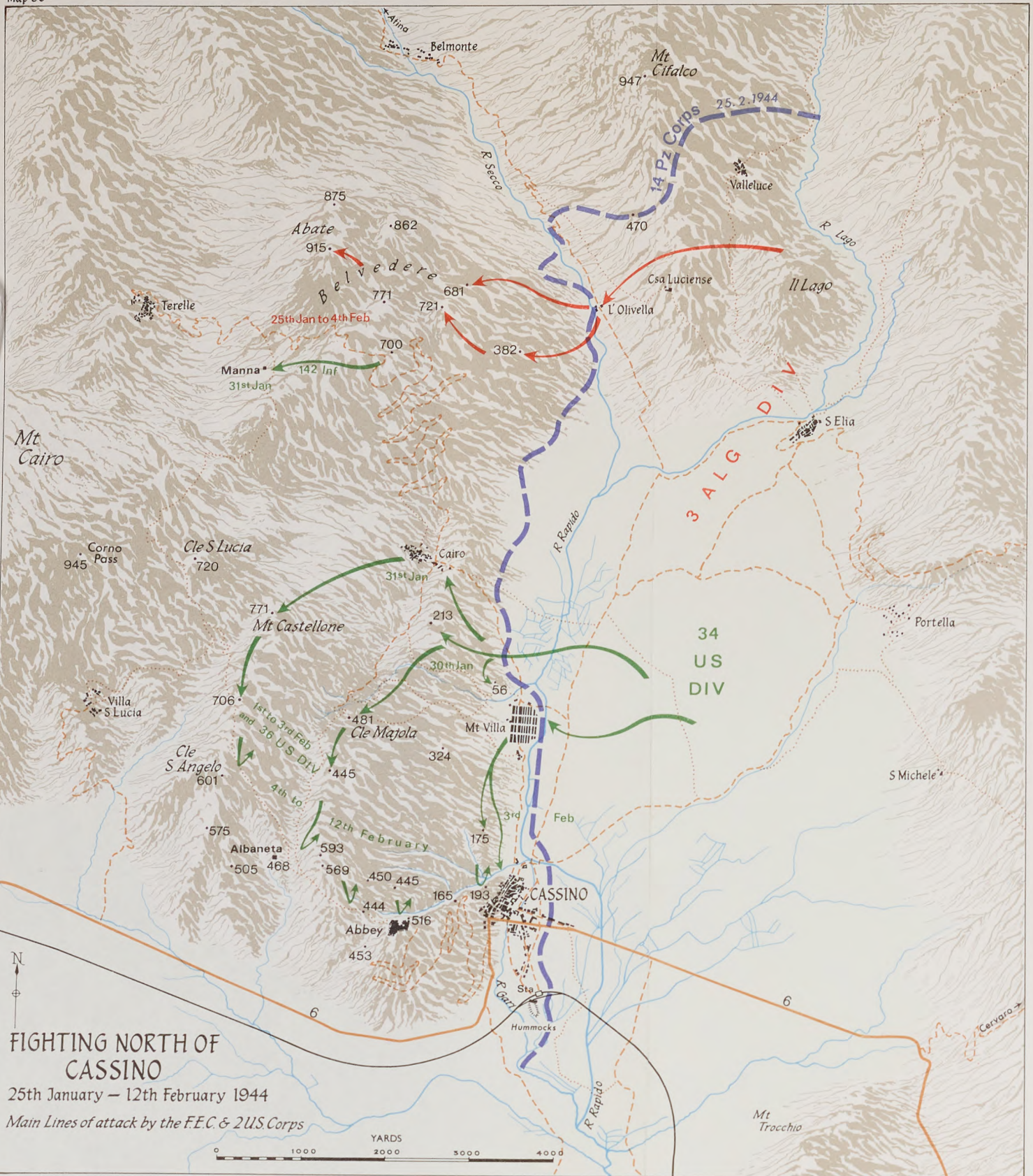
After the failure of 36th U.S. Division and 46th Division Clark had to take stock of his situation. The outstanding features were: that 6th U.S. Corps had landed at Anzio on the 22nd January and had apparently gained a complete surprise; that on the lower Garigliano 10th Corps was successfully holding its bridgehead against counter-attacks but was not advancing northwards; that 2nd U.S. Corps' frontal attack against the Liri valley had failed; and that the F.E.C. had successfully begun a new drive towards Mt. Bianco and Atina on 21st January. Clark knew that his casualties were mounting but could assume that German casualties were at least as heavy.¹

After his review Clark decided that his next main effort would be to try to envelop the German Cassino sector from the north. Accordingly the French Corps was to turn south-west towards Terelle and Piedimonte, and so threaten to cut the German communications. 34th U.S. Division was to cross the Rapido north of Cassino town, and then to turn south, sending one force to capture the town and another, on the right, to take the heights overlooking the town, that is to say Mt. Castellone and the S. Angelo hill, and then the Albaneta farm and Piedimonte. 10th Corps was to continue its operations on the lower Garigliano, aiming as before at S. Giorgio.

The Germans on 22nd January called off the counter-attack against 10th Corps, and although that Corps tried stubbornly until 7th February to improve its positions, it is logical now to turn for a moment to the German side and then to follow the next main thrusts by the French and by 2nd U.S. Corps.

On the German side the Allied landings at Anzio on 22nd January were a complete surprise and created an entirely new situation.

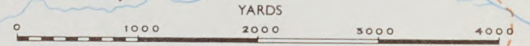
¹ Between 18th January and 22nd January inclusive casualties in 10th Corps were 1,312 and in 2nd U.S. Corps 1,929, a total of 3,241. We do not know the figures for the F.E.C., but can assume that they were much the same as the British or the American. German statistics cover 10-day periods, and between 11th and 20th January casualties in 14th Panzer Corps were 2,487.



FIGHTING NORTH OF CASSINO

25th January - 12th February 1944

Main Lines of attack by the F.E.C. & 2US Corps



Nevertheless the Germans had prepared a framework of plans for such a situation, and therefore the surprise caused no paralysis of will and little loss of time in action. *OKW*, on the morning of the 22nd, gave the landings the status of an independent operation, the first of Allied assaults on the outworks of Fortress Europe, declared Plan Marder 1 (see p. 586) to be in action, and at once sent out orders for the reinforcement of Kesselring's forces.¹ Kesselring had issued as recently as 12th January a directive concerning the action to be taken in the event of large Allied landings on four areas of the Italian coasts. It was assumed that an Allied landing near Rome would have the objects of capturing the city and of cutting *AOK 10*'s supply-line, Highway 6. Kesselring at once began to strip his southern front of reserves and to call down troops from northern Italy.

As regards *AOK 10*, Schlemm, commander of 1st Parachute Corps, was ordered to remove his Corps Headquarters to Grottaferrata, while higher command of the Rome area was given to *AOK 14*. In *AOK 10* von Senger at once ordered 29th Panzer Grenadier Division to turn from counter-attack to defence, and during the afternoon recommended to *AOK 10* that the right wing of 14th Panzer Corps should withdraw at once into the *Führerriegel*.² To shorten the line in this way would enable 29th Panzer Grenadier Division to be drawn into reserve, and might save 94th Infantry Division and neighbouring units from being hammered to pieces by renewed Allied attacks. When this proposal reached Kesselring he turned it down, but allowed the whole of 14th Panzer Corps to go over to the defensive, and to keep 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. At the same time he ordered von Senger to send to Anzio the Hermann Göring Division's von Corvin Regiment and some units of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division. 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division also was ordered to Anzio, without its 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and a battery of artillery which were with 14th Panzer Corps, and which remained in *AOK 10* until March. At 7.40 p.m. on the 22nd *AOK 10* ordered von Senger to take as his right wing's line of defence the features Mt. Scauri on the coast—western slopes of Mt. Natale—Ceraoli hill—Mt. Rondondo East—Mt. Fuga—Mt. Purgatorio. In practice Castelforte and Damiano were included in this line. On 24th January Kesselring rather hopefully told *AOK 10* that the formations and units which had been taken from it for Anzio would be returned to it as soon as

¹ The gathering of German forces against the Anzio bridgehead is described in Chapter XVII. Here only the immediate effects upon *AOK 10* are noticed.

² On the evening of 24 January the grandiose name *Führerriegel* was changed to *Sengerriegel*. The reason may have been that Hitler had given his opinion that *AOK 10*'s present positions would become untenable if the Allies reached out from Anzio to cut its L. of C. It was quickly realized what capital Allied propaganda would make of the loss of a *Führerriegel*.

possible, an encouragement which *AOK 10* repeated to von Senger. In fact 14th Panzer Corps was about to face a very difficult period, with its divisions fragmented and the most dangerous gaps filled only by a patchwork of local reserves, at a time when von Senger claimed that the fighting north of Cassino was costing him the equivalent of a battalion a day.¹

(vi)

See Maps 32 and 35

Clark's decision to envelop the Cassino sector from the north committed the French Expeditionary Corps and 2nd U.S. Corps to a battlefield which Nature, helped by men, made grimly forbidding. From any view point above the narrow valley of the upper Rapido could be seen a landscape dominated in the north and north-west by six mountain masses of from three thousand to three thousand six hundred feet in height.² To anyone who wished to advance westwards on the axis Mt. Bianco-Atina, as Juin wished to do until on 23rd January he received Clark's instructions to change direction, the mountains formed a group because of their natural relations to one another, and because the Gustav Line, running northwards from Cassino town, pivoted on Mt. Belvedere and then slanted north-eastwards towards S. Biagio. The first pair of related masses were the Arena Hill and just north of it Mt. S. Croce. Next in relation came a high east-west chain, about three miles long, formed by Mts Carella, Rotolo, and Bianco. Access to the eastern end of the chain, at Mt. Carella, could be gained by moving northwards up the spurs from Mt. Pedicone. South-west of this chain at about three crow-flight miles' distance stood Mt. Cifalco (Pt. 947; 3,105 feet). This snow-covered, cliff-ringed mountain gave an uncanny feeling that it observed the whole landscape with an ever-open eye. South of Cifalco ran the only road through the system of mountains, from the meeting of the Rapido and Secco rivers up the Secco valley and through Belmonte to Atina, a distance of about seven miles in all. South of this road and dominating it, stood the group of lesser mountains called Mt. Belvedere (Pt. 721; 2,364 feet) and north-west of Belvedere, Mt. Abate (Pt. 915; 3,000 feet). Belvedere and Abate also dominated a road which ran part-way into the mountains, climbing, from Cairo village in the Rapido valley, over two thousand feet in two miles by ten hair-pin bends, to Terelle. It is a surprise that only $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles away southwards across hills of gradually lessening height

¹ Casualties in 14th Panzer Corps from 21st to 31st January were 4,118 as against 2,487 from 11th to 20th January.

² Arena Hill, Mts S. Croce, Pedicone, Carella, Rotolo, Bianco.

lay Highway 6, the road to Rome. All the mountains which we have mentioned were desolate, bleak, and bare of human life in winter. Only here and there in valleys or on tiny plateaux stood lonely farm buildings.

From the meeting of the Secco and the Rapido, the valley of the Rapido, some three miles across at its widest, ran southward. On the west bank of the river a road ran from Cairo village to Cassino town, three miles away to the south. On the west of the road, closely overlooking it, were low, steep, rugged hills. From north to south we may mention S. Lucia hill, Mt. Castellone and west of that, S. Angelo hill. Highway 6 lay two miles distant southward from S. Angelo hill. The military attractions to Allied eyes of the stretch of country between Terelle and Cassino town should now be becoming plain. If here the Gustav defences could be breached at any point, a back entrance of sorts to the Liri valley could be found, perhaps via the S. Angelo hill and the Albaneta farm. If this back door could be seized, and used by even a brigade, the Cassino positions could be attacked from the rear as well as the front.

AOK 10 had always taken seriously the possible Allied threat to its positions north of Cassino and had worked hard to develop defences. In the mountains the Germans relied on natural obstacles rather than man-made defences, and tucked their automatic weapons and mortars into holes and corners, building cover from fire with rocks, boulders, and timber but also placing concrete pill-boxes where necessary. In the Rapido valley, below the meeting of the Secco and the Rapido, the defences were the product of systematic field-engineering. A dam on the Rapido south-west of S. Elia had been breached, and the released water had turned the valley floor into a quagmire seamed with flooded irrigation channels and drainage ditches. Mines had been plentifully sown on both sides of the Rapido and some belts of wire erected. West of the river trees and brush had been cut to leave clear fields of fire, and tree-stumps three feet high had been left as anti-tank obstacles. Along and among the hills between Cassino town and Cairo village there were pill-boxes, emplacements for mortars, and dug-outs, and scattered buildings had been turned into strong-points. The defences of the Liri valley were probably more highly organized but those in the Rapido valley were ugly enough for attacking troops who must struggle across two or three thousand yards of open quagmire, and then ford the river before tackling the defences beyond it.

On 21st January Juin renewed the French Expeditionary Corps' attack. He was still acting on Clark's instructions to seize the 'high ground' north and north-west of Cassino town. His goal was Atina

and he planned to reach it by crossing the worst of the country within his Corps' boundaries on the line Arena hill—Mts Carella—Rotolo—Bianco. He was confident in the powers of his troops to tackle the country and reasoned that the Germans would probably not have built strong defences on approaches which they might think to be impossible.¹ The German troops who were opposite the French Expeditionary Corps were in fact 5th Mountain Division, upon which the Algerian and Moroccan Divisions had already set their bloody mark. The Mountain Division's 85th Mountain Regiment had been relieved in the front line by 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division. North of this regiment stood 3rd Alpine Battalion and the boundary between 5th Mountain and 44th Infantry Divisions ran west to east near Mt. Cifalco.

The first French objectives were the Arena hill, Mt. S. Croce, and Mt. Pedicone. The Arena hill and Mt. Pedicone were taken without great difficulty by 4th Moroccan Infantry Regiment (2nd Moroccan Division) and 7th Algerian Infantry Regiment (3rd Algerian Division), but 5th Moroccan Infantry Regiment (2nd Moroccan Division) had grimmer work on Mt. S. Croce. Its 2nd Battalion could by no means take the summit, and on 23rd January Juin changed his line of attack, sending 2nd Battalion 7th Algerian Infantry against Mt. Carella. This battalion broke into the German defences on 23rd January but could not gain a permanent hold. Meanwhile 2nd Battalion 5th Moroccan Infantry on Mt. S. Croce had been dislodged by a counter-attack, and then had made so savage a riposte that they won the mountain.

Juin's attack therefore had been partly checked when Clark's orders to change direction and take Mts Belvedere and Abate reached him. The new orders were not very welcome because they extended still further Juin's over-extended front, and it was not until 26th January that Clark ordered Keyes to give the French Corps some help. As a result 142nd Infantry (36th U.S. Division), an independent Task Force under Brigadier-General Butler, began to reach the French in the nick of time on 29th January. Besides extending his front, Juin had to switch his supply-points from Acquafondata to Cerreto and to move 3rd Algerian Division to its new jumping-off place in time to attack on 25th January.

The top of Mt. Belvedere was formed by a roughly circular cluster of summits, in a clock-wise order from the north, Pts. 862, 681, 721, 771. A mile west of Belvedere a pyramid of rock, Pt. 700, overlooked

¹ Commenting on Allied tactics at the end of May 1944, Kesselring wrote: 'Ability to cross country is especially notable among the French and Moroccan troops. They have quickly surmounted terrain considered to be impassable, using pack-animals to transport their heavy weapons, and have on many occasions tried to turn our own positions (sometimes in wide encircling movements) in order to break them open from the rear.'

the Terelle road, and pointed north to Pt. 771, and Mt. Abate (Pts. 875 and 915) a mile away. This Belvedere–Abate area had a tactical value because it commanded two valleys, one leading to Atina, the other towards Roccasecca, yet another back door to the Liri valley. The area was held by two battalions of 131st Grenadier Regiment (44th Infantry Division) and 1st Battalion, 191st Grenadier Regiment (71st Infantry Division). 2nd Battalion of 191st Grenadier Regiment was in reserve at Terelle and Belmonte.

Once again the French leaders chose the most difficult approach in the hope of gaining surprise and also of avoiding the field-works in the Rapido valley. The route ran from Il Lago, in the hills west of the Rapido, across the waist-deep Secco at l'Olivella, and then westward up the heights on two lines. One was a two thousand-foot scramble, sometimes a climb, up a fissure that might be called a large chimney.¹ The other, on the left, was the steep ascent from Pt. 382, to Pts. 700 and 771. 4th Tunisian Infantry (3rd Algerian Division) had the honour of the awesome assault. 3rd Battalion, on the right, was to capture Pt. 470, which flanked its approach on the right, and then Pts. 681 and 862. On the left 2nd Battalion was to take Pts. 382, 700 and 771 and then Abate in a second phase. 1st Battalion was in reserve at S. Elia. 3rd Algerian Infantry were to be a flank-guard and support on the right, and Bonjour Group had the same task on the left.

On 25th January 3rd Algerian Division began a mountain battle which lasted until 4th February and was typical of many in the 5th Army because of the rigour of the ground and the ferocity of the fighting. The principal combatants on the Allied side were the three battalions of 4th Tunisian Infantry Regiment (Colonel Roux): 1st (Major Bacqué), 2nd (Major Berne), 3rd (Major Gandoët).² The battle raged on and around Mts Belvedere and Abate which were taken by the French, desperately defended, lost, and then finally re-taken. Though this battle is here described in isolation, its accompaniments, to be related later, were 2nd U.S. Corps' attempts to break the German defences between Cassino town and Cairo village which lasted from 24th January until 12th February; and 10th Corps' repulse of the German counter-attack on 21st and 22nd January and its renewed offensive beginning on 26th January. Battle raged also in the Anzio bridgehead. 'Tout le monde à la bataille' in words attributed to Marshal Foch in the First World War.

In the early morning of 25th January cloud was low on the

¹ This fissure became famous in the F.E.C., and was named le ravin Gandoët after the officer commanding 3rd Bn 4th Tunisian Infantry.

² Of these four officers Roux was killed, Berne and Gandoët were wounded.

mountains, mist filled the valleys, and a thin rain was falling, as 3rd Battalion 4th Tunisian Infantry on the right and 2nd Battalion on the left clambered down into the Secco valley to ford the waist-deep river and to begin an ascent of some 2,500 feet. At 5.40 a.m. the French artillery began a twenty minute bombardment of Pt. 470 and then switched to l'Olivella, and other targets.¹ The 9th Company of Gandoët's 3rd Battalion opened the infantry battle by assaulting the threatening German flanking position on Pt. 470. The French took this position at 10.30 a.m., and for the remainder of the day there was a pitiless sequence of counter-attack, repulse, counter-attack. At nightfall the Germans had regained Pt. 470 but the 18 survivors of 9th Company were grimly holding the slope below. The company had splendidly neutralized Pt. 470 at the cost of its own destruction.

Meanwhile the 3rd and 2nd Battalions broke through or by-passed German positions in Casa Lucienne and l'Olivella. Gandoët's 11th Company began to scramble and climb in Indian file up 'Gandoët Gully' which was fifteen feet deep, very steep, and in places blocked by huge boulders. On the left Berne's 2nd Battalion, on a two-company front, was steadily toiling and fighting upwards towards Pts. 700 and 771, supported by the armoured cars of 3rd Algerian Spahis which nosed up the fantastic hair-pins of the Terelle road. By dusk Pts. 700 and 771 had fallen but the Germans counter-attacked immediately, savagely, and unavailingly. In one of the furious fights Berne was badly wounded.

The 2nd Battalion's success powerfully helped 3rd Battalion's 11th Company, which reached the head of 'Gandoët Gully' during the afternoon to find German posts in front and on the right flank. These, bunkers or pill-boxes, were taken by tactics by now familiar to the Allied forces but not the less perilous. A few brave men, covered by such fire as could be brought to bear, would rush at the flanks of pill-box or bunker. Of those who arrived some would push grenades through the embrasure while others tackled the rear-entrance with grenades and bullets. Sometimes a few trembling men would crawl out from the shambles within to surrender. This was the pattern of a successful attack. But often no attackers reached their goal, and others had to make the same assault.

¹ The French artillery was composed of 63rd, 64th, and 67th Algerian Artillery Regiments armed with 105-mm and 155-mm howitzers. Closely associated with F.E.C. was 13th U.S. Field Artillery Brigade, composed of never less than six Field Artillery Battalions armed with 155-mm howitzers and 155-mm and 4.5-in guns. The howitzers were particularly valuable in mountain warfare because of their high trajectory and heavy shells. Weights of projectiles of American artillery were:

105-mm how. M2A1 and M3	33 lbs
155-mm how. M1	95 lbs
155-mm gun M1A1	99 lbs
8-in how. M1	200 lbs
240-mm how. M1	360 lbs

Such was the scene or scenes until towards dusk on the 25th the survivors of 11th Company, triumphant and exhausted, scrambled up the steep face of Pt. 681. Part of a company of 2nd Battalion had reached Pt. 721. The French now had taken the eastern and southern of the ring of camel-humps that was Mt. Belvedere. They looked into a saucer showing traces of cultivation in a thin soil which had been carried up by generations of Italian peasants. There was one small spring of water, soon to be surrounded by the bodies of French and German soldiers. Unbearable thirst had made these men barter their lives for the chance of a drink. Across the saucer rose the northern part of Mt. Belvedere, Pt. 862, and further off Pts. 915 and 875 of Mt. Abate.

We cannot follow all the details of the following days. In the afternoon of the 26th the 3rd Battalion stormed Pt. 862 and an extraordinary incident occurred during the fight. 2nd Lieutenant Bouakkaz had publicly sworn to be first on Pt. 862 but was killed as he charged. Three tirailleurs picked up his body and bore it forward. Themselves miraculously surviving, they placed the dead officer on the summit, the first to reach it, faithful to his oath. Early on 27th January the 2nd Battalion captured Pts. 915 and 875, foot by foot. The 4th Tunisian Infantry had gained its objectives but to hold them was another matter. Losses had been grievous (150 men remained in action in the 2nd Battalion), ammunition was running short, and the one day's K ration had been eaten and the water-bottles had been drained. No general replenishment was in sight because of eighty mules sent up during the night 26th/27th only two arrived. Seventy-eight were killed or disabled by the scything machine gun and mortar fire. Part of the 1st Battalion was coming up the hill, and de Monsabert was sending forward a battalion of the 7th Algerian Infantry. A battalion of 3rd Algerian Infantry had reached the Secco valley, where small parties of 4th Tunisian Infantry and some anti-tank guns of 8th Chasseurs d'Afrique were mopping up in l'Olivella and Casa Lucienne as a preliminary to forming a badly needed defensive flank in the Belmonte valley to relieve the survivors of 9th Company of the Tunisians. In this confused fighting on the 27th Colonel Roux was killed.

On the German side von Senger believed that 26th January would be a day of crisis for he judged that Juin might be aiming at Terelle thus 'causing the Cassino block to cave in from the north'. A frantic hunt for reinforcements resulted, on 25th January, in the immediate commitment of 2nd Battalion 191st Grenadier Regiment (71st Infantry Division), and in the infantry role of an engineer company and some gunners.¹ Kesselring himself authorized 1st and 3rd

¹ Contrary to British practice, the Germans were always ready to use engineers as infantry, and by 31st January eleven companies of 14th Panzer Corps' engineers were in

Battalions, 134th Grenadier Regiment (44th Infantry Division), from so-called 'reserve', an assault-gun battery, and a troop of *nebelwerfer*, to be sent to the Belmonte area. Another reinforcement was 103rd Reconnaissance Battalion from 94th Infantry Division's front.

During the 27th 2nd Battalion 191st Grenadier Regiment pushed the French off Mt. Abate, and 1st and 3rd Battalions 134th Grenadier Regiment did likewise at Pt. 700 while part of the 3rd Battalion infiltrated to l'Olivella. By midnight 27th/28th Wentzell was deeply thankful to agree with an earlier opinion of Kesselring's, after a visit to the Belmonte sector, that the French had been stopped. A further search for reinforcements, however, produced only a *marsch* battalion and a company of miscellaneous *Luftwaffe* ground troops. Six German battalions were now engaged with the French.¹

But the French were by no means at a standstill, and on the 27th de Monsabert ordered a general counter-attack. This proved impossible to launch until the 29th when 1st and 3rd Tunisian Battalions and the newly arrived 3rd Battalion, 7th Algerian Infantry recaptured Pts. 862 and 700. The desperate battering of attack and counter-attack and the bloody exchanges of pieces of ground raged on, but the will of the French was unbreakable. On one day Bacqué and a few companies were driven from the lately recaptured Pt. 771, abandoning two mortars. Bacqué planted his walking-stick in the ground and said 'Venez. Nous reviendrons chercher tout ça demain.' Besides the tenacity of the French their salvation lay in the tremendous defensive fire of the French and American artillery. Considerations of safety had now been thrown to the winds and forward observers even gave their own positions as reference points. All that mattered were the defensive, flaming rings of bursting shells because on the hill small-arms ammunition, grenades, and mortar-bombs were being hoarded and fired in ones and twos.² The French on the hill were now starving and mad with thirst. On the 28th some Goumiers with eleven mules passed through the fire bringing ammunition, scraps of food, and driblets of wine and coffee. But on the 29th 26 mules arrived by the Terelle road and drew from Gandoët the exulting cry '... Vivres et munitions. C'est la fortune, c'est la victoire certaine ...'

He was right. On 28th January von Vietinghoff and Kesselring agreed that 14th Panzer Corps as a whole had shot its bolt. On the

the line to the detriment of work on field defences. In the British, Indian, and Dominion forces engineers, although trained to fight as infantry, were seldom used as such because it was believed that this was a misuse of highly trained technical troops.

¹ Two battalions 131st Grenadier Regiment, two battalions 134th Grenadier Regiment, two battalions 191st Grenadier Regiment. Something like 59 field-pieces and three troops of *nebelwerfer* were in action, and of course large numbers of mortars.

² Between 24th-31st January the American artillery fired 164,203 rounds in support of 34th U.S. Infantry Division and 3rd Algerian Infantry Division. We know the expenditure of one French artillery 'group' only: 15,920 rounds in five days.

29th 5th Mountain Division's sector was extended southwards to take in the Belmonte valley and Mt. Belvedere in order to help the much-tried 44th Infantry Division in controlling a patchwork assembly of units. Nevertheless the German battle steadily became a battle to contain the French in the salient which they had won. On 1st February 1st Battalion 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (3rd Panzer Grenadier Division) came into action, the last significant German reinforcement for this part of the front.

On the 29th Juin wrote to Clark that he had come to the end of his resources because 2nd Moroccan Division was fully engaged as his right flank-guard, and 3rd Algerian Division could attack for twenty-four hours more. But on the 29th the American 142nd Infantry began to come into action on the left of the Terelle road, and during the next two days drew level with the French who were retaking Mt. Abate for good. The 7th Algerian Infantry, the remnant of 4th Tunisian Infantry (for on 27th January the 2nd Battalion had been almost destroyed, the 1st had lost over a quarter, and the 3rd over a third of their strengths), and 3rd Algerian Infantry held Mts Abate and Belvedere, and the Belmonte valley and the hills eastward of it. There would be little change until the end of March. But the blind chance of battle had to strike once more—on 3rd February Gandoët, his orderly Gacem ben Mohammed, his senior Warrant Officer, Dick, and Lieutenant Jordy who had led 11th Company first up 'Gandoët Gully' and through the whole battle, were descending Mt. Belvedere to rest. A chance salvo of shells killed Jordy and Dick and wounded Gandoët and his orderly.

The battle on Mts Belvedere and Abate has been told at some length for another reason than its tactical interest. It was here perhaps that French arms personified in 4th Tunisian Infantry and in the F.E.C., born from the historic and glorious Army of Africa, rose like a phoenix. The magnificent ascent cost 4th Tunisian Infantry 1,372 officers and men, over half its strength. The F.E.C. between December 1943 and mid-February 1944 suffered 7,836 casualties.¹

The weather and the return of some of the fighter-bombers of U.S. XII A.S.C. to fighter duties to cover Anzio seriously reduced the air support available for the French Expeditionary Corps. Nevertheless, during the spell of good weather from the 27th to the 29th a fair amount of direct and indirect air support was given. On the 27th 60 U.S. Bostons bombed army targets at Terelle with 40 tons of bombs, while 63 Mustangs attacked enemy lines of communication facing the French to help them withstand a fierce German

¹ There is no separate account of German casualties in this battle. von Senger, on 29th January, spoke of losing a battalion a day and doubtless exaggerated. On 5th February one battalion of 134th Grenadier Regiment is noted as destroyed, and the other two as having a combined fighting strength of 260. 131st Grenadier Regiment on the same day had a fighting strength of 430 in its three battalions.

counter-attack. Next day the Mustangs bombed gun positions, and U.S. Kittyhawks bombed targets at Belmonte and Terelle; meanwhile other Mustangs supported by R.A.F. Kittyhawks from D.A.F. attacked Avezzano in indirect support. On the 29th guns at Terelle were again attacked by the U.S. Kittyhawks, and U.S. Kittyhawks from D.A.F. bombed enemy traffic on the Avezzano-Frosinone road claiming 21 vehicles destroyed, 82 damaged and a further 33 set on fire. Though the total effort in support of the French was modest, it was the best that could be provided in the circumstances.

We have already (p. 602) noted Clark's plan to envelop the Cassino sector from the north and have described the F.E.C.'s part in it. General Keyes now had available for battle in his 2nd U.S. Corps only 34th U.S. Division. He had also 753rd, 756th, and 760th Tank Battalions, and, besides, 34th Division's four Field Artillery Battalions, thirteen more including two of 8-inch, and two of 240-mm howitzers.¹ The three tank battalions and all the Corps' artillery were placed in support of 34th Division. Ryder's final objectives were Mt. Castellone (Pt. 771), S. Angelo hill (Pt. 601) and Albaneta farm. When he had secured these he was to cut Highway 6 west of Cassino town and to be ready to capture Piedimonte. 133rd Infantry was to capture the village of Mt. Villa and the low hills north of it, Pts. 56 and 213. 135th Infantry was to be ready to pass through the 133rd and to attack Cassino town to southward, and 168th Infantry was to stand ready to capture the division's final objectives. 133rd Infantry was to begin its attack at 10 p.m. on 24th January. The plan was familiar in shape: to form a bridgehead across the Rapido (here mostly fordable) and from this to make further attacks. In the sector which the Americans chose to attack 14th Panzer Corps disposed of part of 44th Infantry Division (Lieut.-General Franek; from 11th January) reinforced on 16th January by 211th Grenadier Regiment of 71st Infantry Division.² 211th Grenadier Regiment was in and about Cassino town, 132nd Grenadier Regiment at Mt. Villa, a battalion of 131st Grenadier Regiment south of Cassino, and 134th Grenadier Regiment in reserve, although on the night of 25th/26th January two of its three battalions were sent to the Belmonte sector.

¹ 34th U.S. Division (Major-General Charles W. Ryder):

133rd Infantry Regiment (Colonel Carley L. Marshall): Two battalions and 100th Infantry Battalion attached.

135th Infantry Regiment (Colonel Robert W. Ward): Three battalions.

168th Infantry Regiment (Colonel Mark M. Boatner): Three battalions.

² At this date *AOK 10's* plan (doomed to frustration) was for 71st Infantry Division to take over part of 44th's front. 44th Infantry Division would then concentrate at Cassino, relieving von Corvin's Regiment (Hermann Göring Panzer Division). Further intricate reliefs would result in 15th Panzer Grenadier Division becoming available as Army reserve. But all the detailed schemes of regrouping collapsed into a never ceasing jugglery to meet each day's problems.

The Germans were fully alert, expecting to be attacked at any moment, and they enjoyed matchless observation of the whole battlefield from the high ground.

In the battle which began on 24th January 34th U.S. Division, by 31st January, captured Pts. 56, 213, and Cairo village but were unable to make further gains. From 1st February the operations merge, after a short lull, into what we have chosen to call the First and Second Battles of Mt. Cassino (Chapter XVIII).

During the night 24th/25th January 133rd Infantry succeeded only in reaching the east bank of the Rapido. Minefields, heavy fire, and the fact that 756th Tank Battalion could find no fords across the river, caused this slow progress. At 4.30 a.m. on the 25th therefore Ryder ordered 100th Battalion to cross on the left of 1st Battalion and capture the lower part of Majola hill, while 3rd Battalion crossed on the right of the 100th to take Pt. 213. This plan was so far successful that by midnight 25th/26th all three battalions had made a small bridgehead on the west bank of the river. Ryder now ordered 133rd Infantry to enlarge this bridgehead on 26th January with a view to passing 168th Infantry through. Once again little progress was made and 132nd Grenadier Regiment was unperturbed by the attacks. Ryder now ordered 135th Infantry to cross south of Mt. Villa and capture the eastern slopes of Majola. In the small hours of the 27th a company of 1st Battalion of the 135th crossed, only to be recalled by the battalion commander from a position which he judged to be untenable in daylight. At 10 a.m. 27th January the 1st Battalion of the 135th, the 100th Battalion, and some tanks renewed the attack and failed.

Ryder meanwhile had ordered 168th Infantry and 756th Tank Battalion to capture Pt. 213 on 27th January, beginning at 7.30 a.m. After an hour's artillery preparation, during which 5,460 rounds were fired, 756th Tank Battalion led off along a small track leading to Pt. 213, but only four tanks crossed the Rapido; anti-tank fire, mines, and mud halted the rest. Two battalions of 168th Infantry crossed nevertheless, and after dark some men reached Pt. 213. Their company commander, however, withdrew them to the east bank of the river from what he judged to be too dangerous a position, an example which was followed by almost all of the two battalions.

28th January passed in mounting a fresh attack for the 29th, in particular in discovering and improving three tracks for tanks. On the morning of 29th January part of 760th Tank Battalion headed the attack, and seven tanks crossed the river while two battalions of 168th advanced very slowly but steadily across the valley. At 4 p.m. 23 tanks of 756th Tank Battalion entered the battle and restored its flagging impetus. Under a torrent of direct supporting fire from the

tanks (some 1,000 75-mm H.E. shells) the infantry moved forward, reached the bases of Pts. 56 and 213 by nightfall and took these hills during the night 29th/30th January, and on 31st January a quick foray captured Cairo village. The Germans were not markedly worried by the loss of ground but hastened to form a defensive flank between Pt. 56, west of Mt. Villa, and the S. Lucia hill.

We now return to 10th Corps in its bridgehead on the lower Garigliano. The failure and suspension of 46th Division's operation at S. Ambrogio gave McCreery the opportunity, however disagreeable its cause, to draw upon the division in order to reinforce the bridgehead with a view to attacking northwards towards Mts Fuga and Purgatorio.¹ And so during the night 20th/21st January 138th Brigade replaced 169th Brigade, except for 2/7th Queen's, on Mt. Valle Martina and Mt. Castiello; 168th Brigade side-stepped to the left and relieved 167th Brigade on most of Damiano; 167th Brigade remained responsible for Salvatito hill and Lorenzo.² This regrouping was in progress when the German counter-attacks, briefly mentioned on p. 616 came in.

These counter-attacks were made at intervals from the morning of 20th January until the evening of 22nd January. The Germans had intended to mount a deliberate counter-attack by 94th Infantry Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, to which on second thoughts 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was added; the whole to be co-ordinated by General Schlemm and his H.Q. 1st Parachute Corps. This co-ordinated attack never took place for several reasons. Schlemm appeared on the morning 21st January but busied himself over details rather than in grasping and driving on the whole manoeuvre and then on the morning of 22nd January he was whisked away to Anzio. Moreover, between 19th and 21st January continual air attacks by Kittyhawks and Mustangs of U.S. XII Air Support Command pinned down 90th Panzer Grenadier Division so effectively that only its Battle Group Baade came into action, and not until 4.30 p.m. on 21st January.³

¹ Some battalion war diaries give the numbers of casualties which they had suffered by various dates in the last fortnight of January. The figures suggest how heavy was the loss in the infantry, and how great was the need for reinforcements.

13th Brigade: 2nd Wiltshires—195.

15th Brigade: 1st Green Howards—128, 1st K.O.Y.L.I.—174,
1st York and Lancaster—253.

17th Brigade: 2nd Royal Scots—53 in addition to 140 noted on p. 612.

167th Brigade: 8th Royal Fusiliers—144.

168th Brigade: 10th Royal Berkshires—136.

169th Brigade: 2/7th Queen's—195.

² *138th Brigade:* 6th Lincolnshires, 2/4th K.O.Y.L.I., 6th York and Lancaster. 169th Brigade, as a whole, returned to the lower slopes of Damiano on 22nd January.

³ *Battle Group Baade:* 1st and 2nd Bns 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 3rd Bn 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the divisional anti-tank battalion and an engineer company.

The German counter-attacks began, on 20th January, in the areas of Pt. 201 north-west of Tufo, on the western slopes of Salvatito hill, and on Damiano. The fighting in the areas Tufo-Minturno was complicated by the fact that 15th Infantry Brigade was advancing and captured Trimonsuoli village and ridge, and Mt. Natale, while its right-hand neighbour, 13th Brigade, was being counter-attacked north-west of Tufo. During the next two days 21st and 22nd January, the fighting continued in the areas which have been mentioned, and in addition the Germans tried to penetrate to Lorenzo along the eastern foothills of Damiano, and, east of Castelforte, towards Mt. Castiello and the Sujo valley. Several features changed hands at least twice, and the fighting increased in severity until on 22nd January the British judged it to be the hardest since the battle in the bridgehead had begun. On the 22nd January, for example, 56th Division's artillery fired almost continually for nearly five hours from 2 p.m. British casualties were heavy.¹ But the bridgehead as a whole was stubbornly held and when, as we have seen, developments at Anzio caused Kesselring and von Senger to break off the counter-attacks on the evening of the 22nd the Germans had gained only Mt. Natale and the northern part of Damiano including Pt. 411. Their hold on both points was not, in their own opinion, very strong and when on 25th January Colonel Schmidt von Altenstadt, 14th Panzer Corps' new Chief of Staff, came down in search of reinforcements for the Terelle-Belmonte sector, the commanders of 29th Panzer Grenadier and 94th Infantry Divisions declared that they could spare nothing if they were to continue to hold their positions.

The German counter-attacks scarcely interrupted McCreery's plans to regroup and to attack once more. The regrouping amounted to the concentration of his three divisions within the bridgehead. The new attack, as defined in McCreery's orders of 26th January, was to enlarge the bridgehead by capturing Mts Fuga, Ceschito, and dei Bracchi, eliminating in the process the German positions at Castelforte and on the northern part of Damiano. When the bridgehead had been enlarged the advance would continue on the axis Castelforte-Ausonia. 46th Division did not assume its new responsibilities within the bridgehead until 26th January. Meanwhile two local attacks were made: to recapture Mt. Natale which dominated the first stretch of the Minturno-Ausonia road, and also to clear Damiano as a preliminary to advance towards Castelforte and Mt. Ceschito.

¹ Some that have been recorded are:

167th Brigade: 7th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry—180,
8th Royal Fusiliers—140.
169th Brigade: 2/7th Queen's—195.
13th Brigade: 2nd Wiltshires—195.
15th Brigade: 1st Green Howards—128, 1st York and Lancaster—253.

And so on the 23rd January in the late afternoon 17th Brigade sent 6th Seaforth and 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers against Mt. Natale. Rough country, mist, and the onset of darkness hindered co-operation and only one company of the Royal Scots Fusiliers reached the objective and was then withdrawn. On 23rd January also 2/6th Queen's (169th Brigade) moved over the crest of Salvatito and then downwards, reaching Pt. 106 in the plain east of the Ausente. The London Scottish and two platoons of the Royal Berkshires (both of 168th Brigade) attacked towards the crest of Damiano but failed. In this action Private G. A. Mitchell of the London Scottish won the V.C., at the cost of his life, for attacking sometimes alone, sometimes leading a handful of comrades, no less than four German posts in succession.

Under McCreery's new plan 46th Division was to capture Mt. Fuga, and from this position to strike south-west to take Castelforte from behind. At the same time 5th Division was to capture Mt. Natale. Then 56th Division was to take Castelforte and Ceschito, and in a final phase 5th Division was to capture Mt. dei Bracchi, and 56th Division Mt. Cerri. The country which 46th Division would have to traverse was mountainous, presenting in Mts Rotondo East, Furlito, Fuga, Purgatorio, and Ornito, a series of barren, wild, boulder-strewn heights (the mean was 2,000 feet) rising from deep dividing valleys. Supplies could be carried up only by mules and porters in a journey which might last from three to twelve hours.¹ In early December McCreery had disagreed with a plan proposed by Keyes (2nd U.S. Corps) which would have committed 10th Corps to large operations in this tract of country, for which they were not trained or equipped.

McCreery's apprehensions were, however, disproved by 46th Division's 138th Brigade (Brigadier G. P. Harding) which began the attack on the night 26th/27th January. The Germans in this sector were 1st Battalion 276th Grenadier Regiment of 94th Infantry Division and 1st and 3rd Battalions of 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions's 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment. These troops were thin on the ground and without reserves. 2/4th K.O.Y.L.I. led off by taking the hill just north of Mt. Valle Martina and 6th Lincolns won a firm footing on the slopes of Mt. Rotondo East, going on to capture this hill on 28th January, when also the K.O.Y.L.I. took Ruffiano farm. On the 29th 6th York and Lancaster captured Mt. Furlito and later Fuga, and on the 30th the K.O.Y.L.I. took Mt. Purgatorio. In several of the actions the German troops appeared to have been surprised, perhaps because the difficult country in which their

¹ A contemporary calculation, based on experience, was that 687 porters were required to establish and maintain a battalion on a hill like Mt. Camino (2,680 feet). Such calculations of course varied according to the size and nature of the features, to the numbers to be maintained 'on top', to the scales of ammunition, food, water, etc. which were required.

positions lay gave them a false sense of security. On the left flank of the bridgehead 5th Division was as successful as the 46th. On 29th January 6th Grenadier Guards and 3rd Coldstream Guards (201st Guards Brigade) began to drive the enemy from the north-western end of the Trimonsuoli ridge, an operation which was completed on the 30th. On the 30th January 2nd Northhamptons and 6th Seaforth (17th Infantry Brigade) took Mt. Natale and the spurs east of it. The attacks of both brigades were supported by almost the whole of 10th Corps' artillery and by the cruiser H.M.S. *Penelope* and the destroyer H.M.S. *Inglefield*. In the centre, however, 56th Division's attack on Castelforte failed. For this operation the Division had taken under command 46th Division's 128th Infantry Brigade. On 29th January 1/4th Hampshires attacked the ill-omened Pt. 411 which was by now strewn with British and German corpses. Several attempts to capture the base and the rocky summit failed, and 2nd Hampshires, passing through their sister battalion, had no better luck. The attack was abandoned for the time being.

On 30th January 10th Corps was ordered to provide a brigade to reinforce 1st Division at Anzio. 168th Brigade was chosen and the necessary reliefs postponed further operations for a few days. McCreery had decided to exploit 46th Division's success at Mts Fuga, Furlito, and Purgatorio by taking Mt. Faito and by developing from that vantage point operations to take Castelforte from the rear. The new attack was to be begun by 2nd Special Service Brigade (Brigadier T. D. L. Churchill) which had just returned from Anzio and which consisted of 9th Commando and 43rd Royal Marine Commando. On the night 2nd/3rd February this formation set out to capture the approaches to Faito, that is to say Pt. 711 and Mt. Ornito, and then Faito itself. This area was held by 2nd Battalion 276th Grenadier Regiment. The Royal Marine Commando, infiltrating on several lines, secured Pt. 711 and Ornito before dawn on the 3rd, almost before the German posts realized what was happening. But the action aroused the posts on Faito and these repulsed 9th Commando in a savage dog-fight in the dark. On 3rd February therefore 5th Hampshires relieved the Commandos while fresh plans were laid.¹

These plans were for 138th Brigade reinforced by 5th Hampshires (128th Brigade) to capture Cerasola (Pt. 761) and Faito, and then to strike north-west against the southern point of Mt. Majo, known as Mt. Feuci or Pt. 821. 1st Guards Brigade was then to advance westward against the hills north of Castelforte.²

¹ Casualties in 2nd S.S. Brigade were 183. A Commando numbered 447 of all ranks.

² 1st Guards Brigade (Brigadier J. C. Haydon) was in 6th Armoured Division in North Africa. Its battalions were 3rd Grenadier Guards, 2nd Coldstream Guards, 3rd Welsh Guards. The brigade disembarked at Naples on 5th February and moved at once to join 46th Division.

On the night 7th/8th February 5th Hampshires cleared the few German posts on Cerasola and found themselves on a narrow ridge overlooked by other German posts on higher ground to north and west. 6th Lincolns twice reached Mt. Faito and twice were pushed off it by immediate counter-attacks which caused them to fall back on Ornito. The Germans now made several fruitless attacks against Mts Ornito and Cerasola. 2nd Coldstream Guards relieved the Hampshires and the K.O.Y.L.I. on Ornito, and settled down to defence in weather which made life a misery with rain, sleet, and snow.

In fact on 9th February the whole of 10th Corps went over to the defensive. Reinforcements were badly needed at Anzio and the whole of 56th Division was placed under orders to go there. The focal points of the struggle now became Cassino and Anzio.

The fighting on 5th Army's main front (that is apart from the bridgehead at Anzio) had not fulfilled the Allies' hopes in that 5th Army still was far from advancing up the Liri valley towards a junction with 6th U.S. Corps. This Corps moreover was penned in the Anzio bridgehead. On the other hand 2nd U.S. Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps had made a useful bridgehead across the Rapido river, and had penetrated the Gustav Line between Cairo and Mt. Belvedere. These gains at least made possible further operations south-westward against Cassino town and Mt. Cassino, positions which the Germans had to keep if they wished to hold the defences of the Liri valley. 10th Corps had made a satisfactory bridgehead across the lower Garigliano which endangered the right flank of the Gustav Line, because operations could be mounted from the bridgehead against the southern side-entrance to the Liri valley or along the coast. Moreover the battles fought by the three Allied Corps along the length of the Gustav Line had attracted the whole German attention until 6th U.S. Corps had landed at Anzio unopposed. The battles also had brought the Germans to a dire need for reserves. The German troops had very nearly fulfilled Hitler's orders to hold every inch of ground but not his injunction to recapture every inch that was lost. They had demonstrated very clearly the enormous power of the defence in mountainous country. Yet on the whole front the situation was approaching stalemate, and the cost in casualties was sadly high.¹

¹ Battle casualties in 10th Corps amounted to 4,145 between 23rd January and 13th February, and in the American forces to 10,230.

Battle casualties in 14th Panzer Corps between 21st January and 10th February were 6,444.

(vii)

During January there were six days of good flying weather west of the Apennines and three to the east of them. On the remaining days the weather ranged from difficult through bad to the impossible, but of course not simultaneously the same everywhere. The weather might change within a day or during a single flight, and the effects of bad weather were different for different types of aircraft and their pilots. As regards fighters and fighter-bombers, when a fairly clear sky quickly clouded over and clouds shrouded the mountains, forcing the aircraft down to low level, the pilots faced a maze of narrow routes and dangerous blind alleys. The mountainous walls made radio reception poor, and to add to the pilots' problems driving and blinding rain made their short view shorter still, while the roll and pitch of the turbulence made it very difficult to read instruments. More stable aircraft, for example bombers, over-flew the weather or flew through it with a safety margin of height instead of groping through its lower layers or flying beneath it. Yet in every pilot's mind there would be the aviator's traditional maxim that 'What goes up must come down', and the worse the weather the greater would seem the truth of the maxim and the force of its anxious implications. At night darkness increased the hazards of bad weather. These were bad enough for such aircraft as the Wellingtons which could over-fly the mountains with height to spare, yet these aircraft still had to descend to their airfields. Other night-flying aircraft, for example Bostons, because their targets were usually roads and the traffic on them, faced greater dangers because to find and hit their targets they had to forgo the safety of height. On the ground maintenance crews had to endure and overcome the most dispiriting conditions and the most frustrating difficulties without the stimulus of engaging the enemy. When gales, rain, and sleet swept the airfields and their makeshift shelters, and mud was everywhere, half-frozen aircraftmen toiled with numbed fingers to repair and adjust complicated and in some instances delicate machinery. Their knowledge that an unserviceable aircraft is useless and that upon their skill and efficiency the lives of aircrews depended, brought them most creditably through their trials.

The bad flying weather in January grounded the heavy day bombers on six and the medium day bombers on four days, and the U.S. XII A.S.C. in western Italy on one and the Desert Air Force in eastern Italy on three days. The first and fifth days of the month were particularly bad over the whole of the central Mediterranean and virtually no flying was possible at all. However, for the tactical air forces the cumulative effect of the restrictions placed on flying by

the weather on those days when some flying was possible was very much greater than that of the few days when no flying was possible at all. For example, on 5th Army's front flying was restricted on five and severely restricted on eight days. It was unfortunate that one spell of four days' poor weather beginning on the 23rd should have fallen within the period which saw some of the most important fighting on the Gustav Line.¹ Such were the effects of the weather, but since October the Allied air forces had become ever more experienced in flying through difficult or bad flying conditions in search of areas where good weather was likely to be found. Thus the heavy day bombers might turn from distant targets in northern Italy to others in the Balkans, while the medium day bombers—one group of Mitchells at Foggia, two at Naples, and three groups of Marauders in Sardinia—were advantageously disposed to seize any opportunity to attack their primary targets in central Italy, airfields, railways, and roads. The fighters and fighter-bombers, and the light bombers, had to face perhaps the greatest difficulties, because their primary targets lay within or just beyond the mountainous battlefield and their operations were linked with those of the troops on the ground who took no account of what the flying conditions might be.

On 5th Army's front the operations of U.S. XII A.S.C. fall into two phases. These were the month's first three weeks and last ten days. During the first phase the fighters carried out their normal patrols while some of the fighter-bombers attacked German front-line positions. Others of the fighter-bombers joined the day-flying light bombers in attacking roads, railways, and whatever other targets might be given to them, beyond the battlefield. In these latter tasks U.S. XII A.S.C. was helped by the night-flying Bostons of D.A.F. which continued these attacks during the hours of darkness. During the second phase U.S. XII A.S.C. had the additional task of answering calls of 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio, while most of its attacks were directed to severing the communications of the German forces ranged against the beachhead. Its fighters, in particular, were almost wholly occupied in the air defence of 6th U.S. Corps. On 8th Army's front the Desert Air Force's fighter-bombers by day and its light bombers by day and by night gave much of their efforts to preventing the Germans reinforcing 14th Panzer Corps and the formations at Anzio from *AOK 10's* left wing. If we except Anzio, the amount of direct, as distinct from indirect, air support given by U.S. XII A.S.C., with a little help from D.A.F., to 5th Army during January was:

¹ Air operations in preparation for the landing at Anzio, and in direct and indirect support of that operation are described in Chapters XVII and XIX.

<i>Light Bombers</i>	<i>Sorties</i>	<i>Tons of bombs</i>
By day—U.S. Bostons	375	214
By night—R.A.F. Bostons (from D.A.F.)	19	14
<i>Fighter-bombers</i>		
By day—U.S. Mustangs and Kittyhawks	2,184	584

If we turn now to indirect air support on 5th Army's front we find it amounts to:

<i>Light Bombers</i>	<i>Sorties</i>	<i>Tons of bombs</i>
By day—U.S. Bostons	310	238
By night—R.A.F. Bostons (from D.A.F.)	129	89
<i>Fighter-bombers</i>		
By day—U.S. XII A.S.C.	1,805	679
D.A.F.	191	
M.A.C.A.F.	67	
M.A.S.A.F.	36	
Total fighter-bomber	2,099	

That the amount of effort expended in indirect air support was almost identical to that in direct air support emphasizes the effect on the latter of the nature of the fighting on the ground, and of the weather, on 5th Army's main front.

Excluding a few sorties flown by the fighter-bombers against airfields, the attacks in indirect air support were directed against roads and railways with the usual object of interrupting the movement of reinforcements and supplies in general to the German forces in the Gustav line and at Anzio. The targets fell into two groups: 46 of them south of Rome and 24 to the north of it. Thanks to the long range of the Mustangs of U.S. XII A.S.C. and the location in Corsica of American Spitfires of M.A.C.A.F. it was possible to carry attacks by fighter-bombers as far north as Spezia and Florence. Together with those of the heavy and medium bombers, these attacks had their effect on German reinforcements. German records contain many references to interference with them, a serious handicap if we recall how often Kesselring, von Vietinghoff, and von Senger were shuttling even single units to meet varied Allied thrusts.

In addition to the attacks noted above there were those of the famous twin-engine wooden monoplane, the Mosquito. These aircraft belonged to No. 23 Squadron R.A.F. in Sardinia, and although their contribution was small in terms of sorties it was both far-reaching and varied. Besides attacking roads and railways west of the Apennines, the Mosquitos intruded upon German airfields in central and northern Italy and in France. Indeed woe betide anything that attracted their notice in the air, on the sea, and on the ground. They were hornet-like nuisances.

Allied air attacks on the enemy's airfields in the Rome area on the 13th by the heavy day bombers of M.A.S.A.F. and the medium day bombers of M.A.T.B.F. adversely affected his air operations when his troops particularly needed air support, for example when the French were closing upon S. Elia, and when the British were crossing the lower Garigliano. On the 19th and 20th M.A.S.A.F. and M.A.T.B.F. attacked the airfields still serviceable within the Rome group, forcing the German units to abandon the Rome area except for emergency landings. The withdrawal was hampered on the 19th by the medium day bombers of M.A.T.B.F. which attacked the Rieti and Viterbo airfields into which the German tactical air units were moving. They were thus unable to exploit the spell of good weather which lasted from the 20th to the 22nd January.

Because the 8th Army was coming to a standstill, air operations in direct air support were small.

<i>Light Bombers</i>	<i>Sorties</i>	<i>Tons of Bombs</i>
By day—R.A.F. Bostons and Baltimores	126	89
By night—R.A.F. Bostons	23	16
 <i>Fighter-bombers</i>		
By day—R.A.F. Spitfires R.A.F. and U.S. Kittyhawks	733	199

For the same reason indirect air support also was small. By day the Desert Air Force's Bostons and Baltimores flew 384 sorties against roads and railways, supply dumps and repair shops, and dropped 311 tons of bombs. By night 32 sorties were flown by D.A.F.'s night-flying Bostons. The fighter-bombers flew 947 sorties in which 246 tons of bombs were expended. On 2nd January, when tactical reconnaissance reported enemy M.T. snowbound on the Avezzano-Chieti-Pescara roads, all available fighter-bombers were switched to these targets and 34 vehicles were claimed destroyed and a great number damaged—two locomotives were also claimed as destroyed, and a large amount of rolling stock claimed as damaged. Next day, in the Avezzano-Sulmona area, American Kittyhawk fighter-bombers continued the attacks claiming 23 vehicles destroyed and 100 damaged. Nearly two-thirds of the light bomber effort was flown in the last week of January, by far the greatest attention being paid to Popoli to harass enemy movement to 5th Army front and Anzio. Popoli also featured prominently among the targets attacked by the fighter-bombers. During some of their sorties the R.A.F. Kittyhawks each carried a bombload of one 1,000 lb bomb and two of 500 lb apiece, equal to that of a light bomber but of course for a shorter distance.

The Desert Air Force light and fighter-bombers also attacked L. of C. targets in Yugoslavia to help the partisans, and the fighter-

bombers of No. 242 Group (M.A.C.A.F.) attacked radar stations in Albania and the airfield at Berat.

German air activity was on a very small scale in Italy during January, and what there was, if we except operations against the Anzio beachhead, occurred almost wholly on 5th Army's front where the peak German tactical air effort of 137 sorties, so far as is recorded, was reached on 8th January in opposing the Allied advance towards Cassino. Until the 22nd almost all the units of the German Air Force in Italy were tactical, and more than half of the fighters were based in northern Italy to protect important airfields and air and land routes to southern Germany and Austria. During January there were changes in and reductions of the establishments for the higher command of the German Air Force in Italy, a process which would result in September 1944 in the disappearance of *Luftflotte 2* and the substitution of the less imposing Headquarters of a Commanding General, German Air Forces in Italy, which will be described in Volume VI.

On 8th January British air forces in the Mediterranean theatre lost to Overlord a great commander. He was Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham who had taken command of No. 204 Group R.A.F. in the Western Desert on 30th July 1941, and who thereafter transformed this into an air formation which became famous and deserved its fame—the Desert Air Force. Coningham was an airman of the highest quality whether as leader, commander, or organizer, and moreover was outstanding in his grasp and understanding of the complicated relation between air and land operations. As regards his air force, he inspired and fostered unity so that in it there were no watertight compartments, for example bombers and the men who flew and maintained them in one, fighters in another. A single spirit inspired each part and bound them into a formidable whole. 'All for one, one for all' might have been its motto. Yet *esprit de corps* was but one part of Coningham's achievement.

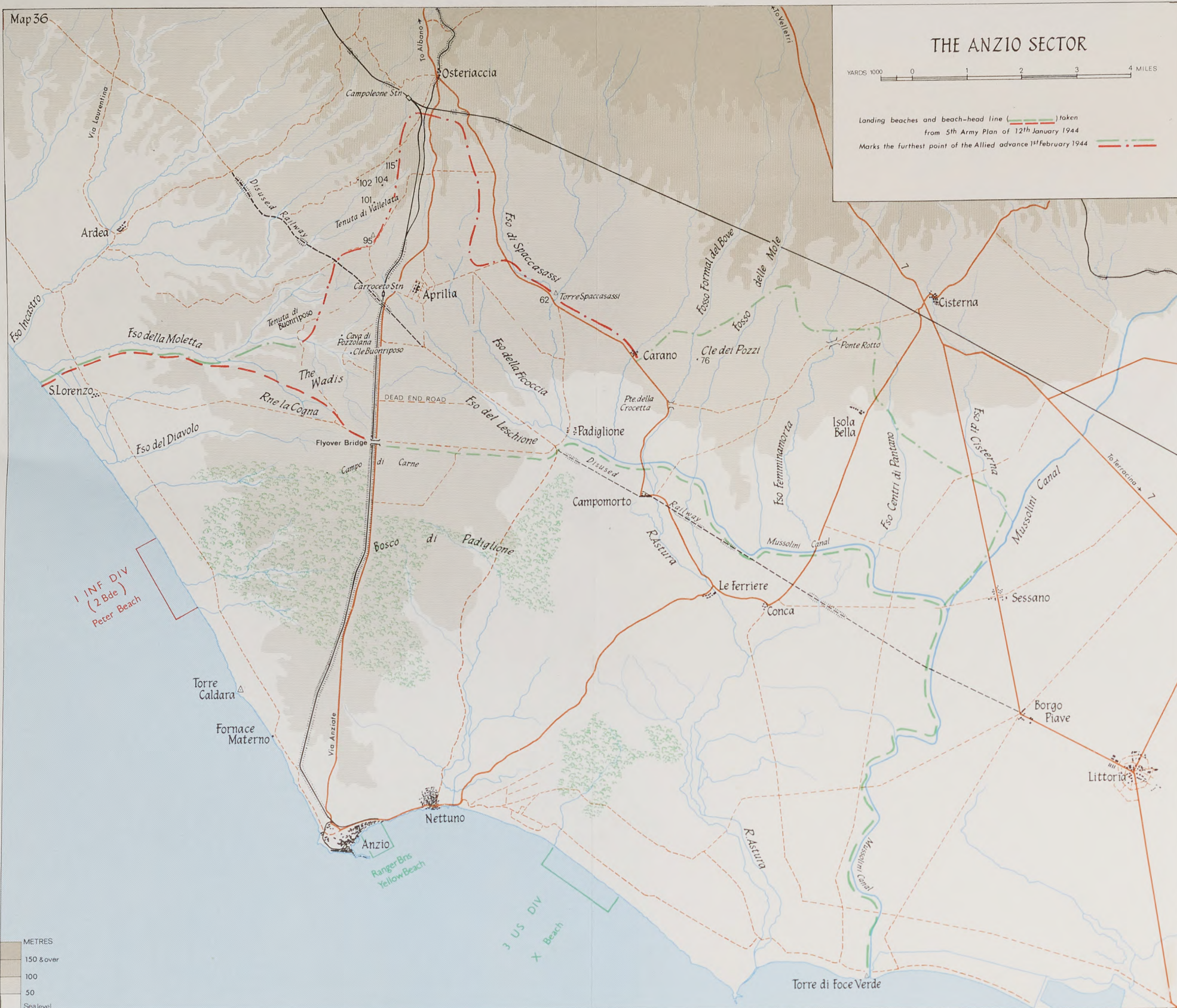
With profound originality he thought out from first principles what should be the shape of a tactical air force in the conditions of fast-moving desert warfare. He then brought his conceptions to life step by step. He formed an air force of which every component, air or land, worked in harmony to produce the greatest possible mobility and the greatest possible striking power, and he devised a method and means of command to direct it. He fought and won a battle for a unified, flexible air force which could carry out his tactical doctrine that an air force on the offensive against the enemy's air force best fulfilled its purpose and being, as well as the purposes of the land forces with which it was linked. He never for a moment forgot the

land forces, and devised for them methods of providing a tremendous direct support which applied familiar principles in a new and most effective way. When the campaign in Africa ended, it was fortunate indeed that Coningham, first as A.O.C. Northwest African Tactical Air Force and then as A.O.C. Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force, was able to perpetuate his doctrine and methods which were the foundations, never to be bettered, of the successes of Tactical Air Forces until the end of the war.

THE ANZIO SECTOR



Landing beaches and beach-head line (---) taken from 5th Army Plan of 12th January 1944
 Marks the furthest point of the Allied advance 1st February 1944 (---)



CHAPTER XVII
THE FIRST BATTLE FOR ROME:
THE ALLIED LANDING
AT ANZIO
(January 1944)

(i)

See Maps 26 and 36

WHEN 5th Army had accomplished the landings at Salerno, the possibility of further amphibious operations, in particular on the west coast of Italy, remained well to the fore in the minds of the higher Allied commanders in the Mediterranean theatre. But General Eisenhower, on 24th September, described very practical limiting circumstances when he wrote 'If we landed a small force, it would be quickly eliminated, while a force large enough to sustain itself cannot possibly be mounted for a very considerable period . . . there is no place on the west coast where a full enemy division cannot be concentrated against us in twelve hours . . .' In early October a special amphibious section of the staff, under Brigadier-General John W. O'Daniel, was attached to headquarters 5th Army to study possible amphibious operations. Landings, south of the Garigliano, near Mondragone, near Sperlonga and Terracina in the Gulf of Gaeta, at Anzio, and at Civitavecchia, were examined. A landing by one division at Anzio came to be the most favoured proposal, and on 12th November General Clark appointed a planning staff under Brigadier-General Donald W. Brann, Assistant Chief of Staff G.3 (in British terms Operations and Training). Rear-Admiral Frank J. Lowry U.S.N. and Major-General Edward J. House, commander of U.S. XII Air Support Command, were closely associated with the work. We have already described how the first Anzio plan was cancelled on 20th December 1943, to be replaced on Christmas Day by a bigger plan to land two divisions at Anzio.¹

At the Christmas Day conference in Carthage 'There seemed to be general agreement amongst the Commanders-in-Chief that an amphibious landing of not less than two assault divisions behind the

¹ Chapter XI, p. 386, Chapter XV, pp. 578-81, Chapter XVI, p. 589.

enemy's right flank was essential for a quick decision. This should decide the battle of Rome and possibly achieve the destruction of a substantial part of the enemy's army . . .' In the event the Allied force which landed at Anzio on 22nd January 1944 and its reinforcements were contained within the beachhead by the enemy until 23rd May. Because events so greatly disappointed early expectations it is interesting to look rather closely at the origins of the operations, and to notice the views which were held at the several levels of command.

At the Christmas Day conference it was assumed that the force to be landed would be maintained from supplies landed with it for the short period, so it was thought, before 5th Army advanced to join it. Because the force was assumed to be large enough for its task, there would be no build-up. These assumptions helped in the all-important investigations of the means of providing assault shipping which have been described in Chapters XI and XV. But closer study of the operation produced the almost inevitable requirement for larger forces. General Alexander summed up the requirements at a conference arranged by Mr. Churchill at Marrakesh on 7th and 8th January.¹ He said 'that in addition to two divisions plus, which would include one or more tank battalions, some parachute troops, Rangers, Corps troops, and ancillaries, he would like to bring in a small highly mobile striking force, which could advance rapidly through the bridgehead with its flanks covered. With such forces he considered that Shingle [the Anzio operation] had a high probability of success . . .' This estimate of the forces required, as worked out in detail by the staff, was approved. Nevertheless Admiral Cunningham said that it would be difficult to maintain two divisions, precarious to maintain three, and impossible to maintain four. To set some bounds to the problem of maintenance the conference agreed to regard the period of the operation as twenty-eight days. By the time that the Marrakesh conference assembled, the general planning, and much of the detailed planning, of the operation, was complete. The conference approved these arrangements. We can now turn to the intentions expressed by the higher commanders in orders and instructions.

In planning a landing estimates of the opposition likely to be met are very important. At Marrakesh General Strong estimated that by

¹ Mr. Churchill was convalescing at the Villa Taylor after his recent illness. He took the chair at the conference. The principal personages attending it were: the Lord Privy Seal, Lord Beaverbrook; Admiral Sir John Cunningham; General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson; General Sir Harold Alexander; Lieut.-General Jacob L. Devers, commander N.A.T.O.U.S.A.; Major-General W. Bedell Smith, departing C.O.S., A.F.H.Q.; Lieut.-General J. A. H. Gammell, C.O.S.-designate A.F.H.Q.; Lieut.-General Sir Humfrey Gale, C.A.O., A.F.H.Q.; Major-General K. W. D. Strong, Director of Intelligence, A.F.H.Q.; Brigadier-General Patrick W. Timberlake representing Air C.-in-C., Mediterranean Allied Air Forces.

the fourth day after landing the Germans would be able to muster two divisions and one or two parachute battalions, and sundry tanks against the Allied force. By 16th January the most detailed estimate (in an appreciation by 6th U.S. Corps) was, cumulatively, as follows:

On the day of landing (D-Day): 7 battalions of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, 4 battalions of 4th Parachute Division, 1 tank battalion of 26th Panzer Division.

By the day after landing (D+1): add 8 battalions of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division.

By the second day after landing (D+2): add 3 battalions of Hermann Göring Division.

By the sixth day after landing (D+6): add 6 unspecified battalions.

The total of 28 battalions and a tank battalion proved to be a close approximation to the facts, except on D-Day.

Air Intelligence estimated that, excluding fighter-bombers, the only German air striking force available to oppose the operation at Anzio would be 60 Ju. 88 and He. 111 torpedo-bombers from southern France, and 50 Ju. 88s from Crete and Greece.

Mr. Churchill, in his post-war memoirs, declares 'As I said at the time, I had hoped that we were hurling a wild cat on to the shore . . .'¹ Admiral Cunningham, on 30th January, referred to 'the lightning thrust by two or three divisions envisaged at Marrakesh'. Alexander used less vivid language in his Operation Instructions dated 2nd and 12th January to General Clark and others. The relevant part of the first ran:

'Fifth Army will prepare an amphibious operation of two divisions plus to carry out an assault landing on the beaches in the vicinity of Rome with the object of cutting the enemy lines of communication and threatening the rear of the German 14 Corps . . .'

Of the second:

' . . . Fifth Army are also preparing an amphibious operation to land a corps of two divisions and the necessary corps troops, followed by a strong and fully mobile striking force based on elements of a third division, in the Nettuno area. The objects of this operation will be to cut the enemy's main communications in the Colli Laziali area South-east of Rome, and to threaten the rear of the German 14 Corps . . .'

The relevant part of Clark's Field Order, dated 12th January, ran:

' . . . Mission. Fifth Army will launch attacks in the Anzio area on H Hour, D-Day.

¹ *The Second World War, Volume V, Closing the Ring*, London 1952, p. 432.

- (a) To seize and secure a beachhead in the vicinity of Anzio.
- (b) Advance on Colli Laziali . . .'

According to the American official historian Clark sent Brigadier-General Brann to Lucas, the commander of 6th U.S. Corps, on 12th January, to expound the Field Order. He writes:

' . . . Brann made it clear that Lucas's primary mission was to seize and secure a beachhead. This was the extent of General Clark's expectations. Clark did not want to force Lucas into a risky advance that might lose the Corps. If, of course, the conditions at Anzio warranted a move to the hills, Lucas was free to do so. But Clark and the Fifth Army Staff believed this to be a slim possibility. Given the strength of the forces in the landing, they thought Lucas could not hold the beachhead to protect the port of Anzio and the beaches and at the same time reach the hill mass. Since loss of the port and the landing beaches would place VI Corps at the mercy of the Germans, Clark was interested primarily in holding a beachhead . . .'

Whatever the impression produced on Lucas by Brann's exposition may have been, 6th U.S. Corps' Field Order, dated 15th January, expressed Lucas's intentions as follows:¹

- . . . '2. VI Corps lands 0200 A D day on beaches vicinity Anzio, seizes and secures beachhead, advances direction Colli Laziali . . .
- 3. (a) 3rd Inf Div . . . secures and establishes beachhead . . . [then] prepared on Corps order to adv direction of Velletri . . .
- (b) 1st Inf Div (Brit) . . . secures and establishes beachhead . . . [then as] Corps res. prepared on Corps order to counter-attack in following probable priority (1) to N, (2) to NE, (3) to NW; or to advance N astride Anzio-Albano rd . . .'

Clark and Lucas therefore were clearly concerned first to establish and consolidate a beachhead, and then to leave offensive operations from it to an undefined second phase.

(ii)

It is suitable at this point to give a general description of the terrain which became the scene of battle in the Anzio operations.

The beaches on either side of the small port of Anzio had been chosen by the planners and accepted by Alexander and Clark after the usual balancing of disadvantages and advantages. The beaches

¹ The extracts from orders and instructions given above omit such details as map references by co-ordinates, forces to be landed etc.

themselves were not attractive as landing places because of sand-bars lying off shore, and because they sloped very gently into the sea, so that a 'water gap' would lie between the points at which landing-craft would take the ground and dry land. The beaches too were sandy and soft and egress was not easy for vehicles because of a belt of dunes. On this coast in January good weather could be expected on only two days out of every seven. On the other hand the beaches were the best to be had south of the Tiber, they were well within effective cover of fighter aircraft based on airfields in the Naples area, and two good roads led from them to the Alban Hills, only twenty miles inland, which were the main tactical objective. Further, Anzio and its hinterland were only some seventy miles distant from 5th Army's main front, a distance which was not too great to rule out the main body of 5th Army advancing to join hands with the force at Anzio within a short period. Three beaches were in the end chosen as landing places. One ('Peter') lay six miles north-west of Anzio; a second ('Yellow') lay immediately east of the harbour at Anzio; the third ('X') was four miles east of Anzio.¹

Anzio lies in a narrow coastal plain which stretches north-west from Terracina to the Tiber and beyond. South-east of Anzio the plain consisted of land which had been reclaimed from marshes and changed into cultivated fields well supplied with drainage ditches and with irrigation channels which varied in size from the large Mussolini Canal to small cuts. Around Anzio itself and to a depth of about six miles inland there was a wooded tract, called Bosco di Padiglione, of pines, cork-oaks, and scrub interspersed with occasional sandy clearings. North-west of the Bosco di Padiglione, towards the Tiber, the country was undulating, wooded in places, and slashed at intervals by wide, deep 'wadis' which ran from the coast towards the Alban Hills. Between the coast and these hills, if we except the Bosco di Padiglione, there is open, featureless country, part grass-land, part cultivated. The Alban Hills are a mass of volcanic rock rising as high as 3,100 feet, and forming the rim of a great basin. The slopes of the hills are covered with vegetation, and the basin, besides cultivation, holds the large lakes of Albano and Nemi. The whole mass is some sixteen miles wide from east to west, and twelve miles deep from north to south. Here was no desolate region of hills but an oasis in the bare Campagna, well-populated, which contained splendid villas and the Papal summer residence at Castel Gandolfo. General Alexander, from a purely military point of view, has written that 'The Alban Hills are really a massive mountain terrain, much more difficult to gain and maintain than can be apparent from maps.'

¹ The gradient of 'Peter' beach was 1 : 110, and of 'X' beach 1 : 80.

The Anzio district was served by two principal roads. One (Via Anziata) was a main road which ran from Anzio northwards through Aprilia, Carroceto, and Osteriaccia, and onwards to Albano by a right-hand branch which joined Highway 7, and by a left-hand branch to join the same Highway near Frattocchie.¹ The other was a metalled secondary road which ran from Nettuno through Le Ferriere to join Highway 7 at Cisterna, whence it described an anti-clockwise loop through Cori to Velletri. Near Le Ferriere a lateral secondary road ran eastwards through Sessano to the provincial 'capital', Littoria. North-westward from Le Ferriere the lateral road ran to Osteriaccia. Osteriaccia and Cisterna were road centres, and were points from which the Allies could thrust out of their beachhead or the Germans could thrust into it. Besides the roads which have been described there were a number of unmetalled roads and cart tracks but these gave scarcely better going than the often waterlogged plain.

The Anzio district and the Alban hills were however related to the Highways 7 and 6 which led to Rome. Highway 7, coming up north-westward from Terracina, passed through Cisterna and Velletri, and from Velletri along the southern slopes of the Alban Hills through Albano to Rome. The Lepini mountains overshadowed this road on the right (if one faces towards Rome) almost as far as Velletri. From Velletri a metalled road ran north-eastward through the so-called 'Velletri gap', between the Lepini mountains and the Alban Hills, to join Highway 6 at Valmontone. Highway 6, coming up straight as an arrow through the Liri and Sacco valleys from Cassino, and guarded on its left (if one looks towards Rome) by the Aurunci and Lepini mountains, passed along the northern side of the Alban Hills to Rome. Rome is about thirty-four miles from Anzio by the Via Anziata and Highway 7, and about the same distance from Velletri through Valmontone and along Highway 6.

Such is the general topography of the scene of battle; its detailed tactical features will appear in the narrative of the fighting. The Photographic Reconnaissance Wing provided detailed mosaics of the assault area and panoramas of the beaches for all concerned in the landing.

(iii)

6th U.S. Corps, under command of Major-General John P. Lucas, was, to begin with, constituted for the Anzio operation as in the following outline:

3rd U.S. Infantry Division (Major-General Lucian K. Truscott):
7th, 15th, 30th Infantry.

¹ Aprilia, known to the Allied forces as 'the Factory', was a cluster of three and four storey brick buildings which had been laid out as a model centre of a farming district.

- 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment.
- 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion.
- 1st, 3rd, 4th Ranger Infantry Battalions.
- 751st Tank Battalion.
- 1st U.S. Armoured Division (Major General Ernest N. Harmon) less Combat Command 'B':
 - 1st Armoured Regiment.
 - 6th Armoured Infantry Regiment.
- 1st British Infantry Division (Major-General W. R. C. Penney):
 - 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades,
 - 24th Guards Brigade.
 - 46th R.T.R.
- 2nd Special Service Brigade (Brigadier T. D. L. Churchill):
 - 9th and 43rd Royal Marine Commandos.

General Lucas had held command of a division and of a corps in the United States. He had been a special 'observer', collecting tactical lessons in North Africa and Sicily, and had acted as a special liaison officer between General Eisenhower and the 5th and 7th U.S. Armies. General Marshall's opinion of him was that he had 'military stature, prestige, and experience'. In early September 1943 he had succeeded General Bradley in command of 2nd U.S. Corps in Sicily, and on 20th September, after the battle of Salerno, he had replaced General Dawley as commander of 6th U.S. Corps. He commanded this corps, with unassuming determination, during the advance to the Gustav Line. He was a deliberate and careful soldier who liked to move step by step in accordance with the principles of war as he understood them, and with his orders, which he was disinclined to overstep. He was a warm-hearted man, devoted to the American soldier whom he believed to be the best fighting man in the world, and to his staff of whom he wrote in November 1943 'I am blessed in all my subordinates. They do all of the work and most of the thinking.' His orthodoxy was shown by his belief that French troops, though brave, were too individualistic and did not know very much about mountain warfare. He had a habit of half humorous self-depreciation: 'I am just a poor working girl trying to get ahead . . .' and 'I am too tender-hearted ever to be a success at my chosen profession.'¹ General Alexander's opinion of him, before Anzio, was expressed in a signal to Sir Alan Brooke on 28th December: 'Lucas who is the best American Corps Commander planned and carried out the Salerno landing and consequently has experience of amphibious operations.'²

General Alexander had decided the composition of the force after

¹ Extracts from General Lucas's diary are quoted by M. Blumenson in his 'Salerno to Cassino'.

² Alexander appears to have confused Lucas with Dawley, or may have forgotten that Lucas took over from Dawley after the crisis at Salerno had passed.

conferring with Clark, and with Sir Brian Robertson who was head of the Allied administrative staffs in Italy. The general reasons for Alexander's decisions have been given in Chapter XVI (p. 594). He was encouraged in them by a characteristically helpful telegram from Eisenhower on 30th December. Eisenhower declared his hope that Alexander would be guided solely by his convictions as to the feasibility of the operation and of the best way to do it from a tactical point of view. He was not to shrink, as a British officer, from exposing an all-American Corps to hazards if he believed that such a corps would best serve his plans. Equally, if he believed an all-British corps to be best, he was not to be deterred by a scruple that he was giving to a British formation the opportunity and the glory of capturing Rome.

The main disadvantage of an American-British formation was the complication of supply, especially of different types of vehicles and of different natures of ammunition, but the disadvantage could be overcome by administrative skill and ingenuity. 3rd U.S. Division concentrated at Pozzuoli on 1st January and other American units followed. 1st British Infantry Division and the Special Service Brigade concentrated at Pompei, Nola, and Salerno between 1st and 5th January. The very strictest security precautions were enforced during and after assembly with very great success in keeping the coming operation secret. The Marrakesh Conference accepted the risk of inadequate training and rehearsal because many weighty considerations caused D-Day to be fixed as early as 22nd January. Nevertheless between 17th and 19th January a rehearsal was held on the Salerno beaches, in full for assaulting units, in skeleton for most of the remainder. The rehearsal did not go very well, and 40 DUKWs and 10 artillery pieces were lost in the sea.

In this volume we have already described the mounting and conduct of two great landings, in Sicily and at Salerno, and therefore it is not necessary to enter into much detail concerning the landing at Anzio because the pattern of the operation was like its predecessors. By the beginning of 1944 there were available many officers of the three Services, British and American, who were well versed in mounting amphibious operations. These officers, whether in the various headquarters or in peripatetic advisory teams, were one of the causes of the very rapid mounting of the Anzio operation.¹ Moreover the searching investigation of the problem of assault ships

¹ An advisory team for lower formations and units might consist of a naval officer and an army officer of the administrative staff. They brought with them skeleton landing-tables and stowage plans, diagrams in plan and elevation of ships and craft, small scaled cardboard templates of vehicles, guns, etc. which could be fitted into diagrams like pieces in a jig-saw puzzle, besides many practical suggestions and tips.

and craft had resulted in enough being provided to transport an assault force of rather more than two infantry divisions; in enough being available until 3rd February to carry a build-up force of the greater part of an armoured division, an infantry regimental combat team, and ancillary units; and in enough being available to maintain the force until the end of February.

As regards the landing Lucas decided that the assault force would consist of:

American

3rd U.S. Division
 751st Tank Battalion
 1st, 3rd, 4th Ranger Battalions
 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment
 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion.

British

1st Infantry Division
 2nd Special Service Brigade
 46th R.T.R.
 No. 655 A.O.P. Squadron

Of the above formations:

- (a) Three infantry regiments of 3rd U.S. Division would make the assault on 'X' beach, and would be followed up by 504th Parachute Infantry.
- (b) The three Ranger Battalions would make the assault on 'Yellow' beach, and would be followed up by 509th Parachute Battalion.
- (c) 2nd (British) Brigade Group would make the assault on 'Peter' beach, and would be followed up by 2nd Special Service Brigade.
- (d) The remainder of 1st Infantry Division would constitute a Floating Reserve to be used wherever it might be needed.

Clark reserved a decision on the build-up force, which might be an all-infantry division or a task force of armour and infantry.

The whole naval force to transport and support the assault formations was commanded by Rear Admiral Frank J. Lowry U.S.N., embarked in the Headquarters Ship U.S.S. *Biscayne*. The force was divided into Force 'X' and Force 'P'. Admiral Lowry commanded directly Force 'X', which lifted the American formations. It included, besides the Headquarters Ship and one submarine, 16 major warships, 154 landing-ships and craft, and 57 minor warships and other vessels. Force 'P', which lifted the British formations, was commanded by Rear-Admiral T. H. Troubridge R.N., embarked in the Headquarters Ship H.M.S. *Bulolo*. Force 'P' was composed, besides the

Headquarters Ship and one submarine, of 14 major warships, 87 landing-ships and craft, and 46 minor warships and other vessels.¹ Gun support for Force 'X' was provided by the cruisers H.M.S. *Penelope* and U.S.S. *Brooklyn*, and for Force 'P' by the cruisers H.M.S. *Orion* and *Spartan*. Additional support was available from British and American destroyers, the Dutch gunboats *Flores* and *Soemba*, and one landing-craft (gun). The cruiser H.M.S. *Dido* and the destroyers *Inglefield* and *Le Fantasque* were to create a diversion by bombarding Civitavecchia on 22nd January at the time when the first flights of 6th U.S. Corps were touching down on the beaches at Anzio.

The plan for 6th U.S. Corps' landings at Anzio covered only the seizure and consolidation of a beachhead. However, before turning to this plan we should describe in outline the plans of the Allied air forces to support the operation.

By January 1944 the pattern of air support for a force landing from the sea had been well established, and had the following broad objects: to destroy as much as possible of the enemy's air force in the air and on the ground; to disrupt as greatly as possible the tactical and administrative movements of his land forces; to protect the Allied landing-force, shipping, and craft from air attack; to provide direct air support for the landing and the operations which followed it. As regards the Anzio operation there existed two special circumstances. One, a disadvantage, was that the Tactical Air Force had to continue to support 5th and 8th Armies while it supported the amphibious operation. Second, an advantage, was that the Allied day fighters could fly to and from Anzio over or near land at fairly short range, while the front to be covered was fairly short.² It

¹ Major warships engaged:

Force 'X'		Force 'P'	
Cruisers:	H.M.S. <i>Penelope</i>	Cruisers:	H.M.S. <i>Orion</i>
	U.S.S. <i>Brooklyn</i>		<i>Spartan</i>
Destroyers:	" <i>Plunket</i>	Destroyers:	" <i>Jervis</i>
	" <i>Gleaves</i>		" <i>Janus</i>
	" <i>Niblack</i>		" <i>Laforey</i>
	" <i>Woolsey</i>		" <i>Loyal</i>
	" <i>Mayo</i>		" <i>Grenville</i>
	" <i>Tribbe</i>		" <i>Faulknor</i>
	" <i>Ludlow</i>		" <i>Ulster</i>
	" <i>Edison</i>		" <i>Urchin</i>
	" <i>Frederick C. Davis</i>		" <i>Beaufort</i>
			" <i>Brecon</i>
			" <i>Tetcott</i>
			H.M.S. <i>Ullor</i>

Beacon Submarines: H.M.S. *Uproar*

² The bringing into use of airfields at Castel Volturno, Lago and Marcianise (all between Capua and the coast) eased the problem of concentration of aircraft in the Naples area, and greatly shortened the range at which some of the fighters would otherwise have had to operate.

followed that it was not essential to establish day fighters in the beachhead. A third circumstance was that the Allied fighters had won a high degree of air superiority in central Italy.

The Allied air forces available in support of the Anzio operation were immensely strong, numbering 2,700 aircraft.^{1, 2} Over half of this number were based near Brindisi, Termoli, and Foggia. The remainder were based near Naples and in Corsica and Sardinia. By comparison the German Air Force was feeble. Allied Air Intelligence estimated that there would be in Italy, on 22nd January, some 260 German aircraft, of which about 154 would be serviceable. Besides these there were the 60 Ju. 88 and He. 111 torpedo-bombers believed to be in southern France and the 50 Ju. 88s believed to be in Greece and Crete. In Italy such German fighters, fighter-bombers, and tactical reconnaissance aircraft as were in the forward area were believed to be based on the two airfields at Ciampino, on the two at Centocelle, and on those at Guidonia and Marcigliano, all in the general area of Rome. A German return dated 31st December however shows (serviceable aircraft in brackets):

Long-range bombers	5 (5)
Long-range reconnaissance	12 (8)
Single-engine fighters	173 (76)
Fighter-bombers and Ground-attack aircraft	28 (10)
Tactical reconnaissance	24 (22)
Total	<u>242 (121)</u>

Though Allied Air Intelligence to some extent underestimated the power of the Germans to reinforce, it nevertheless kept a close watch on the moves of German aircraft. There were in Italy, on 31st January, if we omit coastal and transport aircraft:

Long-range bombers	174 (90)
Long-range reconnaissance	9 (6)
Single-engine fighters	202 (79)
Fighter-bombers and Ground-attack aircraft	60 (27)
Tactical reconnaissance	29 (22)
Total	<u>474 (224)</u>

But this figure of 474 included 82 aircraft in southern France which used airfields in northern Italy as advanced landing grounds. The estimate by Allied Air Intelligence was of 345 aircraft by the end of January, which was thus only some 50 aircraft less than the actual figure. Allied Air Intelligence was also correct in assuming that the German fighter force in the Rome area had been reinforced by that

¹ It is interesting to compare this figure of 2,700 aircraft with the 846 possessed by the whole of the Middle East Air Force in October 1941.

² The Order of Battle of the Tactical Air Force as at 22nd January 1944 is at the end of this chapter.

from northern Italy. Albeit, Allied air strength remained overwhelming.

Major-General John K. Cannon, Commanding General of Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force, was responsible for the general control of tactical air operations in the Allied landing. His responsibilities fell broadly speaking, into three phases:

- (a) Until the day before the landing (D-1) he was:
 - (i) to continue to support 5th and 8th Armies and guerrilla activities in the Balkans;
 - (ii) to help the Strategic Air Force to neutralize and destroy the German air force in central Italy;
 - (iii) to interfere as much as possible with German tactical and administrative movements in central Italy and towards Anzio.

The responsibilities stated above were basic throughout the Anzio operation.

- (b) Besides the above he would, on D-1 Day, provide fighter protection for the Allied assault convoys on the sea.
- (c) Then, during the assault, he was:
 - (i) to provide fighter protection by day and night for shipping lying off the beaches or in convoy to and from them;
 - (ii) to prevent German forces from moving into the Anzio area from Northern Italy;
 - (iii) to interfere as much as possible with the moves of German forces on 5th Army's main front;
 - (iv) to provide direct support for the assault forces.

General Cannon delegated to Major-General Edward J. House, commanding U.S. XII Air Support Command, general control of all fighters and fighter-bombers, and the responsibility for providing direct air support, and fighter protection for the assault forces, shipping, and craft, while continuing to support the main part of 5th Army.¹ He directed Air Vice-Marshal Broadhurst, commanding the Desert Air Force, to continue to support 8th Army and to continue to operate against German shipping on the Dalmatian coast, and also to prevent the moves of German troops from 8th Army's front to 5th Army's front or to Anzio. He ordered

¹ All requests for direct air support were to be made by 6th U.S. Corps to H.Q. 5th Army, No. 7 A.A.S.C. being responsible for passing those approved to U.S. XII A.S.C. the Command Post of which was alongside that of 5th Army. In addition to his light and fighter-bomber forces, C.G. U.S. XII A.S.C. could call on the light bombers of Desert Air Force; through M.A.T.A.F. on the medium day bombers of M.A.T.B.F.; and through M.A.T.A.F. to M.A.A.F. Command Post for the support of the heavy day and medium night bombers of M.A.S.A.F.

the Desert Air Force to detach, on D-3, a wing of Spitfires to the Naples airfields for about a fortnight, and either a R.A.F. Wing or a U.S. group of Kittyhawk fighter-bombers to Corsica for about 10 days. In the event all these reinforcements went to the airfields at Naples.

The plans of the Allied air forces were necessarily intricate, and it will make for simplicity in describing them to consider first the bombing plan to disrupt German movements outside the area of Anzio, and then the plans which were more directly connected with the landings in the area of Anzio.

The bombing plan was a concern of both Mediterranean Allied Tactical Bomber Force and of Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force. For shortness' sake we pass over the programme before 15th January, and take the phases from 15th to 21st January, and from 22nd January (D-Day) onwards.¹ As regards M.A.S.A.F., targets connected with the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany held first priority on paper, but the success of the Anzio operation was considered so important that General Eaker readily agreed that M.A.S.A.F. should take a full part in the preparatory air operations, and would continue its support for as long as required.

The aims of the bombing plan were to neutralize the enemy's air force by attacking his airfields; to prevent him moving land forces to the Anzio area by disrupting his rail and road communications; and to give air support to the Allied landing when it took place. Because the enemy's air force was comparatively so weak, and because he used rail transport to the greatest extent possible, the emphasis in the bombing plan was placed on rail communications. Indeed this was made the primary task of the Tactical Bombing Force.² There were four main rail routes in Italy which served the German forces. They were:

Western: Pisa-Rome along coast.

Central: Bologna-Prato-Florence-Arezzo-Rome.

Central Alternative: Florence-Empoli-Siena-Rome.

Eastern: Bologna-Rimini-Falconara (near Ancona on east coast)-Foligno-Rome.

A glance at Map 16 will show that the area Pisa-Florence-Arezzo-Rome was focal and therefore vital.

M.A.T.B.F.'s main task was to attack railways and roads south of latitude 44°N, or, more specifically, south of the Pistoia-(just south

¹ During the first fortnight of the month M.A.S.A.F. and M.A.T.B.F. attacked rail targets scattered over the length and breadth of enemy-occupied Italy, from Turin in the north to Pontecorvo in the south. The 1,230 tons of bombs dropped included 289 on Reggio Emilia marshalling-yard in a devastating attack on 8th January.

² The Marauders of the U.S. 42nd Wing of M.A.S.A.F. came under the operational control of M.A.T.B.F. on 3rd January to join the Mitchells in this task.

of) Rimini line. The following rail routes were its targets in order of priority:

- (1) Arezzo–Orvieto–Orte–Rome.
- (2) Arezzo–Foligno–Terni–Orte.
- (3) Leghorn–Civitavecchia–Rome.
- (4) Terni–Sulmona.
- (5) Viterbo–Rome.

In bad weather targets were to be sought on the route Nice–Genoa–Pisa, and along the coast south of Rome.

M.A.S.A.F.'s field of operations lay north of M.A.T.B.F.'s northern boundary. Its day bombers were to attack the following rail routes in order of priority:

- (1) Florence–Arezzo.
- (2) Empoli–Siena–Arezzo.
- (3) Pisa–Pistoia–Prato–Florence.
- (4) Rimini–Falconara.

The night-bombers (Wellingtons) were to attack marshalling-yards and other targets which had already been attacked by day bombers, in the area Pisa–Florence–Rome. In addition to the principal tasks given above, the strategic bombers were heavily to attack the main German airfields, on D—2 if possible, or soon thereafter.

In the disruption of the enemy's rail communications, the majority of the targets were automatically marshalling-yards for the simple reason that they studded the Italian railway system. Few of those chosen however were key marshalling-yards where repair facilities for locomotives and rolling stock existed, and where also large quantities of locomotives and rolling stock were invariably to be found. Even then, these few key marshalling-yards received only average attention. Key bridges, stations and sections of line provided the remaining targets which together with the marshalling-yards formed the planned programme of 'Interdiction' to which the bombers were to conform.¹

From D-Day onwards both bomber forces were to continue to prevent traffic into the Anzio area, to neutralize the German Air Force in central Italy, and to provide direct support for 6th U.S. Corps immediately after its landings.

The arrangements for the fighter protection of the convoys at sea, of the ships and craft gathered off the beaches, and of the beachhead itself were as follows. Air Vice-Marshal Sir Hugh Lloyd, commanding Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force, provided anti-submarine patrols, and, by arrangement with Cannon and House,

¹ For the beginnings of 'Interdiction' see Chapter XIII, pp. 467. There was another school of thought which favoured instead attacks on key marshalling-yards, such as Foligno, Verona, Genoa, Turin, Vicenza, Voghera, and Rimini to name a few.

fighter protection by day for the embarkation area Naples-Salerno and of the convoy 'lane' between Naples and the Pontine islands. By night M.A.C.A.F. provided fighter protection of the convoy 'lane' within the range of the radar stations in the area Naples-Salerno, and of the area itself. M.A.C.A.F. also placed some of the Beaufighter night-fighters of No. 255 Squadron under the operational control of U.S. XII A.S.C. for operations to seaward of the assault area. These aircraft were equipped with the Mk. VIII A.I. and were not allowed to fly within ten miles of the coast. U.S. XII A.S.C. provided fighter protection by day for the convoy 'lane' between the Pontine islands and the beachhead, and by night within range of the radar stations ashore in the beachhead, or afloat. U.S. XII A.S.C. also provided day and night fighter protection of the beachhead itself. To begin with, by day at any one time over the beachhead and shipping and craft off shore, there were 32 fighters on patrol between 8,000 and 25,000 feet. At night eight fighters were on patrol at dusk and shortly before dawn and four during the intervening hours. H.M.S. *Ulster Queen* was the principal Fighter Control Ship, with H.M.S. *Palomares* and *Bulolo* standing by. U.S. 64th Fighter Wing provided the fighter control staff. For night-fighter interception one Ground Control Interception station (G.C.I.), embarked in a landing ship, served the Coastal Air Force aircraft operating to seaward, and another G.C.I., similarly embarked, served the U.S. XII A.S.C. aircraft operating over the assault area. The Fighter Control Ship directed night-fighters to their correct G.C.I.

When the landings were in progress a Forward Fighter Control from U.S. 64th Fighter Wing was to go ashore as early as possible to take over control of day fighters from the Fighter Control Ship. This F.F.C. would take with it one G.C.I., two light warning sets, four ground observation posts, and a 'Y' Service detachment for wireless interception. The landing of further equipment would enable the F.F.C. to take control of day and night fighters from D+5.

Besides fighter protection, very careful arrangements were made for anti-aircraft fire from ships and from A.A. guns ashore. Balloons also were to be flown from ships in convoy, and on shore.

The immediate object of 6th U.S. Corps, on landing, was to seize and secure a beachhead some seven miles deep and with a perimeter of twenty-six miles. On the ground, beginning on the east flank where the Mussolini Canal enters the sea at Torre di Foce Verde, the perimeter ran northward to the point where the Sessano-Le Ferriere road crossed the Mussolini Canal. From there the perimeter turned west and ran towards and then along the small ridge of Campo di

Carne, then westward until it met the Fosso della Moletta and followed this to the sea. Before reaching out to the above line the assault force had to land and seize footholds or preliminary beachheads. On the right the three infantry regiments of 3rd U.S. Division, landing on 'X' beach, were to seize an area three miles deep extending from the mouth of the Astura river on the right almost to Nettuno on the left. The three Ranger battalions, landing on Yellow Beach, were to seize an area two and a half miles deep extending from Nettuno on the right to Fornace Materno on the left, and including Anzio. 2nd British Infantry Brigade, landing on 'Peter' Beach, was to seize an area almost three miles deep extending from Torre Caldara on the right north-westward to a point on the coast four miles away. The landing was ship-to-shore and the leading flights of assault-craft were to touch down on all beaches at 2 a.m. The 'follow-up' after the landings and the advance from the preliminary beachheads to the perimeter of the final beachhead would obviously be affected by the amount of opposition that would be encountered. Nobody expected to spring a tactical surprise, although every precaution had been taken to keep the expedition secret and a careful deception plan had been devised. Clark and Lucas expected that the landings would be strongly opposed, and that heavy counter-attacks were certain. To counter this prospect most of 1st British Division was held as a floating reserve, and all commanders were impressed with the need to consolidate ground gained by digging-in and all other means. Air tactical reconnaissance for the American formations, and spotting aircraft for all bombarding warships and the American artillery were provided by U.S. 111th Tac. R. Squadron; and tactical reconnaissance for British formations and spotting aircraft for their artillery were provided by No. 225 Tac. R. Squadron R.A.F. No. 655 A.O.P. Squadron which landed at Anzio on the 22nd also directed naval and army shoots. In fact there was to be no naval supporting fire for the first flights of the assault force in the interest of surprising the enemy, or perhaps rather of mystifying him. However, during the last few minutes of the landing-crafts' run-in, when the noise of engines would have aroused the dead, a rocket landing-craft off each beach was to fire its salvo of 785 rockets at targets chosen from air photographs and intelligence. So much for the tactical plans which were in outline straightforward and simple although the details were many and intricate as is inevitable in an amphibious operation.

The administrative side of the operation presented many difficulties and as late as 4th January Sir Brian Robertson had condemned it as administratively unsound. His objections may be summarized by saying that the operation committed the administrative authorities to maintaining a mixed American-British force of 110,000 men

and more for an indefinite time, over difficult beaches in variable weather, by means of ships and craft whose number and types were endlessly debated instead of being allotted in a reasonably firm programme. Administrative objections however were overridden and the administrative staffs had to make the best of a hard job as it is so often their lot to do.

To begin with, A.F.H.Q. Advanced Administrative Echelon through its British administrative staff sections and representatives of Services took the responsibility for laying down and maintaining at Naples all stocks required by British troops. The existing U.S. Base Section (Peninsular Base Section) took the same responsibility for American troops, and the responsibility for loading and dispatching all convoys. Four phases of maintenance were provided for:

- (a) *Preparatory*, during which stocks would be laid down at the Naples group of ports; and the programmes for loading and dispatching convoys would be arranged by Peninsular Base Section.
- (b) *Initial Assault Phase*, during which maintenance would be carried out by H.Q. 6th U.S. Corps through beach organizations from beach dumps.
- (c) *Continuing Maintenance Phase*. Little different from its predecessor except that H.Q. 6th U.S. Corps would ask H.Q. 5th Army to make any changes in the arrangements for maintenance that might be necessary.
- (d) *Final*. H.Q. 5th Army would take control and would maintain American troops. H.Q. 10th Corps would maintain British troops. Maintenance over beaches would cease.

Two circumstances made it essential to open and develop the little fishing port of Anzio as soon as possible. The first was that bad weather was expected to prevail off the beaches. The second was that the water off the beaches was so shallow that cargo ships would have to be discharged by small craft, and DUKWs, and over pontoon causeways.

The programme of convoys was arranged in this manner. On the day of landing 18 L.S.T., 3 L.C.T., and 4 cargo-ships would arrive from Naples carrying 19,575 tons of maintenance supplies and stores, and 700 vehicles.¹ After this convoy further convoys would arrive at intervals of three days. A most ingenious device for quickly unloading L.S.T.s was adopted. The 1,500 2½-ton trucks of U.S. 6732nd Truck Group were loaded in advance with 5 tons each. A number of

¹ The administrative staffs bid for and obtained the very high figure of 1,500 tons per division daily. This was one way of making sure of something towards reserves while the going was good.

loaded trucks were driven aboard L.S.Ts, and on arrival at the beachhead were driven off to the dumps. The 'empties' were filled with salvage etc. for the return journey to Naples.

As regards 1st British Division No. 3 Beach Group (Colonel A. G. Young) was appointed to control 'Peter' beach. 2nd Infantry Brigade was given 198 DUKWs embarked in L.S.T. and loaded in advance with Jeeps, field and anti-tank guns, and other equipment and stores which were essential on shore at the earliest possible moment.

By 20th January preparations were complete and the force had embarked. During the afternoon General Lucas opened his headquarters in U.S.S. *Biscayne*. The weather forecast was favourable and General Wilson, who had opened a Command Post at Caserta, decided at 4 p.m. that the expedition would sail at 5 a.m. on 21st January.

(iv)

The Allied air forces had in a sense begun the Anzio operation at the beginning of January by attacking rail communications and airfields in Italy. By the 21st M.A.S.A.F. and M.A.T.B.F. had between them dropped 4,028 tons of bombs on rail targets and 1,885 tons on airfields, and the light and fighter-bombers of U.S. XII A.S.C. and of D.A.F. had added their weight as well to these tasks. By the 21st the Allied air forces had almost cleared the sky of German aircraft, and none saw and none molested the assault forces at sea.

The force sailed in five groups from Naples and its satellite ports, from Castellammare, and from Salerno, at various times from 5 p.m. on the 20th to noon on the 21st. The groups headed south to deceive possible observers and to avoid minefields. The route lay outside Ischia and the Pontine islands and after dark on the 21st course was altered for Anzio. The various navigational aids, the beacon submarines *Ultor* and *Uproar* and the mark-ships, were picked up on time, and other aids for the landing-craft such as folbots and buoys were set out. The elaborate drill of a landing began punctually in the early hours of 22nd January.¹ The minesweepers swept many mines. The first flights of assault landing-craft headed towards the beaches over a calm sea and under a moonless sky, and touched down at 2 a.m. General Lucas in the *Biscayne* three and a half miles off shore, other senior commanders afloat, and officers and men in the

¹ For a summary see Chapter VIII, p. 275.

second flights of landing-craft strained their ears for the expected outburst of firing on shore. To their extreme astonishment none came. At this point of the story, to be beforehand with the German side of events will avoid fragmentary explanations later.

The landing of 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio took the Germans completely by surprise. German intelligence and German commanders had of course always believed that the Allies would attempt further landings on the east and west coasts of Italy, but no information about the landing at Anzio reached them. Two agents in Naples reported nothing. 'Line crossers', who worked behind the Allied front up to a depth of eighteen miles only, reported nothing to arouse suspicion of a landing. German reconnaissance aircraft which were sent out during the nights 18th/19th and 20th/21st January never returned, and on 22nd January only the western Mediterranean was patrolled by aircraft. It seems, therefore, that the first news of the Allied landing came from a corporal of German railway engineers who, with three men, had been stationed in Anzio since November 1943 to supervise local suppliers of timber. This non-commissioned officer sped off on a motor-cycle in search of a German unit. Failing to find one, he went on to Albano where he came across a Lieutenant Heuritsch who was en route to join his unit, 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, at Sezze. This officer gave the news to the German Town Major of Albano, who, at 4 a.m. passed it by telephone to a German headquarters in Rome.¹ As we shall show, there were no German tactical headquarters and no German troops in the near neighbourhood of Anzio and Nettuno on 22nd January.

How the information reached Kesselring's headquarters, now at Mt. Soratte thirty miles north of Rome, and how it was confirmed is uncertain. Certainly Kesselring reported the landing to *OKW* at 12.45 p.m. on the 22nd with sufficient detail to cause that exalted headquarters to act immediately. *OKW* at once declared the landing to be an operation not directly connected with 5th Army's offensive against the Gustav Line but the first of the expected Allied assaults on the perimeter of 'Fortress Europe'. It put into action at once part of the plan to reinforce Italy from outside that theatre ('*Marder 1*'; see Chapter XVI, p. 586). Very quickly the C.-in-C. Replacement Army in Germany was ordered to send to Italy the headquarters of 75th Corps, three infantry regiments, and some artillery.² *OB West*

¹ According to the German naval staff reports of shelling by surface craft were received from observers at Nettuno at 1.40 a.m., and from others at Civitavecchia at 2 a.m. on 22nd January. The naval staff assumed that the shelling was no more than a normal harassing of ports used by German coastal vessels.

² 1026, 1027, 1028 Grenadier Regiments, a regiment of artillery, and a battery of nebelwerfer.

was ordered to send 715th Infantry Division from southern France, and 1st Battalion, 4th Panzer Regiment (Panther tanks). The G.A.F. was ordered to make available two Gruppen (I and III) of Kampfgeschwader 26 (He. 111 and Ju. 88 torpedo-bombers) of *Luftflotte 3* already in southern France, and to send there as reinforcements II/Kampfgeschwader 100 and II/Kampfgeschwader 40 (II/KG 100 had Do. 217s and a few He. 177s, and II/KG 40 had He. 177s—both types being radio-controlled glider-bomb carriers). Air Command South-East was ordered to send I and III/Lehrgeschwader 1 (Ju. 88 bombers) which became based in northern Italy. Advanced landing grounds at Piacenza and Bergamo in northern Italy were made available for I & III/KG 26 and II/KG 100. II/KG 40 was established at Bordeaux.

Meanwhile Kesselring acted with great speed during the 22nd to collect forces from his own Command to oppose the Allies at Anzio. His activities came under three heads: to improvise forthwith a tactical headquarters to control whatever units could be immediately collected to oppose the Allied landing force; to establish as quickly as possible a more adequate command organization; to collect from *AOK 10* and *AOK 14* an anti-invasion force using such plans as had been made in obedience to that part ('*Richard*') of his directive of 12th January which dealt with an Allied landing in the neighbourhood of Rome.

To begin with, control was exercised by the senior officer on the spot, namely General Schlemmer who on 18th January had left an administrative appointment in Rome to take command of the rear echelons of 1st Parachute Corps at Grottaferrata, and also of the handfuls of troops who had been left to guard the coastline west of Rome. Surviving records do not permit us to be precise about their whereabouts in the early hours of 22nd January, but 90th Panzer Grenadier Division's Battle Group von Behr was watching the coast north of the Tiber, and inland was the Gericke Battle Group of 4th Parachute Division. Two engineer companies of this Division were with the Ziegler Battle Group of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, which also included 2nd Battalion 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment and a company of divisional engineers south of Velletri, and 129th Reconnaissance Battalion near Terracina. In the Alban Hills were the reinforcement-holding units of the Hermann Göring Panzer Division, and other miscellaneous elements of this division. This was the total array more or less immediately available to oppose 6th U.S. Corps early on 22nd January.¹

¹ *von Behr Battle Group*: 1st and 2nd Battalions 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 1st Battalion 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment.

Gericke Battle Group: one battalion from each 10th, 11th, 12th Parachute Regiments.

Ziegler Battle Group: 2nd Battalion 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment (Velletri), 129th Reconnaissance Battalion (Terracina), one engineer company.

As regards the organization of command, Kesselring recalled, at 8.30 a.m. on the 22nd, Schlemm and the operational headquarters of 1st Parachute Corps from the Garigliano. Schlemm and his staff arrived at 5.30 p.m. at Grottaferrata, and took over from Schlemmer. At 2.30 p.m. on 23rd January Kesselring ordered General von Mackensen and his Headquarters of *AOK 14* to take tactical command of the area of Rome and on 25th January von Mackensen began to exercise his command.¹

Meanwhile from about 7 a.m. on 22nd January there began furious activity in speeding formations and units to the beachhead. It was fortunate indeed that Kesselring's 'Richard' plan had resulted in some units and formations being at from four to twenty-four hours' notice to move, and in skeleton arrangements for movement and administration. The first hours and days saw a brilliant and swift, if higgledy-piggledy, feat of improvisation in which troops arrived unit by unit in no sort of order and sectors of command were completely fluid. On 24th January, when Kesselring gave verbal orders to von Mackensen, the situation in the beachhead had so far improved that Westphal was able to say 'The situation is much more favourable than it was at Salerno. Now we have got something there [i.e. the beachhead], we can help . . .' The situation, very dangerous at first, was more or less stabilized.

It is impossible to say exactly what the 'something' was. By the evening of 22nd January the Hermann Göring Panzer Division had established its headquarters at Cisterna, and by the 25th the headquarters of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division was in Albano. Hermann Göring Panzer Division, on the north-east and east of the beachhead, disposed of its own two reinforcement-holding battalions and sundry divisional units. 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, astride the Anzio-Albano road (Via Anziate) had 3rd Battalion 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. 4th Parachute Division, on the line of the Fosso Incastro had the Gericke Battle Group. By 26th January there were present at the beachhead, or not too far from it, the nuclei of six divisions, namely:

- 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division
(Lieut.-General Fritz-Hubert Gräser).
- Hermann Göring Panzer Division
(Major-General Conrath).
- 4th Parachute Division
(Colonel Trettner).
- 65th Infantry Division
(Major-General Helmut Pfeifer).

¹ H.Q. *AOK 14* opened at Capranica, just north of Rome, and at 6 p.m. on 25th January formally took command of the 'Rome area' and of the coast and its hinterland between Cecina in the north and Terracina in the south.

71st Infantry Division¹

(Major-General Wilhelm Raapke).

114th Jäger Division¹

(Major-General Alexander Bourquin).

Besides the above, 362nd Infantry Division (Lieut.-General Heinz Greiner) was beginning to move into the Cecina–Tiber coastal sector, while 26th Panzer Division (Major-General Smilo von Lüttwitz) was assembling at Avezzano under orders to join 1st Parachute Corps.

Thanks to the deliberateness of 6th U.S. Corps' operations and to his own rapid gathering of forces to oppose the Allies, Kesselring was able on 24th January to order von Mackensen to destroy the Allies in their beachhead or to throw them back into the sea. On the same day von Mackensen gave Schlemm a warning order that 1st Parachute Corps would conduct the operation. By 26th January the counter-attack had been fixed, tentatively, for 30th January, but this date was soon changed to 1st February owing to some tactical considerations decreed by Hitler, and to 6th U.S. Corps' attacks towards Campoleone and Cisterna. In the end *AOK 14* was unable to attack, on a small scale, until 3rd February or, on a large scale, until 16th February. However, by 30th January the German array had been better organized and strengthened. Headquarters 51st Mountain Corps (General Valentin Feuerstein) had moved down from northern Italy to take command of the Cecina–Tiber coastal sector while 65th Infantry Division had taken over 4th Parachute Division's sector and its Gericke Battle Group. 71st Infantry Division had set up its headquarters at Velletri and had taken over part of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division's sector. The Knöchlein Battle Group of 16th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Division and the Berger Battle Group of 114th Jäger Division had arrived in the Hermann Göring Panzer Division's sector.² 26th Panzer Division was assembling at Velletri; the headquarters of 715th Infantry Division and one of its battalions had reached Genzano in the Alban Hills, while others of its units were hastening forward.

The haphazard manner of their arrival makes it impossible to present an accurate picture of the German forces which assembled to contain, and then to counter-attack, the Allies in their beachhead. But the fact that they arrived at all and so quickly was a brilliant feat of staff work. Something too was owing to weather unfavourable

¹ Of 71st Infantry Division, 211th Grenadier Regiment and two battalions of 191st Grenadier Regiment remained in the Gustav Line under command of 14th Panzer Corps. The leading parts of 114th Jäger Division were at Viterbo. Of 65th Infantry Division, 146th Grenadier Regiment was with 76th Panzer Corps.

² 16th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Division had been called forward from Lucca and Laibach under Kesselring's plan 'Richard'. By 30th January the G.A.F. had conferred the title 'Parachute' upon the Hermann Göring Panzer Division. We continue to use the former, shorter title.

for flying which made the interference of the Allied air forces with movements much less than it would have been in good weather. By 28th January most of the reinforcements which had been ordered to Italy from France and the Reich had crossed the Italian frontier, and although most of them had to detrain at Florence or north of it, they found that their onward journeys had been planned. Delays of course occurred. Until the reinforcements arrived von Mackensen's troops were placed something as follows, on or about 28th January. We show the picture clockwise from left to right of 6th U.S. Corps

- (a) *Torre Vaianica-Fosso della Moletta-Vallelata:*
65th Infantry Division (Pfeifer):
 1st, 2nd, 3rd Bns 145th Grenadier Regiment.
 Gericke Battle Group: 1st, 2nd, 3rd Bns
 11th Parachute Regiment; 2nd Bn 71st Panzer
 Grenadier Regiment (of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division);
 2nd Bn 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (of 90th Panzer
 Grenadier Division).
- (b) *Vallelata to a North-South line drawn two miles east of the Via Anziata:*
3rd Panzer Grenadier Division (Gräser):
 1st, 2nd, 3rd Bns, 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment.
 Ens Battle Group: 1st, 2nd Bns, 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division; relieved on 29th January by 71st Infantry Division).
- (c) *North-South line, drawn two miles east of the Via Anziata, to Fosso delle Mole:*
71st Infantry Division (Raapke):
 1st, 2nd, 3rd Bns, 194th Grenadier Regiment.
- (d) *Fosso delle Mole-Cisterna-west of Littoria to the sea:*
Hermann Göring Panzer Division (Conrath):
 1st Bn 1st Panzer Regiment; 1st, 2nd Bns von Corvin Regiment. Schulz Battle Group: 3rd Bn, 1st Parachute Regiment, M.G. Bn (of 1st Parachute Division). Knöchlein Battle Group: 2nd Bn, 35th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 2nd Bn, 36th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Regiment (of 16th S.S. Panzer Grenadier Division). Berger Battle Group: 3rd Bn, 721st Jäger Regiment (of 114th Jäger Division); 7th German Air Force Jäger Bn; 129th Reconnaissance Bn (of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division); 356th Reconnaissance Bn (of 356th Infantry Division).¹

¹ The divisions and battle groups listed above possessed each a proportion of the supporting arms. On 28th January Westphal announced that a total of 120 troops of field and A.A. artillery had reached the Anzio front. Because 4th Parachute Division was not yet fully operational its headquarters was given the task of coast watching north of Torre Vaianica, and it retained three battalions for this purpose. Headquarters 114th Jäger Division had not arrived. On 30th January 1st Bn 735th Grenadier Regiment (of 715th Infantry Division) was attached to 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division as the first of six battalions which 715th Infantry Division was expected to contribute to the counter-attack.

We must now return to the early hours of 22nd January on 6th U.S. Corps' three beaches.

(v)

The 15th, 30th and 7th Infantry (from right to left) of 3rd U.S. Division moved straight inland from 'X' beach, and occupied their preliminary beachhead. 30th Infantry then advanced northwards towards Le Ferriere, while three patrols of 3rd Reconnaissance Troop (motorized), moving east and north-east, seized and prepared for demolition four bridges over the Mussolini Canal. 30th Infantry continued to advance and by dusk had reached the west branch of the Mussolini Canal and had secured its crossings. During the day the disembarkation of the follow-up flights went smoothly on. The one thing wanting was information about the enemy. Three reconnaissance patrols were ordered to Littoria, Cisterna, and Velletri but none of them approached their destinations. This failure may have been because Major Crandall, commanding the Reconnaissance Troop, drove into a German patrol west of Sessano, and disappeared without trace into captivity. At 'Yellow' beach the three Ranger battalions followed by 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion landed and occupied their preliminary beachhead. By nightfall Truscott, who had been on shore since 6 a.m., could feel satisfied that everything was going satisfactorily. None the less he was receiving vague reports of patrol actions along his front and he, like his troops, warily awaited the counter-attack that did not come.

1st British Division on 'Peter' beach was enjoying a landing undisturbed except by the impediments of an off-shore sand bar, a 'water gap', and bad exits from the beach.¹ The adjutant of the Scots Guards, coming ashore in the second flight, noted '. . . We found ourselves able to move about, form up and generally conduct ourselves as if we were on an exercise. Looking back, it all seemed ridiculously easy but it did not appear so at the time; we thought

¹ 1st British Division. Main formations and units:

2nd Infantry Brigade (Brigadier E. E. J. Moore): 1st Bn The Loyal Regiment, 2nd Bn The North Staffordshire Regiment, 6th Bn The Gordon Highlanders.

3rd Infantry Brigade (Brigadier J. G. James): 1st Bn The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, 2nd Bn The Sherwood Foresters, 1st Bn The King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

24th Guards Brigade (Brigadier A. S. P. Murray): 5th Bn Grenadier Guards, 1st Bn Scots Guards, 1st Bn Irish Guards.

Artillery (including Corps artillery): 2nd, 19th, 67th, 24th Field Regiments R.A.; 80th Medium Regiment R.A.; 81st A/Tk Regiment R.A.; 90th Light A.A. Regiment R.A.

Engineers: 23rd, 238th, 248th Field Companies R.E.

Divisional Troops: 1st Reconnaissance Regiment, 2/7th Middlesex Regiment (M.G.)

Corps Troops: 46th R.T.R.

3rd Beach Group: 54th The Durham Light Infantry, 70th The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment.

that we were liable to be attacked at any moment . . .¹ The infantry of 2nd Brigade were all ashore by 2.45 a.m., 2nd Special Service Brigade followed in, and 24th Guards Brigade (less the Scots Guards who had been lent to 2nd Brigade for the landing) was ashore by 11.30 a.m. 2nd Brigade's Tactical Headquarters was ashore by 5.30 a.m., and 67th Field Regiment had its guns in action by 8.30 a.m. The infantry of 2nd Brigade moved slowly through the tangled scrub, and by dusk the Loyals, on the left, held the line of the Fosso del Diavolo, the North Staffordshires were on the western end of the Campo di Carne ridge, with the Gordons a little to their right rear. 2nd S.S. Brigade was astride the Via Anziate two and a half miles north of Anzio and was in touch with the Rangers. 24th Guards Brigade was gathered near Torre Caldara. The Scout Troop of 1st Reconnaissance Regiment had sent patrols through the Loyals' front to the Fosso della Moletta. Nothing had been seen of the enemy except a few coast watchers and some scout-cars.

At the close of 22nd January something was missing in the tactical side of the landings, and that was an enemy. Yet from Corps headquarters downwards there existed the feeling that the enemy would show his hand at any moment in the counter-attacks which had been foretold. Everyone was defensively busy, digging-in, and patrolling their immediate fronts. No deep reconnaissance was attempted, even to a depth that could be covered on foot. Alexander and Clark visited the beachhead during the morning, and the adjutant of the Scots Guards gives us once again a glimpse of the scene ' . . . General Alexander made a tour of the beachhead that morning, wearing his red hat and riding in a jeep followed by the usual retinue. We were again reminded of the likeness of the operation to an exercise—the Chief Umpire visiting the forward positions and finding things to his satisfaction . . .' The visit of the Army Group and Army commanders was, correctly, one of encouragement. It was not their business in any way to try to command Lucas's Corps for him. Alexander, however, on the 22nd January signalled to Mr. Churchill ' . . . We have made a good start . . .' and on the 23rd ' . . . The build-up of 6 Corps is proceeding satisfactorily . . . I have stressed the importance of strong hitting mobile patrols being boldly pushed out to gain contact with the enemy . . . '

Lucas in fact was giving most of his attention to build-up which was going well. At the port of Anzio damage amounted to a gap blown in the mole and a few small craft sunk in the harbour, but U.S. 36th Engineer Combat Regiment put the port in working order by the afternoon of the 22nd. The U.S. 54th Engineer Combat Regiment and 1st Naval Beach Battalion were organizing 'X' beach,

¹ Quoted in *The Scots Guards 1919-1955*, David Erskine, London 1956, p. 199, 201.

and 3rd Beach Group was organizing 'Peter' beach. The whole beachhead was protected by the fighters of U.S. XII A.S.C. which flew 465 sorties over the beachhead and 165 over shipping. From mid-day on the 22nd German fighter-bombers attacked shipping and craft off Anzio six times, perhaps 100 sorties in all. All the raids were intercepted and two German aircraft were shot down, although six Allied fighters were lost. A few German guns shelled now and then at long range from positions which were undiscovered. Off-shore floating mines sank the U.S. minesweeper *Portent* and damaged H.M.S. *Palomares*. In spite of these nuisances about 90% of the assault convoys, including 36,000 men and about 3,069 vehicles, had been brought ashore by midnight January 22nd/23rd. Lucas decided to land the remainder of 1st British Division at Anzio and this was accomplished during the morning of 23rd January. Unloading of stores and equipment continued steadily, although rather slowly owing to worsening weather which on 24th January closed the beaches, and restricted discharges to Anzio harbour. Here on 24th January arrived 179th Regimental Combat Team of 45th U.S. Division in a convoy from Naples which carried also more stores and equipment.¹ Clark had now decided to send, as further reinforcements, 1st U.S. Armoured Division (less Combat Command 'B') and the remainder of 45th U.S. Division. The development of Anzio harbour and 'Yellow' beach led to a decision to close 'Peter' beach altogether on 25th January. Although 1,000 tons had been landed there, the combination of worsening weather, off-shore obstacles, and bad beach-exits showed that this beach would not repay further work.

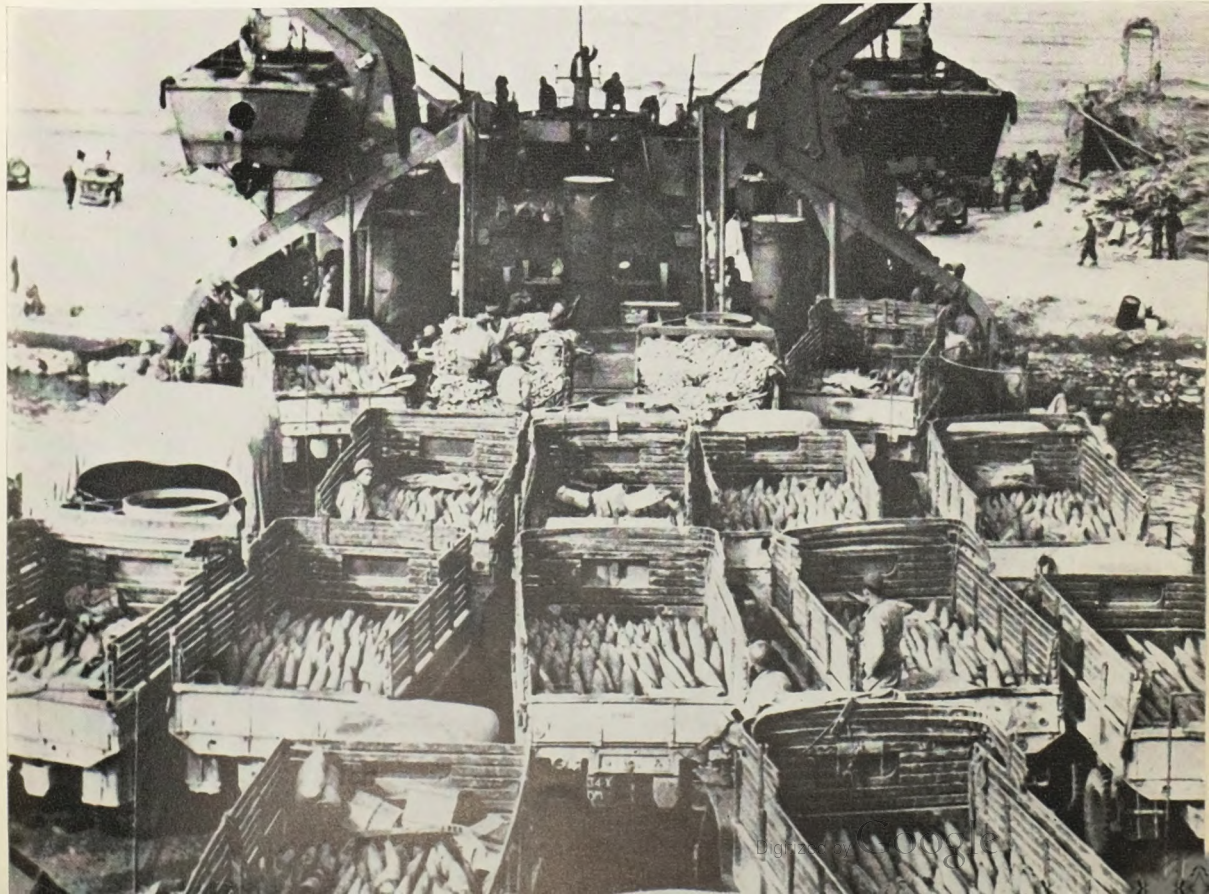
On the evening of 23rd January there occurred the first of the attacks by German bombers on Allied shipping, and unloading points. 55 German bombers had set out, of which 25 were driven off by Allied fighters. 21 bombers got through, and an aerial torpedo sank H.M.S. *Janus* while a radio-guided bomb damaged H.M.S. *Jervis* sufficiently to cause her to withdraw to Naples. H.M.S. *Penelope*, *Orion*, and *Spartan* were withdrawn also because there was no point in exposing these cruisers to risks when their support was apparently not required by the land forces. Eleven of the German bombers were shot down by American day and night-fighters, and by anti-aircraft fire. At dusk on 24th January 43 German bombers attacked, followed later by 52 more. In these raids the U.S. destroyer *Plunkett* was damaged as was the U.S. minesweeper *Prevail*. The hospital ship *St. David* was sunk and her sister ship the *Leinster* was

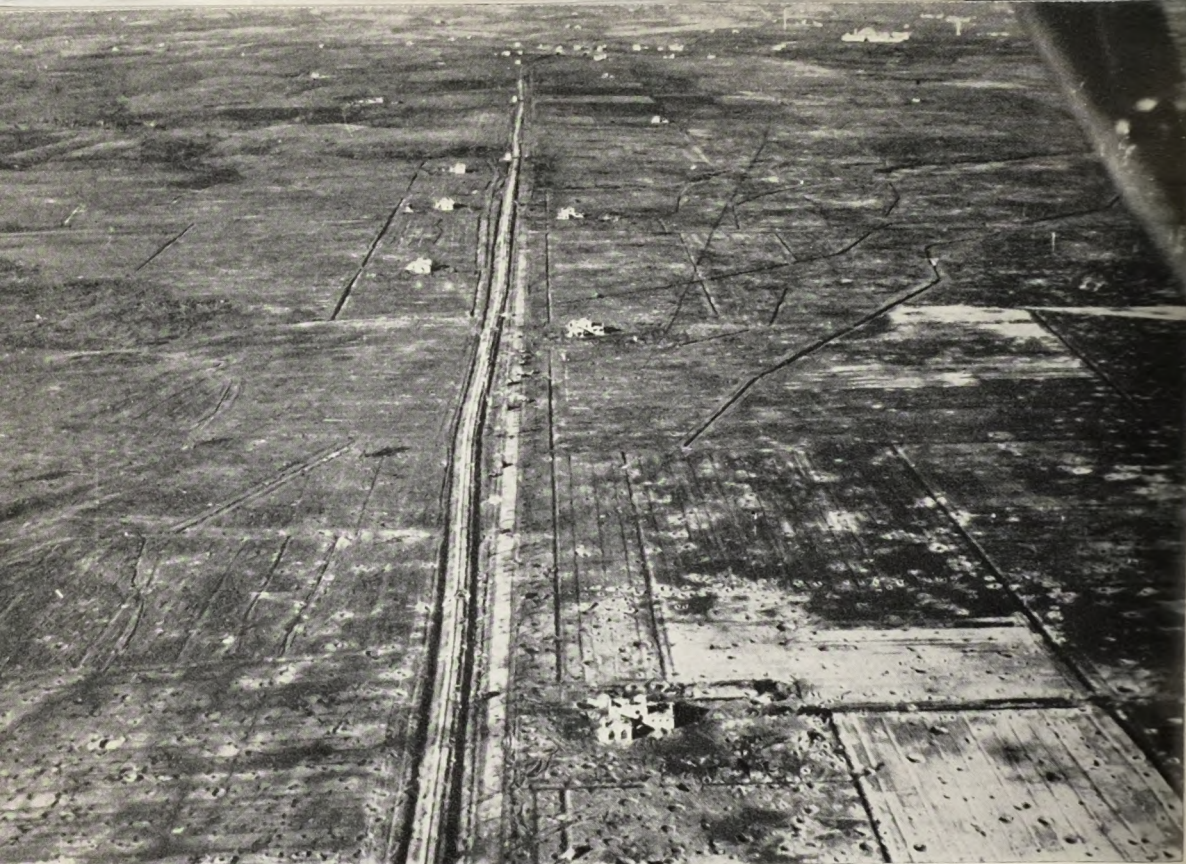
¹ A R.C.T. was the equivalent of a British brigade group. 179th R.C.T. included 179th Infantry, 160th Field Artillery Battalion, and ancillary units.



39. H.M.S. *Spartan* bombarding. Anzio.

40. Tank landing ship, carrying loaded trucks, beaches near Anzio.





41. Part of the plain of Anzio, looking north up the Via Anziante towards Campoleone. Aprilia (the 'Factory') top right.



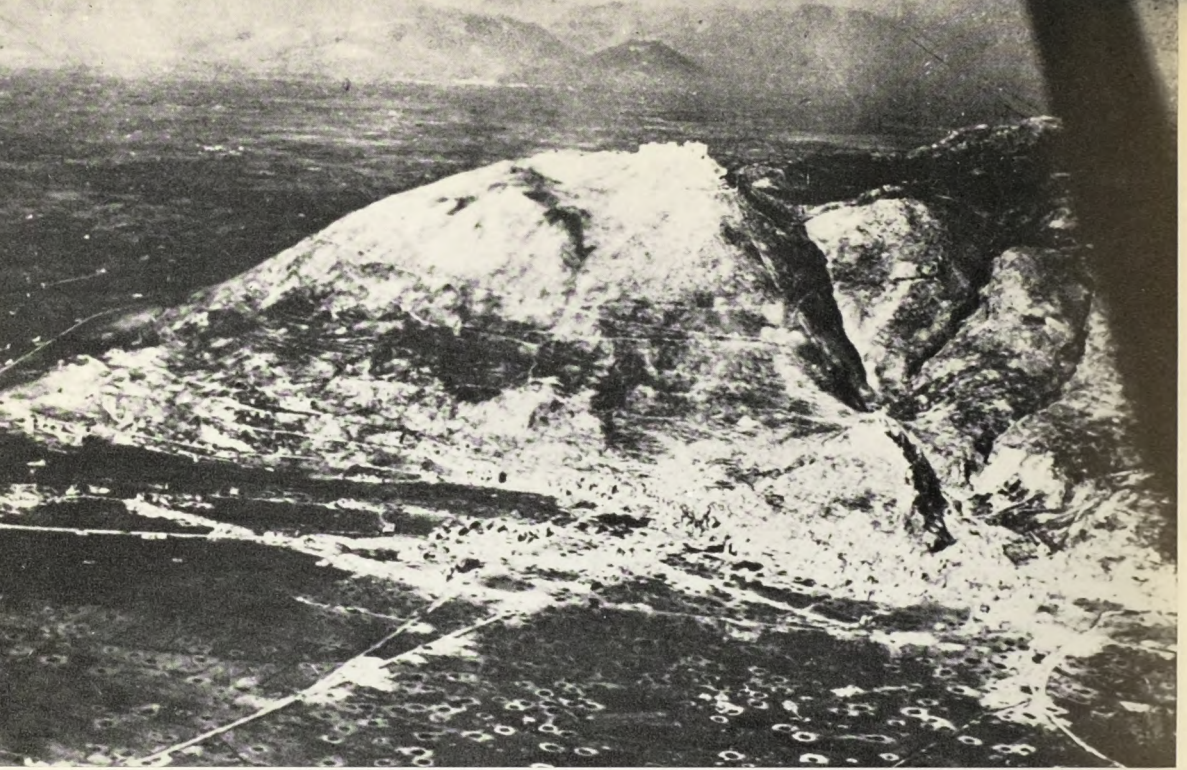
42. Anzio. In the 'wadi country'.



43. View towards Castelforte and the Aurunci mountains, across the Garigliano.

44. The Cassino massif. View, looking west. Left, Mt. Cassino crowned by the Abbey. Right, snow-capped Mt. Cairo.





45. The Cassino massif. Another view, looking west. Middleground, ruins of Cassino town. Above, Mt Cassino, and Abbey; note deep gorges on the right. Liri valley in the distance.

46. The Cassino massif. View looking north-west across Mt. Trocchio (centre) to Cassino town, Mt. Cassino and Abbey, snow-capped peak of Mt. Cairo. Highway 6 skirts Mt Trocchio's right, runs to Cassino town and then into Liri valley on left top corner of photograph.



set on fire. The U.S. destroyer *Mayo* was disabled by a mine. Once again eleven bombers were shot down at Anzio, seven of them by No. 600 Squadron and three by No. 255 Squadron R.A.F., and three fighters were destroyed elsewhere by U.S. XII A.S.C. Two American fighters were lost. The weather on 25th and 26th January did not favour flying, but at dusk on the 26th 70 German bombers attacked, followed by 26 at dawn on the 27th. Nine bombers in all were shot down, and the rest had no success. No. 600 Squadron's Beaufighters accounted for three of the bombers. The next serious attack occurred on 29th January when H.M.S. *Spartan*, which had returned from Naples, was sunk by a radio-guided bomb with heavy loss of life as was the cargo-ship *Samuel Huntington*. Bad weather now brought German air activity almost to a halt.

Bad weather by itself in the shape of a gale during the night 26th/27th January interrupted discharges by damaging the pontoon causeways on the beaches and many landing-craft. Nevertheless hard work at sea and on shore soon repaired damage, and the port at Anzio had not been greatly affected. By the 29th January some 69,000 men, 508 guns, 237 tanks, and 27,250 tons of supplies and stores had been landed.

The activities of 6th U.S. Corps on 23rd and 24th January were given almost wholly to consolidating the final perimeter of the beachhead. On 24th January a patrol of 5th Grenadier Guards, under orders to reconnoitre to Albano, reached Aprilia ('the Factory') which seemed to be strongly held, and returned with five prisoners from 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division. Patrols of 3rd U.S. Division eastward across the Mussolini Canal were repulsed by troops of the Hermann Göring Panzer Division. However, on 24th January Lucas, encouraged by the arrival of 179th R.C.T. and the promise of more troops to come, took 1st Division out of reserve and ordered it to probe towards Albano, and 3rd U.S. Division to do likewise towards Cisterna. On 24th January 2nd Special Service Brigade left Anzio to return to the Garigliano.

On 25th January therefore 15th Infantry advanced along the road leading from near Le Ferriere through Isola Bella to Cisterna, while on its left 30th Infantry followed the unmetalled road leading to Cisterna from Campomorto. Neither of these advances progressed very far—some two or three miles on either road—before being checked by troops of the Hermann Göring Panzer Division. A diversionary attack towards Littoria by 504th Parachute Infantry had no better fortune. 24th Guards Brigade on the Via Anziante was more successful for 5th Grenadier Guards captured Aprilia, which

was held by 3rd Battalion 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment as a battle outpost, during the afternoon. On 26th and 27th January 3rd U.S. Division continued its attempts to reach Cisterna but was finally checked at a point some three miles short of the town. The American attacks had been by single battalions on the 25th, and by two battalions apiece on the 26th and 27th, and Truscott now proposed a full divisional attack. On 26th January the Grenadier Guards and the Irish Guards repelled a counter-attack, and 24th Guards Brigade then settled in to hold Aprilia. It cannot be said that 6th U.S. Corps' probing caused the German higher command much concern, and indeed it was Hitler's insistence on waiting for a maximum concentration of tanks and artillery and weather bad enough to hamper the Allied air force that caused a general counter-attack to be postponed until 1st February.

On 25th January both Alexander and Clark visited the beachhead. On 27th January Alexander suggested to Clark that since the remainder of 45th U.S. Division would shortly arrive at Anzio the moment had come for a quick advance on Velletri. On 28th January Clark returned to the beachhead not without adventure, for his P.T boat was mistaken for a German E-boat by a U.S. minesweeper which fired into it, causing casualties. Clark now urged Lucas to take Cisterna and Campoleone to strengthen his beachhead line. Lucas, expecting 45th U.S. Division and part of 1st U.S. Armoured Division to reach him by 30th January, agreed to attack on that day. But, according to Mr. Blumenson, Lucas confided his feelings to his diary in the following words:¹

'Apparently some of the higher levels think that I have not advanced with maximum speed. I think more has been accomplished than anyone has a right to expect. This venture was always a desperate one and I could never see much chance for it to succeed, if success means driving the Germans north of Rome. The one factor that has allowed us to get established ashore has been the port of Anzio. Without it our situation by this time would have been desperate with little chance of a build up to adequate strength . . . Had I been able to rush to the high ground around Albano . . . immediately upon landing, nothing would have been accomplished except to weaken my force by that amount because the troops sent, being completely beyond supporting distance, would have been immediately destroyed. The only thing to do was what I did. Get a proper beachhead and prepare to hold it. Keep the enemy off balance by a constant advance against him by small units, not committing anything as large as a division until the Corps was ashore and everything was set. Then make a co-ordinated

¹ *Command Decisions*, Sec. 11, Martin Blumenson, Methuen and Co. Ltd. London 1960, p. 264.

attack to defeat the enemy and seize the objective. Follow this by exploitation. This is what I have been doing but I had to have troops in to do it with.'

This was a clear statement of Lucas's perplexity about his ultimate object, since no one had suggested that his task was to drive the Germans north of Rome, and of his deliberate, and by no means unjustifiable, tactics. On 28th January Mr. Churchill sent Alexander his view of the beachhead. '... It would be unpleasant if your troops were sealed off there and the main army could not advance up from the south.'

(vi)

6th U.S. Corps' attack on 30th January was based on the assumptions that the Germans were holding Cisterna and Campoleone as delaying positions while their main line of resistance would be found further north on the slopes of the Alban hills. It is interesting, therefore, that the 'I' Staff of 1st Division placed the German main line of resistance as passing through Cisterna and Campoleone, and forecast that the enemy intended to counter-attack.

On the German side the Chiefs of Staff of *AOK 14* and at Kesselring's headquarters summed up the situation in believing on 24th January that the Allies had at best put ashore a little more than three infantry divisions and one armoured division. They agreed that this force was insufficient for an attack on an objective such as the Alban hills, having regard to the fact that a force committed in this way would be obliged to protect both its flanks strongly. They expected the Allies to spend the next few days in expanding and consolidating their beachhead in preparation for a full-strength attack later. On 26th January von Mackensen was more precise in a directive. He did not rule out an Allied thrust towards Rome but he thought that the most likely Allied course was to try to seize the high ground at and west of Velletri as the first stage of a drive towards Valmontone, while making a secondary attack towards Littoria. He hoped that his own counter-attack would go in first. He had been enjoined by Hitler to contain the Allies in their beachhead and to prevent them from enlarging it. He therefore pushed out battle outposts to the general line Cisterna-Campoleone with the intention of building up that line as the jumping off ground for an attack or alternatively as a main defensive belt. This was a neat combination of orthodox German offensive and defensive tactics. The higher commanders briefly entertained the idea that the Allies might land at Civitavecchia or elsewhere but on 28th January dismissed it with an unusual jocularity.¹

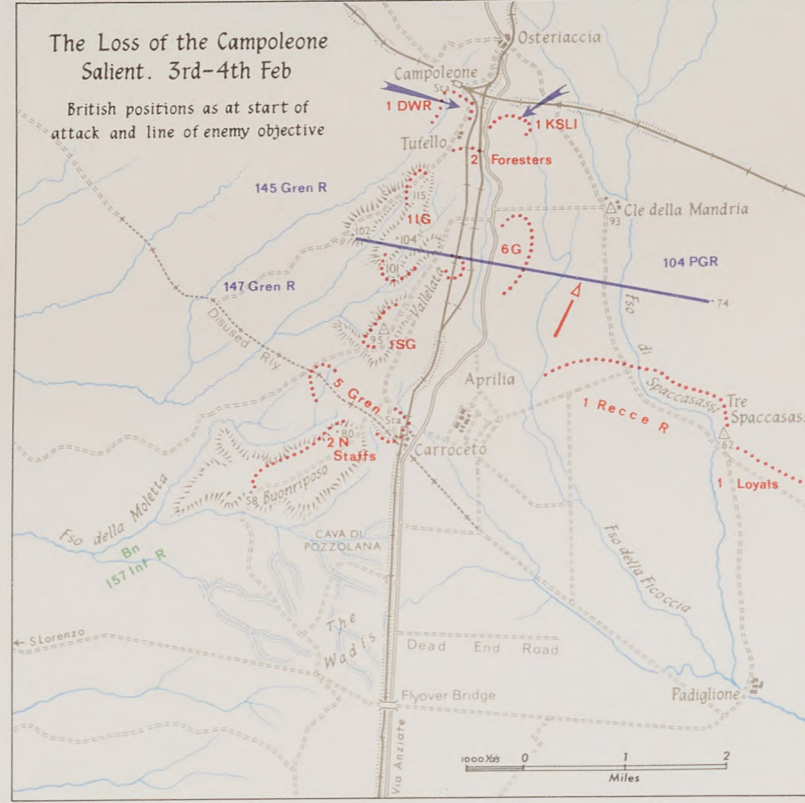
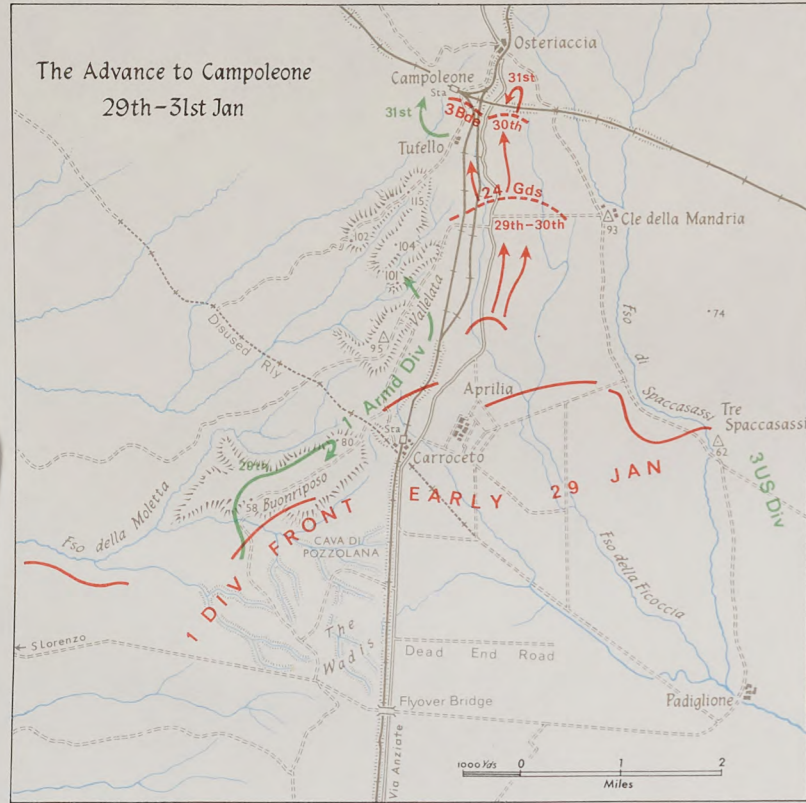
¹ Westphal, Kesselring's Chief of Staff, told Wentzell on the 28th January that the Japanese military attaché had informed him that the Allies would land at Grosseto on

Within the sectors which we have already described Schlemm was now assembling the forces for the attack which his 1st Parachute Corps headquarters was to control. By 30th January four large Battle Groups—Pfeifer, Gräser, Conrath, and Raapke—stood ready. They had a combined strength of 33 battalions and (on the arrival of all the artillery reinforcements) a fire-power of some 238 field guns and howitzers and 32 nebelwerfer.

6th U.S. Corps' plan of attack was to advance on 30th January on a front of two divisions. On the right, 3rd U.S. Division, including 504th Parachute Infantry and the three Ranger battalions, was to get astride Highway 7 at Cisterna, and then to seize the high ground at Velletri preparatory to moving on Valmontone. On the left, 1st British Division and 1st U.S. Armoured Division (less Combat Command 'B') would be engaged. 1st British Division was to advance northwards up the Via Anziate, directed on the high ground at Albano and Genzano. 1st U.S. Armoured Division was to swing round the left of the British division, moving north-westwards from Carroceto to the Via Laurentina and then northwards, directed on Marino. The choice of the armoured division's route seems extraordinary today, because the maps and air photographs in use in 1944 clearly and correctly suggest that the country which the division was to traverse was a tank trap. Lucas regarded the operations of 1st British Division and 1st U.S. Armoured Division as his main effort. 3rd U.S. Division's operations were in a sense secondary and preparatory for they were to begin during the night 29th/30th January, whereas 1st British Division and 1st U.S. Armoured Division would make their main attacks on the 30th. A full programme of direct and indirect air support was arranged, and it was therefore disappointing that a period of bad flying weather began on 30th January and lasted into February. This weather badly handicapped U.S. XII A.S.C., and grounded all medium tactical bombers during 31st January. Only the heavy bombers, flying far beyond the battlefield, were able to pursue, more or less fully, their attacks on airfields in north Italy.

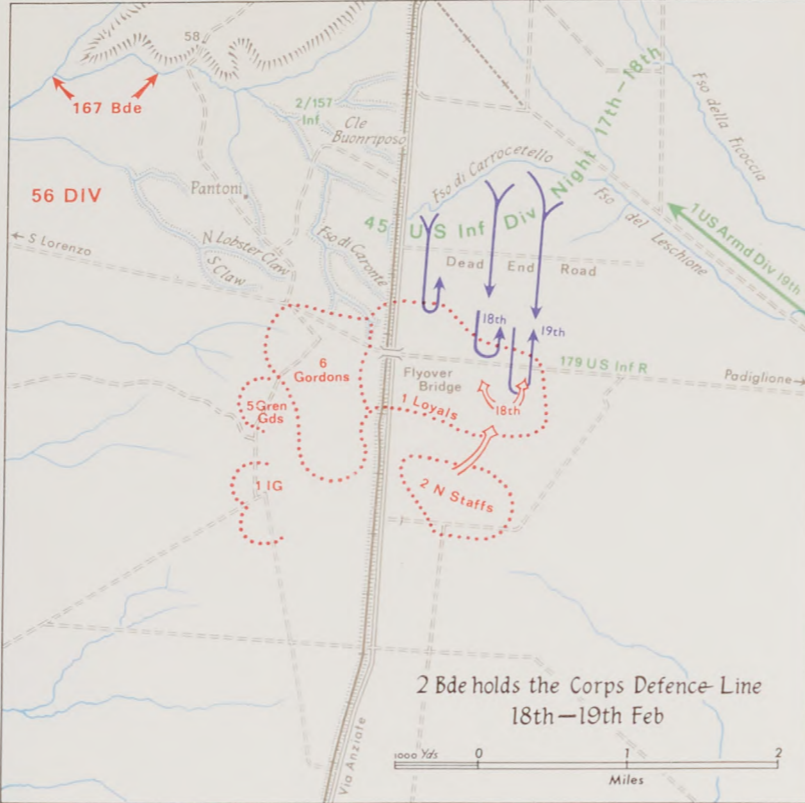
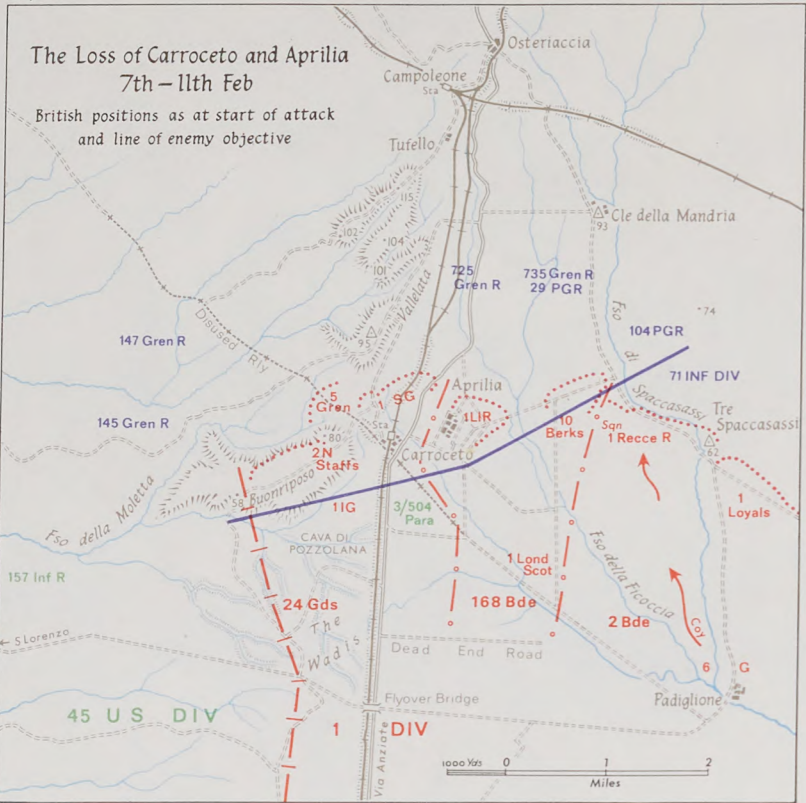
Some regrouping in 6th U.S. Corps was necessary before the attack in order to free 1st British and 3rd U.S. Divisions from protective tasks. 36th U.S. Engineer Regiment relieved the British 2nd Infantry Brigade in its positions along the Moletta wadi. 1st Reconnaissance Regiment relieved the Ranger battalions and 3rd battalion 7th Infantry in positions east of Aprilia. Part of 179th R.C.T. took over 504th Parachute Infantry's positions along the Mussolini Canal.

29th January. He told von Mackensen also, who replied that his Tokio Information Service said that the landing would be at Venice.



1 Infantry Division in the fighting at Anzio
January and February 1944

- Battalion positions.....
- Brigade ".....
- Inter Brigade Bdy.....
- " Divisional ".....



General Truscott's plan for 3rd U.S. Division was stealthily to infiltrate the town of Cisterna by using an approach which seemed made for the purpose. This was a half-dry irrigation channel, the Fosso Centri di Pantano or 'Pantano ditch', which ran roughly parallel to the road Conca-Cisterna on the right-hand side, and joined it $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Cisterna. 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions were given the task. 15th Infantry and 4th Ranger Battalion, starting a little later, were to attack up the Conca-Cisterna road to complete the capture of Cisterna. 7th Infantry, on the left of the 15th, was to attack northwards on the line of the Fosso Femminamorta, to take German positions along the railway line west of Cisterna, and then to cut Highway 7 north of the town. 504th Parachute Infantry, on the extreme right flank, was to make a diversionary attack northwards along the Mussolini Canal.

At 1 a.m. therefore on 30th January 1st and 3rd Ranger Battalions advanced along the 'Pantano ditch' in a column whose head, at dawn, was emerging from cover while the remainder was strung out in the ditch. The Germans, however, had an eye on the ditch and very soon set upon the Rangers with a battle-group hastily improvised from 3rd Battalion 1st Parachute Regiment, 7th G.A.F. Jäger Battalion, and 129th Reconnaissance Battalion. The Rangers in fact were in a trap and their fate depended upon the timely arrival of 15th Infantry. But 15th Infantry had been meeting strong resistance and by noon had advanced only to Isola Bella. The Rangers, who had expended their ammunition, were rounded up. The American official historian states that 6 men escaped out of the 767 who formed the two battalions; the Hermann Göring Panzer Division claimed that its battle group took 639 prisoners. This calamity ended the good services which Ranger Battalions had given in Italy and before that in Sicily and in North Africa. 7th Infantry, on the left of the 15th, also made little progress, and 504th Parachute Infantry reached the junction of the Mussolini Canal and the Fosso di Cisterna, and was then brought to a standstill. Losses had been heavy. The American front now ran from Ponte Rotto to Isola Bella and thence south-east to the Mussolini Canal, a gain of about one and a half miles. General Truscott decided to renew his attack on the afternoon of 31st January, using in support of the infantry all his artillery, 751st Tank Battalion, 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and 1st Battalion 30th Infantry from reserve. 7th Infantry from the area of Ponte Rotto and 15th Infantry from Isola Bella were to converge upon Cisterna.

On 31st January, therefore, the attack was renewed and continued with pendulum-like swings of American attacks and German local counter-attacks until noon on 1st February. By that time the Americans had advanced to a point some fifteen hundred yards from Cisterna, but there were no signs that the Hermann Göring Panzer

Division and its attached battle groups were weakening. 3rd U.S. Division had sustained 3,000 casualties since 22nd January and had temporarily exhausted its offensive power. Truscott thought it wise to halt and create a firm front against the general counter-attack which he thought almost certain to come.

See Maps 37 to 40

General Penney, for his attack astride the Via Anziante, chose his as yet uncommitted 3rd Infantry Brigade, supported by 46th R.T.R., and 2nd, 19th, and 24th Field Regiments R.A. and 80th Medium Regiment R.A. 3rd Infantry Brigade's first objective was the road and railway crossing at Campoleone Station, and its second objective was Osteriaccia, half a mile further north. The attack was to begin at 12 noon on 30th January. On Penney's left, General Harmon decided to send his tanks north-west along the disused railway track which ran through Carroceto, in the hope of avoiding the worst of the ravines which lay between that place and the Via Laurentina.¹ But before either attack could begin it was necessary to seize suitable start lines—for 3rd Infantry Brigade along a lateral track about a mile south of Campoleone Station, for 1st U.S. Armoured Division a piece of the railway track north-west of Carroceto. 24th Guards Brigade was to seize the British start line, and 1/6th Armoured Infantry, with two companies of 1st Armoured Regiment and a field artillery battalion, the American start line.

Neither of the preliminary operations turned out to be smooth. On the afternoon of 29th January the American force reached the Buonriposo ridge, west of Carroceto, and was then heavily fired on by German machine-guns and artillery from across the Moletta wadi. The Americans then swung north to the railway track, only to run into a minefield covered by heavy fire. The infantry could not advance to clear the minefield without tank support, and the tanks could not advance because of mines and boggy ground. Both remained in this predicament during the night 29th/30th January.

Meanwhile a misfortune had occurred in 24th Guards Brigade. The Grenadier Guards were to take part, with the Scots Guards, in the attack to seize the start line for 3rd Infantry Brigade. On the afternoon of 28th January four company commanders of the Grenadiers and four other officers set out in Jeeps to join their commanding officer at the Scots Guards' positions which were a mile north of Aprilia and on the right of the Via Anziante. The officers were to reconnoitre the ground of the coming attack from these positions. Unfortunately the little convoy missed the side turning and drove

¹ This disused railway track must not be confused with the 'working' main line which runs to Rome through Campoleone Station.

straight into the German outposts. While escaping, four officers, including three company commanders, were killed and one wounded. This loss left only eleven officers in the battalion, and with the 130 casualties already suffered in the capture of Carroceto and Aprilia, temporarily disabled the Grenadier Guards. Their place had to be taken by the Irish Guards. In spite of the delays caused by the consequent regrouping in the Guards Brigade, the Scots Guards on the right and the Irish Guards on the left began their attack just before midnight 29th/30th January. Their objective was a lateral track about a mile south of Campoleone Station. Both battalions moved off under cover of artillery fire, and found themselves in the usual conditions of a night attack when the enemy means to fight: uproar, darkness criss-crossed with coloured tracer fire and lit here and there by burning vehicles, and much confusion about what is happening. Both battalions nevertheless reached their objectives, although at first light a company of the Scots Guards was overrun by counter-attack, while the survivors of two companies of the Irish Guards, on the left of the Via Anziate were in so exposed a position that they had to be withdrawn a little. It was therefore necessary to regain this part of the start-line, a task most satisfactorily accomplished by 'C' Company 1st K.S.L.I. and 'A' Squadron 46th R.T.R. by noon. 3rd Infantry Brigade's attack, however, had to be postponed until 3.15 p.m. on 30th January.

When 3rd Infantry Brigade's attack began—1st King's Shropshire Light Infantry on the right of the Via Anziate, 1st Duke of Wellington's on its left, 'B' Squadron 46th R.T.R. accompanying the infantry—it went steadily and well. A note by Colonel Webb-Carter, commanding the Duke's, captures very nearly the odd, workmanlike, prosaic feeling of such an attack, "'A' Company had pushed on beyond the start-line, and as the heavy shell-fire lifted for a moment, the two supporting companies rose and walked dourly on . . . ' The diarist of the K.S.L.I. notes ' . . . the Battalion fought its way forward with great steadiness and precision.' Between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. both battalions gained and consolidated their objectives south of the railway which passes through Campoleone Station. Both sent out patrols, and the Sherwood Foresters came forward to be ready to continue the advance on 31st January.

Meanwhile throughout the day 1st U.S. Armoured Division had been struggling to continue its advance north-westwards, but though it succeeded in making a little ground on the Vallelata ridge and opening a small gap between 65th Infantry Division's left and 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division's right, it was unable to maintain the momentum of its attack to take advantage of the opening. The fortunes of Lucas's main attack and in particular the Armoured Division's difficulties caused him to split the division for operations

on the morrow, the 31st. 3/1st Armoured Regiment and 6th Armoured Infantry were to continue to try to force their way north-westwards and north. 1st Armoured Regiment (less 3rd Battalion), reinforced by 3/504th Parachute Infantry, was to stand ready to thrust along the Via Anziata as soon as 1st British Division had captured Osteriaccia.

On the German side the attacks of 6th U.S. Corps on 30th January led von Mackensen to alter his plans for the immediate future. At 8.40 p.m. he ordered 1st Parachute Corps to go over to the defensive, and to abandon for the time being the plan of a general counter-attack although local counter-attacks were to continue. von Mackensen told his troops that the Allies must not extend their beachhead 'by another inch of ground. Our main line must keep the enemy clamped down and there is to be no retreat.' Kesselring confirmed von Mackensen's decision, and Westphal expressed the view that 'everything was going quite well at the bridgehead'.

The Sherwood Foresters spent an uncomfortable night dug-in against intermittent shelling on ground just behind the K.S.L.I. At 10.30 a.m. on 31st January the Sherwood Foresters began their advance northwards, aiming at the railway line where they intended to swing left towards Campoleone Station. They were supported by the divisional artillery and 'C' Squadron 46th R.T.R. As the leading companies, 'A' and 'C', went forward through trenched winter vineyards they came under ever increasing machine-gun and mortar fire, but none the less gained the railway which ran on an embankment. Losses were heavy and several attempts to cross the embankment, which greatly impeded the tanks, failed. The enemy indeed was very well dug-in and had turned scattered farm buildings into strongpoints. Between noon and 1 p.m. the attack came temporarily to a halt. The pause was used to prepare a strong artillery fire plan and to bring up 2/1st Armoured Regiment west of the Via Anziata. Thus supported the Foresters' reserve companies renewed the attack. Their gallant effort was in vain and in the later afternoon Brigadier James withdrew the remnant of the battalion, 258 of all ranks, into reserve. North-west of Carroceto the American force had been unable to gain ground. The afternoon of 31st January therefore marked the end of General Lucas's main attack towards Albano and Genzano. Lucas now ordered a halt in order to prepare the next move.

1st British Division had created a salient some seven thousand yards deep and three thousand five hundred yards wide at the base. A salient can be a valuable gain when there are plenty of fresh troops at hand to push through it and then perhaps to fan out. When no

such troops are at hand a salient is a defensive problem for it invites attack from front and flanks. To guard against these possibilities General Penney ordered 3rd Infantry Brigade to consolidate in the nose of the salient, and brought up 2nd Infantry Brigade to positions south-west of Carroceto. The east flank was watched by 1st Reconnaissance Regiment and the Loyals detached from 2nd Infantry Brigade. 1st U.S. Armoured Division departed into Corps' reserve. British casualties since the landing had amounted to 2,100 and 46th R.T.R. had lost 11 Shermans.

On 31st January Alexander arrived in the beachhead and remained until 2nd February. He was not satisfied with the situation and took pains to see the whole front and all senior commanders. It was clear to him that 6th U.S. Corps would be unable to launch a further large attack while Cisterna and Campoleone remained in German hands. Accordingly, after conferring with Clark on 1st February, he instructed him to attack in order to extend the left flank of the beachhead to the Incastro river and also to gain Cisterna and Campoleone. These operations would give 1st Division a secure left flank and more elbow room. Then 6th U.S. Corps was to go over temporarily to the defensive and was to improve its lateral communications in order to gain freedom of movement behind its front for reserves, artillery and so on. All this was to be the prelude to a further full-strength attack. However, on the afternoon of 1st February Lucas, as yet unaware of Alexander's instructions, ordered his Corps to organize its present positions thoroughly for defence against the general German counter-attack which now seemed imminent. On second thoughts Clark confirmed Lucas's orders on 2nd February, and Alexander accepted his Army Commander's decision.

We have already seen that von Mackensen had temporarily suspended a general counter-attack by 1st Parachute Corps. On 31st January Kesselring, after considering the state of both *AOK 10* and *AOK 14*, confirmed von Mackensen's decision. He interpreted 6th U.S. Corps' attack as the first phase of a determined attempt to break out of the beachhead, and to oppose this there were only two divisions of von Mackensen's array that were at full strength, namely 715th Infantry Division and 26th Panzer Division. As regards the remainder neither the Hermann Göring Panzer Division nor 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division had quite come up to what was expected of them. Moreover though Schlemm was a good commander, his staff appeared to be a set of cigar-smoking DO NOTHINGS. Kesselring

therefore decided to strengthen von Mackensen by giving him Herr and his experienced Headquarters 76th Panzer Corps from the Adriatic wing of *AOK 10*, and to replace Herr by Feuerstein and Headquarters 51st Mountain Corps. By the morning of 4th February Feuerstein had handed over control of the Cecina-Tiber coastal sector to 362nd Infantry Division and had moved his headquarters to near Pescara. Headquarters 76th Panzer Corps by the same date, at Giulianello on the Velletri-Cori road, took command of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, 715th and 71st Infantry Divisions, Hermann Göring Panzer Division and 26th Panzer Division. Headquarters 1st Parachute Corps remained at Grottaferrata and kept under command 65th Infantry Division and 4th Parachute Division.

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See Maps 16, 22, and 26

We must now return to the actions of the Allied air forces. During January 1944 the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces flew 41,517 sorties exclusive of attacks on shipping and against ports, a total which gives a rough yardstick of 1,339 sorties during each 24 hours. The total was roughly twelve thousand sorties greater than the total flown during December 1943 and shows how much the Allied air forces had improved their effort in spite of the consistently bad weather described in the previous chapter.¹

Because the enemy seems to have suffered most from bombing beyond the battlefield we consider firstly the actions of the tactical (medium day) and strategic bombers.

The outline of the bombing plan may be recalled from pages 654-656. There the boundary between the general area of the Tactical Bomber Force and that of the Strategic Air Force was given as the line Pistoia-south of Rimini. In practice, however, the two general areas became three, which may be described as:

Northern Area: North of a line Pistoia-just south of Rimini.

Central Area: Between a line Pistoia-just south of Rimini and a line Rome-Teroli.

Southern Area: South of a line Rome-Teroli.

Table I shows the approximate tonnage of bombs dropped in each of these areas between 15th-31st January, and shows the approximate distribution of effort in terms of tons of bombs.

It is clear from the table opposite that the Central Area received the largest share of bombs.

¹ A detailed table of sorties flown during January is at the end of this chapter.

TABLE I

	Strategic Bombers*		Tactical Bombers†	
	Day	Night	Day	Total
<i>Phase 2</i> (15th-21st January)				
Northern Area	89	Nil	Nil	89
Central Area	1,297	185	1,127	2,609
Southern Area	Nil	Nil	100	100
Total	1,386	185	1,227	2,798
<i>Phase 3</i> (22nd-31st January)				
Northern Area	544	34	Nil	578
Central Area	755	84	711	1,550
Southern Area	333	Nil	617	950
Total	1,632	118	1,328	3,078

* Day: U.S. Fortresses and Liberators. Night: R.A.F. Wellingtons.

† U.S. Mitchells and Marauders.

The bombers' attack was directed mainly against railways and roads, and to a lesser extent against airfields. The targets fall into three groups. The more distant were railway centres on the main routes from Austria in the north:

- Verona
- Ferrara
- Bologna
- Rimini

Then came a group of targets linked with the four main rail routes already described on page 655. Then came a group within the area of battle, and mostly in the Sacco and Liri valleys:

- Frascati
- Velletri
- Colleferro
- Ceprano
- Sezze
- Pontecorvo
- Terracina

It is, however, the second group of targets that is the most numerous and interesting. Table II represents these as nearly as possible under the railway route with which they were related, and in order roughly North to South. But it will be recalled from Chapter XIII p. 467 that a policy of 'interdiction' requires attacks to be

distributed not only in place but in time to cause a perpetual cycle of destruction and repair. Table II therefore also shows these targets in the Central area of Italy arranged in sequence of order of time when each was first attacked. The numeral following each target indicates its place in the sequence.

TABLE II

<i>Western</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central Alternative</i>	<i>Eastern</i>
...	Terni 1	...	...
...	Pistoia 2	...	...
Pontedera 3	...	...	...
...	Foligno 4	...	...
...	Arezzo 5	...	...
...	...	...	Ancona 6
...	...	...	S. Benedetto 7
...	...	...	Fabriano 8
...	Orvieto 10*	...	...
...	Prato 11	...	...
...	...	Certaldo 12	...
...	...	Poggibonsi 13	...
Montalto di Castro 14	...	...	...
...	...	...	Civitanova 15
Civitavecchia 16	...	...	...
...	...	...	Fano 17
...	Orte 18	...	...
...	...	...	Chiaravalle 19
...	Viterbo 20	...	...
...	Pontassieve 21	...	...
Pisa 22	...	...	...
...	...	...	Carsoli 23
Cecina 24	...	...	...
...	...	...	Avezzano 26
...	...	...	Iesi 33
...	...	Siena 34	...
...	...	...	Pedaso 36
...	...	...	Montalto di Vomano 37
...	Rieti 38	...	...
...	Civita Castellana 40	...	...
...	...	Borghetto 41	...
...	Manziana 42	...	...

* Serials missing from the sequence above refer to targets in northern Italy or in the battlefield area.

It is hoped that Table II may give some idea of how the bombers' attacks switched here and there in place and time in pursuing the policy of 'interdiction'. The targets were various, sections of track, bridges, viaducts, stations, repair shops, and included twenty-one marshalling-yards, large or small. In the allotment of targets to aircraft an interesting point deserves mention. In the first fortnight of January the Marauders, which were fitted with the American Norden bomb-sight, had consistently achieved very accurate bombing. From then on therefore the Marauders were given precision

targets such as bridges, and the Mitchells, which had British bomb-sights, were given targets such as marshalling-yards and bottlenecks on railways and roads. The difference between the American and British bomb-sights needs explanation. The former automatically found the correct wind speed and direction during a long, straight or nearly straight, run-up to the target, and the bombs were automatically released at the correct point. On the other hand the British bomb-sight was fed with wind speed and direction computed during the approach or calculated beforehand. The bomb-aimer had then only to direct the pilot until the cross-wires were over target when bombs were released, and this could be done in a turn and thus when only fleeting glimpses of the target were possible. Against lightly defended targets and in clear weather the American bomb-sight was preferable. In other conditions the British bomb-sight held the advantage.

The bombers' attacks were too many to be described and such a description would, unhappily, be repetitive and monotonous. In Table III we have summarized twenty-three typical examples and, from German records, their results. It should not be hard to imagine the chaos which lies in a bare phrase such as 'station closed'. The mind's eye can see shattered and blackened buildings, derailed waggons, the driving-wheels or other parts of locomotives hurled upwards to hang in the twisted girders of a shed's roof, holes in the tracks, pulverized signal-cabins and signal-arms askew, water-tanks rent and empty. The scene suggests that forty or fifty drunken Cyclopes have run amok. Yet although damage was continual and great, traffic did not come to a stop. The general results were delays and difficulties amounting to part paralysis which caused the German commanders constant anxieties. There are many reasons why it is almost impossible to stop or even completely to disrupt traffic. Damage is not often permanent or even very long-lasting except when it occurs to bridges and viaducts where alternative routes do not exist or cannot be contrived. Such targets are few and hard to destroy. Other targets must be chosen, and attacked by the right methods, easy to say, very hard to do.¹ Moreover the Germans by 1944 had taken measures to tackle damage systematically. In northern Italy, at least, they had created a 'castastrophe service' through

¹ The point is interestingly illustrated in the autobiography of a professional railway-man, Mr. G. F. Fiennes, who early in the war was stationed in Cambridge as a District Manager of the London and North Eastern Railway. R.A.F. Wellingtons, Hampdens, and Stirlings from airfields in East Anglia, were at this time trying to destroy Hamm marshalling-yard but '... Hamm just kept rolling along ... (local R.A.F. commanders) came down and asked me why ... "Well, gentlemen, all you do is to dig a few dozen holes each night which a few dozen wagons of ashes and a few straight rails will repair in a very few hours." They asked what they ought to do. "Plaster the place so hard ... that you give their breakdown gangs a month's work rerailing wagons ..."' G. F. Fiennes, *I Tried to Run A Railway*, Allan, London 1967, p. 24.

which commanders could commandeer local German or Italian troops, and Italian civilians as labour, and could also call on the services of the Todt Organization.¹ It was also the custom to detrain almost all German reinforcements from outside Italy at, or north of, Florence from where they continued their journeys by road. However, and by contrast, movement of units within Italy, and of supplies from depots such as in the Arezzo-Viterbo-Terni area right up to and into the forward areas, was by rail whenever possible.

TABLE III

N—Northern Italy; W—Western rail route;
C—Central; E—Eastern; B—Battlefield area.

Date	Place	Aircraft	Bombs (tons)	Results
16 January	Terni C	67 Mitchells	97	} Stations closed
	Orte C	72 Marauders	127	
17 "	Arezzo C	28 Liberators	64	} Stations closed
	Pontassieve C	35 Fortresses	94	
	Prato C	66 Fortresses	162	
	Viterbo C	24 Marauders	32	
18 "	Pisa W	49 Liberators	129	All tracks destroyed
	Pontedera W	40 Fortresses	107	Station heavily damaged
	Pistoia C	29 Fortresses	78	Lucca-Bologna line cut
	Terni C	65 Mitchells	93	Length of Terni-Foligno line destroyed
21 "	Orvieto C	41 Marauders	58	Viaduct damaged
	Rimini N	34 Fortresses	89	Station closed
	Civitanova E	37 Fortresses	104	Station destroyed
	Pontedera W	22 Liberators	58	} Stations closed
	Pisa W	3 Liberators	11	
22 "	Pontecorvo B	38 Fortresses	101	Railway bridge, roads, damaged
27 "	Terni C	34 Marauders	58	Station heavily damaged
	Castiglione C	Mitchells		Tiber bridge damaged
(part of force of 66 aircraft attacking bridges in Orvieto area with 101 tons)				
28 "	Verona N	76 Fortresses	206	} Stations heavily damaged
	Ferrara N	57 Liberators	137	
29 "	Rimini N	37 Fortresses	99	All tracks blocked by explosion of ammunition dump
	Ancona E	28 Fortresses	75	Tracks and installations heavily damaged
	Bologna N	39 Fortresses	102	Main station closed

In attacking German airfields in Italy the Allied bombers, excluding the fighter-bombers, dropped 2,590 tons of bombs during January. The airfields attacked fall into three groups and were attacked for different reasons. The first group was made up of airfields near Rome, and the Allies' object was to neutralize the German tactical air effort. These airfields received 1,065 tons of bombs, and after

¹ For the Todt Organization see Chapter XIV, p. 476.

heavy attacks by Liberators and Fortresses on the 19th and 20th January in which the runways on the Ciampino airfields were put completely out of action, German aircraft had been almost driven from this group. The Allied bombers followed to the airfields to which their enemies had withdrawn, namely Rieti and Viterbo which formed part of a group in central Italy attacked by the bombers, from Pistoia, the most northerly, down to Viterbo and including Iesi situated to eastward. This group received 580 tons of bombs, mostly in the second fortnight of January, and on the 19th the runways at Rieti and Viterbo were also put completely out of action. Perugia was singled out for special attacks, receiving a third of the tonnage of bombs dropped, because it was a base for German reconnaissance aircraft. The third group was far off in north-eastern Italy near Udine, and Air Intelligence believed that the Germans based their reinforcements of long-range bombers on these airfields. They received 945 tons of bombs.¹

Outside Italy there were three airfields in southern France—Istres, Salon, Montpellier—from which it was believed that long-range aircraft of *Luftflotte 3* would make their attacks on shipping at Anzio. In attacks on these airfields before and after the Allied landing 620 tons of bombs were dropped.

It is not possible to give the numbers of aircraft which were destroyed on the airfields listed, but this may be the point at which to compare losses in January. The Germans recorded 135 aircraft destroyed by Allied action in the air and on the ground and 45 which failed to return to base, or 180 in all. The Allies lost 232 aircraft on operations. It is impossible to express and compare these figures as percentages of total strength, but it is safe to say that the rate of German losses was far greater and was crippling.

The effects of the Allied bombing, besides the destruction of aircraft, were frequent interruptions in the working of German airfields, and sometimes their temporary closing. It was peculiarly fortunate that Perugia was put out of action on the 19th January by Allied air attacks for 24 hours, and on 21st and 22nd January by fog, and that therefore virtually no long-range reconnaissance flights were made in the central Mediterranean on the days when the Allied assault forces were sailing to Anzio and landing there. Ingenious tactics were employed in attacking airfields. For example, when the heavy and medium day bombers co-operated in an attack,

¹ *Groups of Airfields*

<i>Rome</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>North Eastern</i>
Guidonia	Pistoia	Udine
North and South Ciampino	Iesi	Villaorba
North and South Centocelle	Perugia	Aviano
Tivoli	Viterbo	Osoppo
	Rieti	Maniago
		Lavariano

the heavies would drop 500 lb bombs to crater the runways and so make it impossible for aircraft to take off. Then the mediums, arriving an hour later, would shower 20 lb fragmentation bombs upon the aircraft grounded in the dispersal areas. Again, it was a German practice to put their aircraft into the safer air when radar gave warning that Allied aircraft were approaching an airfield. Allied attacks on Villaorba and Udine turned this precaution to advantage. The heavy bombers set out and, when these were well on their way, a force of Thunderbolt fighters followed, flying fast and very low to foil radar. The German radar picked up the bombers and the German aircraft began to take off, only to be attacked by the Thunderbolts which had raced past the bombers and arrived first. The bombers, coming in on the fighters' heels, dropped fragmentation bombs on the German aircraft which were still on the ground.

The Allied bombers undertook some operations which were not directly connected with the campaign in Italy. During January five raids were made as part of the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany.¹ Besides these several attacks were made on targets in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, as a rule marshalling-yards, to help and encourage the guerrillas. Other attacks were made on targets in Albania and Greece. All these operations were shared among the Fortresses, Liberators, Wellingtons and Mitchells.²

We have already described air operations over the beachhead at Anzio on 22nd and 23rd January and such German attacks against shipping as scored successes up to the 29th. Between 22nd January and the 31st bad weather greatly curtailed flying on the 24th, 25th, and 26th, and almost ruled out air activity on the Anzio front for friend and foe alike on the 30th. In general, American and British

¹ 3rd January	103 Fortresses. 292 tons of bombs. Turin: Fiat-Lingotto aero-engine factory and Villa Perosa ball-bearing plant.			
7th January	41 Fortresses. 76 tons of bombs. Aircraft factory at Maribor (Yugoslavia).			
23rd/24th January	18 Wellingtons. 22 tons of bombs. As above.			
16th January	67 Fortresses. 179 tons of bombs } Attacks on aircraft component factory at Klagenfurt (Austria)			
31st January					70 Fortresses. 182 tons of bombs
²	<i>Yugoslavia</i>	<i>Albania</i>	<i>*Bulgaria</i>	<i>Greece</i>
	Skoplje	Fieri	Sofia	Salonika
	† Mostar		Dupnitsa	
	Prijedor		Vratsa	
	Metkovic			
	Travnik			

* Over 600 tons of bombs were dropped on the targets in Bulgaria.

† On the 14th January three Liberators and 140 Fortresses dropped 284 tons of bombs on the airfield at Mostar.

fighters maintained patrols over the forces ashore and the shipping by day and night at a rate of rather more than 500 sorties in twenty-four hours. The heavy demands for the services of fighters reduced the number available as fighter-bombers, and the Kittyhawks acted as 'triple threat men' to compensate for the reduction in this way. The Kittyhawks, going out to patrol as fighters, carried bombs and went out with enough time in hand to drop these under cover of the fighters they were to relieve. The Kittyhawks then carried out their fighter-patrols and, finally, strafed any worthwhile targets before returning to base.

6th U.S. Corps made its first call for direct air support on 27th January, and 87 U.S. Kittyhawks dropped 25 tons of bombs on gun positions at Lanuvio and Cisterna. On the 28th the Kittyhawks again attacked, dropping 21 tons of bombs on guns at Cisterna and Velletri, while 71 U.S. Boston day bombers dropped 48 tons on guns and L. of C. at Cisterna, and on the 29th 86 Kittyhawks and Mustangs attacked guns at Cisterna and Velletri with 25 tons of bombs. On the 30th, when the fighter-bombers were severely affected by the weather, the Mitchells supplied direct support by dropping 100 tons of bombs on troops and guns in the areas of Genzano and Monte Comprati. Next day 99 U.S. fighter-bombers attacked road junctions at Sezze, Priverno, and Fondi as well as scattered transport beyond the Allies' beachhead.

During the ten days 22nd-31st January the enemy's air activity over the beachhead was not great apart from the raids by long-range bombers. His fighter-bombers reappeared on 27th January, and on this day sorties by German aircraft of all kinds were estimated to number 125. Thereafter the number dwindled.

(viii)

This chapter has told only the beginnings of the story of Allied operations at Anzio, yet it may be opportune to reflect a little upon the tactical side of these beginnings. In doing so, hindsight is a more than usually unreliable guide. Hindsight, enjoying a view of events on both sides of the hill, plausibly suggests that General Lucas had within his grasp, certainly for two days and possibly for longer, a wonderful opportunity to make a swift and audacious offensive towards some point in the Alban hills. Had he acted in this way the communications of 14th Panzer Corps might have been cut, the German higher commanders might have been thrown off balance, Rome might have fallen. Hindsight declares that Lucas did not grasp the opportunity and devoted himself instead to making his beachhead secure while postponing bold offensive action until reinforcements should have greatly increased the size of his force.

Contemporary thoughts and actions, however, suggest ideas which accord better with military realities. In the first place when the first alarm caused by the surprise of the Allied landing had subsided, the staff at Kesselring's headquarters appreciated, on 24th January, that Lucas had too few troops to advance to the Alban hills while effectively protecting his flanks. Two days later von Mackensen, in considering the courses open to Lucas, did not think a thrust to Rome to be out of the question, but believed that he would in fact try to seize Velletri as a first step to Valmontone. This was a sound and practical appreciation because if the Allied forces could capture *and hold* these places the German main lines of communication to 14th Panzer Corps, Highways 6 and 7, would be cut.

If we turn to the superior Allied commanders we find that neither Alexander nor Clark instructed Lucas to rush at the Alban hills immediately after landing. They gave the Alban hills as the ultimate objective, with a view to cutting the German L. of C. and threatening the rear of 14th Panzer Corps, but gave no particular objectives on the ground and imposed no timings. Very properly they left these matters to the commander on the spot. When they had visited the beachhead and had seen matters for themselves they did no more than instruct Lucas to seize Cisterna and Campoleone for reasons which differed. Alexander saw these places as jumping-off places for a further advance; Clark saw them as places which must be captured if the beachhead was to be secure. Alexander and Clark were soldiers and it is therefore interesting to hear the views of an airman, General Ira C. Eaker, Air C.-in-C. of Mediterranean Allied Air Forces. Eaker, in a letter to the American Chief of Air Staff on 6th March 1944, said that for a time he had been very critical of Alexander and Clark for not forcing the pace from the beachhead. But now, after seeing the ground, he had altered his opinion. He believed now that if Lucas had pushed forward his two divisions to Cisterna and beyond, they would have been destroyed by German forces cutting in from the flanks and cutting them off from their sole source of supply and reinforcement, the port of Anzio.

Alexander, in his despatch published in 1950, had this to say:

' . . . 6th Corps, with the resources available to it, would have found it very difficult both to be secure on the Alban Hills and at the same time retain the absolutely necessary communications with the sea at Anzio. There are too many hypotheses involved to make further speculation valuable; but such conclusions as can be drawn are at any rate satisfactory: that the actual course of events was probably the most advantageous in the end . . . '

This is a sound and balanced opinion but there is an hypothesis that should be discussed. If we take into account only such matters as

Lucas knew during the last ten days of January and the forces that then in fact he had, there seems to have been a course that he could have taken for military reasons that were then apparent. This was to push on during the first 48 hours after landing and seize Campoleone and Cisterna. The distances—a little less than fourteen miles to Campoleone and a little more than fifteen to Cisterna—were within the range of a force even with no more than transport at assault scales.¹ There was visibly no opposition. A commander could not enjoy circumstances more favourable to local exploitation. If Lucas had seized these road-centres he would have gained at no cost valuable jumping-off places for his next moves, whenever he chose to make them, and would have handed to the Germans the problem of attacking him in a favourable defensive position. Lucas failed to see the opportunity or decided not to take it. The failure, of the one kind or the other, enabled Kesselring and von Mackensen to manoeuvre for, and to call 'Checkmate'.

Tactical Air Force (H.Q. at Caserta)

Order of Battle as at 22nd January 1944 for the Anzio Operation

	Formation	No. of Sqdns	Aircraft	Area
U.S. XII A.S.C. (Adv. & Rear H.Q. at Caserta H.Q. U.S. 64th Wing at Frattamaggiore)	U.S. 31st Group	3	Spitfires	Naples
	U.S. 33rd Group	3	Kittyhawks	Naples
	No. 324 Wing R.A.F.	4	Spitfires	Naples
	U.S. 324th Group	3	Kittyhawks	Naples
	U.S. 27th Group	3	Mustangs	Naples
	U.S. 86th Group	3	Mustangs	Naples
	U.S. 111th Sqdn		Tac. R. Mustangs	Naples
	No. 600 Sqdn R.A.F.		N.F. Beaufighters	Naples
			(Detachment in Foggia area)	
	U.S. 415th Sqdn		N.F. Beaufighters	Naples
	No. 225 Sqdn R.A.F.		Tac. R. Spitfires	Naples
	U.S. 79th Group		4 Kittyhawks	Naples
			(Detached from Desert Air Force)	
	No. 244 Wing R.A.F.		4 Spitfires	Naples
			(Detached from Desert Air Force)	
No. 255 Sqdn R.A.F.		(‡) N.F. Beaufighters	Naples	
		(Made available by M.A.C.A.F.)		
U.S. 47th Group		4 Bostons	Naples	
M.A.T.B.F. (H.Q. at Trocchia)	U.S. 12th Group	4	Mitchells	Naples
	U.S. 340th Group	4	Mitchells	Naples
	U.S. 321st Group	4	Mitchells	Foggia
	U.S. 17th Group	4	Marauders	Sardinia
	U.S. 320th Group	4	Marauders	Sardinia
	U.S. 319th Group	4	Marauders	Sardinia
	No. 241 Sqdn R.A.F.		(‡) Strat. R. Spitfires	Naples

¹ The assault scale of transport was calculated to enable units and formations to operate up to a distance of ten miles or so from their maintenance areas on the beach.

	Formation	No. of Sqdns	Aircraft	Area
D.A.F. (Forward H.Q. at Vasto. Adv and Rear H.Q. at San Severo)	No. 239 Wing R.A.F.	{ 5 1 3	Kittyhawks	Termoli
	No. 7 (S.A.A.F.) Wing		Kittyhawks	Foggia
	No. 40 (S.A.A.F.) Sqdn		Spitfires	Termoli
		Tac. R	Spitfires	Foggia
		(Detachment in Termoli area)		
	No 232 Wing R.A.F.	{ 2 1	Bostons	Foggia
			Baltimores	Foggia
	No. 3 (S.A.A.F.) Wing	1	Baltimores	Foggia
	No. 600 Sqdn R.A.F.	(Det.)N.F. Beaufighters		Foggia
	No. 241 Sqdn R.A.F.	(1/4)Strat. R. Spitfires		Termoli
No. 80 Sqdn R.A.F.	F.B.	Spitfires	Termoli	
No. 274 Sqdn R.A.F.	F.B.	Spitfires	Termoli	
No. 682 Sqdn R.A.F.	P.R.	Spitfires	Termoli	
U.S. 57th Group	3	Kittyhawks/ Thunderbolts	Foggia	

Air Observation Post Squadrons

<i>With 8th Army</i>			
<i>Main</i>	No. 651 (A.O.P.) Sqdn		Auster
<i>With 5th Army</i>			
10 Corps	No. 654 (A.O.P.) Sqdn		Auster
<i>With 6th U.S. Corps</i>	(formerly with 13 Corps 8th Army)		
	No. 655 (A.O.P.) Sqdn		Auster
	(Landed at Anzio on 22nd January)		

TABLE
Sorties flown by Mediterranean Allied Air Forces dawn 1st January—dawn 1st February 1944
(excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports)

Command	Land Recce	Fighters	Bomber and Fighter-bomber										Bomber Totals	
			France	Italy	Austria	Yugoslavia	Albania	Greece	Bulgaria	Day	Night			
			L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields & other L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields & other L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields & other L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields & other L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields & other L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	
M.A.A.F.* † (excl. M.E.)	1,416	22,953 (3,574)	—	1,411	137	177	210	41	—	—	—	—	225	3,507
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			29	2,429	—	96	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,039
			—	335	80	18	—	—	—	29	—	—	44	506
			—	1,266	—	24	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,290
			—	212	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	212
			—	6,238	30	34	—	51	6	—	—	—	—	6,365
			—	22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22
H.Q., R.A.F. † M.E.	234	2,072 (1,898)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	1,650	25,025 (5,472)	29	11,344	137	331	210	92	6	—	—	—	225	14,101
			—	569	80	18	—	—	—	29	—	—	44	741

Total Sorties Flown = 41,517 or 1,399 every 24 hours.

* The sorties flown by M.A.A.F. include A.H.Q. Malta but not H.Q., R.A.F. M.E.
† The sorties flown by M.A.A.F. and H.Q., R.A.F. M.E. have been taken from a single consolidated record amended by other documents as necessary and are considered reasonably accurate for our purpose.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE FIRST BATTLE FOR ROME:
FIRST AND SECOND BATTLES
OF MT. CASSINO
(February 1944)

(i)

See Map 35

IN this chapter and in Chapter XX we deal with the battles of Mt. Cassino, which stand out in high relief among the operations in Italy during the winter of 1943-44.¹ They present most starkly the terrible features of that winter warfare but now within the compass of a small battlefield no longer than five miles from north to south and no wider than four miles from east to west. They occur in three short periods of time. The numbers of troops engaged were not very large. These battles therefore can be seen in a sharp focus. The antagonists were too equal in strength for a decisive result to emerge from the savage fighting which raged on ground so different as mountain ridges and the shattered houses and rubble-choked streets of a once flourishing little town. It was not only a town that was laid waste. The Allies unhappily destroyed the venerable, famous Abbey of Monte Cassino which appeared, quite falsely, to be the key point of the German defences. Allies and Germans, matched as they were in physical strength, showed an equal courage, determination

¹ We adopt General Alexander's classification, namely:

First Battle of Cassino, fought mainly by 2nd U.S. Corps between 1st and 12th February.

Second Battle of Cassino, fought mainly by the New Zealand Corps between 15th and 18th February.

Third Battle of Cassino, again mainly a battle of the New Zealand Corps, between 15th and 23rd March.

The fourth and last battle of Cassino was fought in May 1944 and has its place in the sixth and last volume of our history of the campaigns in the Mediterranean and Middle East.

The Report of the Battles Nomenclature Committee, published by H.M.S.O. in 1956, distinguishes:

Cassino I. 20th January to 17th March.

Cassino II. 11th to 16th May.

This classification is too broad to be suitable for adoption in a historical narrative.

and endurance which can seldom have been surpassed by fighting men.

The 5th Army, advancing towards Rome along Highway 6 as its main axis, was faced at Cassino by a natural defensive position of immense strength. Highway 6, crossing the valley of the Rapido river and over the river itself from the south-east, passed through the small country town of Cassino and then turned south for a mile before curving round the base of the promontory formed by Mt. Cassino. The road after accomplishing its circuit ran north-westward along the northern edge of the Liri valley towards Rome which was eighty-five miles away. Above the road on its northern side the slopes of tall mountains ran parallel for several miles. The first of these mountains was Mt. Cassino which stood a thousand yards west of Cassino town, dominating it and Highway 6 as well. Mt. Cassino was seventeen hundred feet high and its northern, eastern and southern sides were exceedingly steep. The south-eastern tip of the mountain was crowned and adorned by the enormous building of the Abbey. Seen from without the Abbey was a mass of cream-coloured stone, shaped as an irregular quadrilateral whose longest side extended six hundred and sixty feet. To connect the Abbey with Cassino town, a road six miles long zig-zagged in seven hairpin bends down the southern and south-eastern faces of Mt. Cassino.

Cassino town, the Rapido river and Mt. Cassino were, however, no more than the south-eastern tip of the natural bulwark which defended the northern edge of the entrance to the Liri valley. An observer, standing at any point east or south-east of Cassino town with his face to the west, would have remarked the snow-covered peak of Mt. Cairo (Pt. 1669), five thousand and four hundred feet high, standing five miles north of Mt. Cassino. Between Mt. Cairo and Mt. Cassino the mountains seemed to form an unbroken barrier. We must look more closely at this barrier when we have recalled how it affected the plans of Generals Alexander and Clark.

The reader will recall from Chapter XVI that 2nd U.S. Corps and 46th British Division failed to force an entry into the Liri valley by attacking across the valley floor at S. Angelo and S. Ambrogio. After this failure Clark decided that it was useless to repeat the attempt at or near these places. It was clear that the Germans were creating at Cassino town and Mt. Cassino, as well as in the Liri valley, defensive positions of fortress strength, that is, according to the German definition, defences in which steel and concrete were used, heavy weapons were dug-in, and which included strong 'bunkers' and overhead cover. Clark decided not to try to storm these defences by frontal attack but to try to outflank them from the north. The French

Expeditionary Corps began this manœuvre by capturing Mts Belvedere and Abate and was then too exhausted to continue without a pause. But as the French Corps' attack began to lose momentum, 2nd U.S. Corps, on 24th January, began its attempt at a turning movement of shorter radius by attacking towards Mt. Castellone (Pt. 771) which stood three miles north-west of Mt. Cassino. Mt. Castellone marked the outer arc of the American manœuvre. Other places, for example S. Angelo hill and Albaneta Farm, lay within the arc and nearer to Mt. Cassino. All, from Mt. Castellone to Mt. Cassino were situated on the mountain barrier between Mt. Cairo and Mt. Cassino.

If we look only at the ground between Mt. Castellone and Mt. Cassino we notice what appears as a ridge descending from Mt. Castellone almost southwards to Pt. 706 fifteen hundred yards away. At Pt. 706 the ridge forks and becomes two spurs. One of these runs generally south-westward through the S. Angelo hill (Pt. 601) to the nameless Pt. 575. At this point the spur turns through almost a right-angle to descend south-eastward to the Abbey (Pt. 516). The second spur drops almost southwards from Pt. 706 to the large buildings of Albaneta Farm (Pt. 468) which lies in a small valley within the right-angle mentioned above. There is another important ridge to notice which runs parallel to that between Mt. Castellone and Pt. 706. This ridge begins at the Majola hill (Pt. 481) and runs between south and south-west to the rocky knoll Pt. 593, and then turns sharply eastwards to drop towards Cassino town. Between Pt. 593 and the Abbey there is a saddle in the middle of which stands a knoll, Pt. 444.

The topography of Mt. Cassino (or Monastery Hill as we shall now call it, adopting the name given to it in 1944) is so complicated as to defy description in words. What we have tried to do is to point out the two principal routes which a force might use in trying to outflank Monastery Hill if, like 34th U.S. Division, that force had crossed the Rapido two miles north of Cassino town and had captured a bridgehead marked by Points 56 and 213 and Cairo village.¹ The first possibility was to advance south-westward up and along the slopes of Mt. Castellone until Pts. 706 and 575 were reached, and then to turn south-eastward down the spur to Monastery Hill. The second possibility was to climb the Majola hill from Cairo village, move south-westward to Pt. 593, and then deploy along the ridge which ran eastward down to Cassino town. Troops deployed along this ridge and facing south-westward would see below them a flattish piece of land sprinkled with olive trees and gashed by steep-sided gorges, and on the further side the mighty Abbey. The 34th and 36th

¹ See Chapter XVI, pp. 630-32.

U.S. Divisions and later 4th Indian Division were to use both lines of approach. As is usual in mountainous country the ridges, when seen from a distance, look like smooth, bare slopes running up or down. At Cassino this appearance concealed the horrible nature of the ground. This was unspeakably rough and broken with minor ridges, knolls, and hollows jumbled all together. At one point deep clefts might be the obstacle, at another sheer rock faces or steep slabs, or all three might be found in a few acres. Huge boulders were scattered about, here and there were patches of scrub, while the gorges were often choked with innocent-looking but savage thorn. To attacking troops the ground set vile tactical puzzles one after another. This or that knoll or ridge might seem to be promising objectives but would turn out to be commanded from an unlikely direction by another knoll or ridge or by several. A line of approach might look as if it would 'go' and would turn out to be blocked by some impassable obstacle. The advantages of the ground lay wholly with defending troops.

We have already described (Chapter XIV, pp. 479-80) the origin, in November 1943, of the defensive system which *OKW* then named the 'Cassino Position', and how work on it began.¹ These defences included Cassino town, Mt. Cassino, S. Angelo hill, Majola hill and Mt. Castellone. It will be noticed that the defended area combined low and high ground; the fortified town of Cassino; a large hill mass; and the river line of the upper Rapido. As regards the low ground, *AOK 10* decided in mid-December that more depth must be given to the defences between Petracone (three miles south of Cassino town) and Cairo village, and engineers and other troops were switched for this purpose from the area of the S. Angelo hill. We have seen (Chapter XVI, pp. 630-32) that 34th U.S. Division had breached part of this main defensive belt by 31st January by capturing Mt. Villa, Pts. 56 and 213, and Cairo village.

There is no doubt that all German commanders from Hitler himself down to von Senger believed the Cassino Position to be a keystone. If this fell it seemed likely that the whole Gustav line would fall. So, for example, on 13th December *OKW* described the Mt. Cassino-Mt. Cairo massif as 'decisive' and on the 23rd Hitler decreed that the defences of Mt. Cassino were to be raised to 'fortress strength'. On the 27th Jodl told Kesselring that Hitler wished him to concentrate his best reserves for the defence of the massif, placing them under a single commander, because this block 'must on no

¹ *OKW* gave various names, on the whole confusingly, to the same or various parts of the 'Cassino Position', and included in this name actual or proposed defences in the Liri valley well to the west of Cassino town and Mt. Cassino.

account be lost'. Work on the defences went on during November, December and January but it seems that most of the engineer resources were given to positions in the Liri valley, in Cassino town, and on the west bank of the Rapido between Cassino town and Cairo village.¹ By the end of December the defences in Cassino town and on Castle Hill (Pt. 193) perched on a spur of Mt. Cassino above the town, were well developed. 'Bunkers' and emplacements for men and weapons were ready and had been strengthened with girders, railway sleepers and rails, and sometimes with concrete. Houses had been demolished to improve fields of fire, and wire obstacles up to six yards deep had been built.

It seems, however, that the field-works on the high ground north and west of Cassino town were less elaborate although by the end of February some mechanical equipment had become available to make them. Here it may be well to deal shortly with the much discussed question of the Abbey. There is abundant and convincing evidence that the Germans made no military use whatever of the Abbey's buildings until after the Allies had wrecked them by bombing. We need give no more than three examples. On 5th December von Senger asked *AOK 10* to obtain an up to date ruling from Kesselring on the treatment of the Abbey because it now stood in the middle of what must become a battlefield. On 11th December Kesselring replied that assurances had been given to the Vatican that German troops would not occupy the buildings; no more, no less was the German word pledged. On 11th December von Bonin, Chief of Staff of 14th Panzer Corps, inspected the Abbey buildings and found in them only a few monks and a large number of civilian refugees. On 26th December 14th Panzer Corps issued an order to 44th Infantry Division to evacuate the civilians as soon as possible, to make no military use of the Abbey buildings, but to make defences right up to the exterior walls if necessary. On the morning of 15th February, before the ravaged Abbey had become valuable material for German propaganda, Westphal, Chief of Staff to Kesselring, asked *AOK 10's* Chief of Staff, Wentzell, if the destruction of the Abbey had done any military harm. Wentzell gave the simple and convincing answer 'No, because we were not inside . . .' and went on to discuss a matter that seemed really important at that moment—ammunition supply. The Abbey's magnificent library and its objects of religious art had been removed to Rome by the Germans

¹ *AOK 10* was responsible for the fortification of the Gustav Line but 16th Fortress Engineer H.Q., under Kesselring's direct control, supervised the fortification of the *Führerriegel*. The technical troops, employed from time to time on these systems, included G.H.Q. Construction and Rock-Drilling Companies, 60th Engineer Battalion, 94th Infantry Division's engineer battalion, part of Hermann Göring Panzer Division's engineer battalion and two G.A.F. construction battalions. Sundry Ostruppen battalions and labour units of the Todt Organization were employed also.

between 17th October and 5th November. 187 cases of works of art from Naples, which had been stored in the Abbey for safety, were taken to Spoleto and in the end passed into the keeping of the Vatican except for a few which had been looted.

We left (Chapter XVI, p. 630) the German troops in the Cassino Position disposed in the following fashion during the last two days of January. 211th Grenadier Regiment (71st Infantry Division) was in and south of Cassino town. One battalion of 134th Grenadier Regiment (44th Infantry Division) was for the moment in general reserve, and 3rd Battalion 131st Grenadier Regiment (44th Infantry Division) was watching the Terelle-Cairo road. 132nd Grenadier Regiment (44th Infantry Division) was in process of taking up positions between Pt. 56 (a thousand yards north-west of Mt. Villa) and Colle S. Lucia which is a northern spur of Mt. Castellone. It was this regiment which was immediately concerned in withstanding the attacks of 34th U.S. Division. Two battalions of 134th Grenadier Regiment (44th Infantry Division) were on the northern and eastern foothills of Mt. Cairo keeping guard against the French and Butler's 142nd Infantry in the Terelle area. One battalion of 134th Grenadier Regiment was for the moment in general reserve.

On 29th January von Senger conceived the idea of assembling 90th Panzer Grenadier Division which was split between the southern part of his front and Anzio, and bringing it into the Cassino Position which would then be placed under the single command of Major-General Ernst-Günther Baade, commander of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division. von Senger believed that the situation in the Terelle-Belmonte area was growing more stable, and that Mt. Castellone was now the chiefly threatened area. As a first step to putting these ideas into practice, on 30th January, 2nd Battalion 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment and 3rd Battalion 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (both of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division) were made available, and on 1st February von Senger placed Baade and his divisional headquarters in command of the Cassino Position. On the 1st the threat to Mt. Castellone seemed to be confirmed when the Americans captured part of the hill. With von Vietinghoff's agreement both battalions named above were brought up to the area of Villa S. Lucia and Mt. Majola, to be joined on 2nd February by 1st Battalion 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment. The stout-hearted Baade believed that he could stabilize the battle in the Cassino Position without too great difficulty provided that the position was held by fairly fresh troops. But at the beginning of February, what with the state of affairs at Anzio and on 14th Panzer Corps' front, to find fairly fresh troops was a problem to which

Kesselring, von Vietinghoff and von Mackensen could find no simple answer. As regards 14th Panzer Corps, arrivals, departures, and reliefs in the Cassino Position during February form a confused and shifting mosaic which we shall avoid examining in detail. During the first days of February units of 1st Parachute Division (76th Panzer Corps) were arriving at Cassino. They were 3rd Battalion 3rd Parachute Regiment, 2nd Battalion 1st Parachute Regiment and the Parachute Machine Gun Battalion. The independent 4th Alpine Battalion also arrived. Such, in outline, was the German situation as 34th U.S. Division continued its attack.

(ii)

At the end of January Clark was still determined to turn the Cassino Position from the north but he and Alexander were as perplexed about how to find at once fairly fresh troops as were von Vietinghoff and Kesselring. The French Expeditionary Corps had been temporarily reduced and exhausted by its battles at Mts Belvedere and Abate. In 2nd U.S. Corps two infantry regiments of 36th U.S. Division were absorbing reinforcements and were re-equipping to make good the losses suffered in the disastrous battle of S. Angelo. 36th U.S. Division's third infantry regiment, the 142nd, and 34th U.S. Division were in action west of the upper Rapido. 10th Corps, on the Garigliano, was fully stretched and was being deprived of 56th Division which was moving to Anzio. To Anzio also Clark had sent 45th U.S. Division, his sole reserve of infantry. Nothing therefore could be done to reinforce 2nd U.S. Corps in its operations against the Cassino Position. Alexander, however, decided to milk 8th Army in order to form a reserve which would be ready to exploit the success which 2nd U.S. Corps might possibly gain. On 3rd February he created the New Zealand Corps under General Freyberg. At first the Corps consisted of the New Zealand Division (Major-General H. Kippenberger), but by 6th February it was joined by 4th Indian Division (Major-General F. I. S. Taker until 4th February, then Brigadier H. K. Dimoline temporarily). The New Zealand Corps was an improvised formation as it had been during its first existence in Africa during February and March 1943. Brigadier R. C. Queree became B.G.S. but was not provided with a full Corps' staff and some of the New Zealand Division's staff in effect did double duty. The artillery was augmented by 2nd A.G.R.A. of three field and five medium regiments, and some engineer, medical and transport units were added. On 6th February the New Zealand Corps took over a part of 2nd U.S. Corps' front on the Rapido, south of Cassino town.

On 31st January Ryder, commander of 34th U.S. Division, gave his orders to renew the attack on 1st February. 135th Infantry was given the large task of capturing Mts Castellone and Majola. 133rd Infantry was to be ready to attack southwards from Mt. Villa towards Cassino town. 168th Infantry was to hold its positions at Pts. 56 and 213 as a firm base. These tasks accounted for the three infantry regiments of 34th U.S. Division. Besides these Ryder now had 142nd Infantry under his command, and he ordered this regiment to take over Mt. Castellone when 135th Infantry had captured that feature. Ryder felt that he must hold Mt. Castellone to guard against a stab in the back from the Germans in the area of Terelle and Manna Farm. This danger arose from the lie of the land because when the Americans changed the general direction of their attack from westward to southward, enemy positions which had been on their former northern flank would lie behind them.

The first phase of the battle, 1st to 3rd February, began well. 3rd Battalion 135th Infantry took Pt. 771, the highest part of Mt. Castellone, while 2nd Battalion took Mt. Majola. A heavy mist had greatly helped both battalions to advance almost undetected. Ryder now decided to exploit a good beginning and gave 135th Infantry an even larger task: to continue to advance south-west and south and to capture Pt. 706, the S. Angelo hill, Albaneta Farm and part of Monastery Hill. 133rd Infantry was to attack Cassino town. 2nd February was a day of mixed fortunes. 3rd Battalion of the 135th on Mt. Castellone was counter-attacked and it was not until noon that 1st Battalion 142nd Infantry began to arrive and take over the feature as had been planned. 3rd/135th therefore was unable to continue its advance south-westward until 3rd February. On the other hand 2nd/135th from Mt. Majola reached Pt. 445, almost half way to Pt. 593 on Monastery Hill, while on its left 1st/135th advanced almost as far—to Pt. 324. In this fighting 132nd Grenadier Regiment was almost 'pulverized', to quote the German report, by the American artillery, and 2nd Battalion 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, which had been hurried forward, was reduced to a handful. 133rd Infantry's attack toward Cassino town resulted in its 3rd Battalion and a few tanks reaching the town's northern edge from which they were dislodged towards dusk by a counter-attack by 211th Grenadier Regiment.

The German higher commanders now felt some anxiety about the battle in the hills north and north-west of Cassino town, and von Senger sent 4th Alpine Battalion to the Mt. Castellone area, and 3rd Battalion 3rd Parachute Regiment to the Majola area, followed by 1st Battalion 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment. The German opposition therefore had not become weaker when 34th U.S. Division continued its attacks on 3rd February. Nevertheless 3rd Battalion

135th Infantry, at length relieved on Mt. Castellone by 142nd Infantry, struck southward and captured Pt. 706 where, as we have described, the Castellone ridge throws out two spurs. Apart from this the main engagement during 3rd February occurred during the afternoon when 3rd and 1st Battalions 133rd Infantry attacked Cassino town. The 3rd Battalion took the precipitous Pt. 175, a knoll a little distance north-west of the town, and 1st Battalion reached the town's north-eastern edge and dug in there. Elsewhere the Germans recaptured Majola hill, only to be driven off it by an American counter-attack. At Mt. Castellone and north of it two battalions of 142nd Infantry were engaged in meeting attacks and in counter-attacking. American losses were heavy during the three days, 1st to 3rd February, but Ryder and Keyes, giving due weight to the great American superiority in artillery and armour, felt that there was reason to think that 34th U.S. Division might break through the Cassino Position. On the German side Baade felt that at least he had made a connected front on Monastery Hill. On the 3rd Kesselring made an important decision—to bring over to the Cassino Position from the Adriatic flank the whole of 1st Parachute Division, at the moment commanded by Major-General Korte. Kesselring intended to replace the Parachute Division in 51st Mountain Corps by 90th Panzer Grenadier Division. His decision did not please von Senger and Baade who thought that 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was just beginning to make itself felt at Cassino, and were reluctant to exchange it. Kesselring however believed the Parachute Division to be the better troops, and that the Cassino Position was the place for them.

The first Battle of Cassino entered its second phase on 4th February but there was no change in the nature of the fighting. On 34th U.S. Division's extreme right 3rd/135th Infantry reached Colle S. Angelo but was later pushed back to Pt. 706 by 3rd/3rd Parachute Regiment, and in the end it was hard to say who held this feature. 2nd/135th Infantry advanced to within five hundred yards of Pt. 593, and was then hard pressed by counter-attacks as was 1st/135th on its left at Pt. 445. The fighting was continuous and at the closest quarters, the troops sometimes trying to bomb each other out of positions behind rocks and walls a few yards apart. 133rd Infantry, down in the northern outskirts of Cassino town, held on to its positions but could not improve them. The American artillery was now pouring shells into Cassino town, including the heavy metal of 8-inch howitzers. On 5th February again there was little change. The Americans recaptured Pt. 706, and at Cassino town captured Castle Hill (Pt. 193) only to lose it again to counter-attack. During the night 5th/6th

February the 1st and 3rd Battalions 168th Infantry came forward to Pt. 445 from their 'firm-base' positions and early on the 6th attacked directly southward against Monastery Hill. The infantry managed to scramble down into a narrow gorge but, as they climbed out of it, they were caught and pinned down by cross-fire. At dusk they fell back to Pt. 445, and then relieved the 1st Battalion of the 135th which moved to a reserve position a few hundred yards in rear. On the right flank the Americans recaptured Pt. 706, and later took Pt. 593, but lost the top of this feature to a counter-attack by 1st/361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, although keeping a footing on the northern slopes.

While the American and German infantry were clinched, exchanging blow for blow with blind yet heroic pugnacity, the commanders on both sides were looking for some way of breaking the deadly and unrewarding grapple. On the evening of the 5th Baade reported to von Senger that his front was fairly firm. He proposed to stage a carefully-prepared counter-attack to recapture and consolidate Mt. Majola and Mt. Castellone which he felt must be firmly in German hands if the Cassino Position was to be defended for any length of time. If the enemy were allowed to keep these features he would sooner or later use them as the starting point of a wide manoeuvre to turn Monastery Hill from the north and west. von Senger and von Vietinghoff approved Baade's proposal, but it could not be undertaken for a few days mainly because a large amount of artillery ammunition must be dumped for it.¹ Meanwhile the commander of 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, Colonel von Behr, returned from Anzio to take command of the sector formerly held by 132nd Grenadier Regiment (of 44th Infantry Division). On 6th February his 2nd battalion was in reserve north of Cassino and 2nd Battalion 1st Parachute Regiment was in the area of Albaneta Farm to form a reserve for 3rd Battalion 3rd Parachute Regiment and the Parachute M.G. battalion. 3rd Battalion 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment (of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division), newly arrived, was near Colle S. Angelo in rear of 1st Battalion. The regiments of 44th Infantry Division had been terribly mauled.²

When the New Zealand Corps took over from 2nd U.S. Corps some eight thousand yards of the Rapido front south of Cassino town, 36th U.S. Division became available for action elsewhere. As early as 2nd February Keyes had hoped to use this division on the right

¹ 109 guns and 28 Nebelwerfer were to support the counter-attack, and 23,590 rounds of ammunition were allotted for it.

² 131st Grenadier Regiment's fighting strength was about 430; in 132nd Grenadier Regiment 1st Battalion had been destroyed, the two other battalions mustered 300 between them; in 134th Grenadier Regiment two battalions mustered 260 together.

90th Panzer Grenadier Division was 8,017 strong on 6th February, excluding units which were still coming forward.

(west) of 34th U.S. Division, and on the 5th he made a new plan. 36th U.S. Division was to move to the right of 34th U.S. Division and prepare to make a right hook to Piedimonte and Highway 6; 34th U.S. Division was to capture Monastery Hill thus making it possible for Combat Command 'B' (detached already from 1st U.S. Armoured Division) to enter the Liri valley and unite with 36th U.S. Division as this debouched from Piedimonte. The New Zealand Corps was to be ready to exploit. On 6th and 7th February 36th U.S. Division was concentrating but the first move in Keyes' new plan was allotted to Ryder's sorely-trying 34th.

Ryder's plan, in brief, was that 135th Infantry would capture the area of Albaneta Farm during the night 7th/8th February, and that the fairly fresh 168th Infantry would begin its attack on Monastery Hill at 6 a.m. on 8th February, 133rd Infantry would continue its attack against Cassino town. The events of 7th February, however, upset the first part of Ryder's plan. The 135th Infantry was engaged all day in furious combats in the area of Pt. 593, and was simply unable to mount an attack on Albaneta Farm that night. But 135th Infantry was in fact creating a very great diversion, and Ryder decided to launch 168th Infantry at 4 a.m. under cover of darkness instead of an hour before sunrise.

At 4 a.m. on 8th February the 1st and 3rd Battalions 168th Infantry moved down from the ridge facing Monastery Hill with the object of attacking the opposite steep to the saddle (Pt. 444) which lay between the Abbey and Pt. 593. But the American troops, whether they were descending from their starting points or trying to organize themselves for the assault in the gorge below Monastery Hill, found themselves caught in the relentless German cross-fire. Gradually the companies became split into small groups pinned down in patches of cover. The 168th Infantry however made a further effort at a concerted attack at 3.0 p.m. after an hour of artillery preparation, but once again the gallant attempt failed. Meanwhile 135th Infantry fought furiously to take Pts. 593 and 569. It won Pt. 593 for some hours but towards dusk 2nd Battalion 3rd Parachute Regiment with parts of 2nd Battalion 1st Parachute Regiment and 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment counter-attacked and the fight raged on in the dark. Down at Cassino town the 133rd Infantry were engaged in a day-long battle. 100th Battalion captured and held Pt. 165 south-west of Castle Hill and the 1st Battalion reached the north-west slopes of Castle Hill. In the town, the 3rd Battalion gained two hundred yards in bloody fights for ruined houses and heaps of rubble.

It seems impossible to give a coherent account of the fighting on 9th and 10th February. It is possibly the truth to say that the battle had lost all coherence except that which arose from the inflexible

wills of the opponents. The Americans were determined to take Monastery Hill and the Germans were as determined to hold it. Both sides seem to have decided that whoever could capture and keep Pts. 593 and 569 would become master of Monastery Hill. The four German battalions fighting in this area were placed under command of Colonel Schulz of 1st Parachute Regiment, who had returned from Anzio on 7th February.¹ Pt. 593 changed hands at least three times in three days and in the end remained in German hands. In Cassino town 211th Grenadier Regiment seemed proof against the tempests of high explosive which fell on it. To add misery to the trials of the troops on both sides the weather began to worsen. Rain, sleet-laden winds, and falls of snow began their torments.

On 10th February Alexander sent his American deputy, Lemnitzer, to inquire into the state of 2nd U.S. Corps and Lemnitzer found that the troops were at the limit of endurance. Alexander decided that 2nd U.S. Corps could not prolong its effort later than 12th February and that the New Zealand Corps must relieve it. He thus committed his last reserve. By 11th February Baade had reported to von Senger that three of his battalions were exhausted to the point of uselessness and two more were sadly battered. There were no immediate reserves in sight, and the only way to bring relief to the hard pressed units between Colle S. Angelo and Albaneta Farm seemed to lie in launching the counter-attack which von Senger and Baade had been preparing. On 10th February they had agreed to postpone this until the weather improved, but 2nd U.S. Corps forced their hand by making a fresh, concerted attack on the 11th.

General Walker's 36th U.S. Division concentrated for action on its new front between 7th and 10th February. The 143rd Infantry relieved 142nd Infantry of the watch on the Terelle area, and Walker therefore had 141st and 142nd Infantry at his disposal for an attack south and south-westward on the right of 34th U.S. Division. The attack was fixed for 11th February. On that day 142nd Infantry advanced against Albaneta Farm, and on the 142nd's left, 141st Infantry assaulted Pt. 593. Both attacks went in with heavy artillery support. Of the two, the 142nd Infantry had the better fortune, reaching the neighbourhood of Albaneta Farm and holding it for some time. Here Colonel Schulz threw in his last local reserve, a platoon of engineers, and the affair rested on a knife-edge until a few reinforcements from 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment arrived. The Albaneta positions moreover were covered by further German positions at Pt. 575 a few hundred yards to the north-west, and 142nd Infantry's attack came to a stand-still. 141st Infantry could make no impression on Pt. 593 and were hard put to it to resist counter-

¹ 2nd Battalion 1st Parachute Regiment, Parachute M.G. Battalion, 3rd Battalion 3rd Parachute Regiment, 1st Battalion 361st Panzer Grenadier Battalion.

attacks. Their casualties were very high, and after some hours two battalions numbered less than two hundred unwounded men. 168th Infantry (34th U.S. Division) again attacked Monastery Hill, unsuccessfully in a storm of rain and snow. In this regiment, clerks, drivers, and anti-tank gunners were now reinforcing the terribly depleted rifle companies. In Cassino town 133rd Infantry continued to fight among the ruins.

It was in these circumstances that von Senger and Baade decided on the evening of 11th February that the capture of Mt. Castellone must be attempted next day in spite of the bad weather. They had planned that this counter-attack would be made by von Behr's 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment in two groups—one striking eastward from the neighbourhood of Pt. 575 and one striking northwards from Colle S. Angelo. When the time came—4 a.m. on 12th February—troops were available only for the northern thrust. Mt. Castellone was reached by 6 a.m. but the fire of the American artillery was so tremendous that to save von Behr's units from possible annihilation Baade recalled them at 9 a.m. Nothing had been gained except a respite from American attacks, and Baade was confirmed in his belief that although a commanding feature could be captured by surprise attack, it could not be held while the American artillery remained unsubdued.

In the first battle of Cassino the Allied air forces during the first twelve days of February dropped about 159 tons of bombs in direct support, and about 24 tons in indirect support. The reason for this very small contribution was that the 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio had been given almost unqualified first call on the Allied air forces. Unfortunately even when air support was available at Cassino the nature of the fighting on the ground offered little opportunity for close co-operation with the infantry. Instead more often than not, the Allied air forces with the help of spotter-aircraft, sought out and attacked guns in and to the north and west of the Cassino area, at the same time bombing and strafing enemy positions in their stride. When the weather was bad, as it frequently was, the air effort was switched to attacks on the enemy's L. of C. wherever a break in the weather could be found. Vehicles and roads in the Pignataro-Aquino-Roccasecca-Atina-S. Lucia area, and Highway 6, provided some of the targets, and occasionally others such as trains, railway tracks and bridges further afield were attacked. However, all this meant that 2nd U.S. Corps had to do without much help from the air in the battle area itself.

By 12th February both 2nd U.S. Corps and 14th Panzer Corps had fought themselves to a standstill. The infantry regiments of

36th U.S. Division were reduced to about one quarter of their fighting strength, and the 34th U.S. Division had been as hard hit. By 7th February 100th Battalion of 133rd Infantry had 85 men in its rifle companies; on 10th February 168th Infantry's three battalions numbered 693 in all; 135th Infantry had an average strength of 30 men in each rifle company. When Brigadier Lovett of 7th Indian Brigade, a hard-bitten commander, made his first reconnaissance of Monastery Hill he was so shocked by the casualties and exhaustion of the American infantry that he advised that they should be relieved at once. Nevertheless the Americans had given the Germans a tremendous hammering. Their Artillery had fired 199,293 rounds, including more than 12,000 from their 8-inch howitzers. On 9th February von Senger estimated that he was losing three hundred men daily, and at the end of the first battle of Cassino he believed that the Americans had come 'within a bare 100 metres of success'. But it had seemed otherwise to the Gods.

(iii)

On 11th February Alexander issued an Operation Instruction of which the first paragraph dealt with the Cassino Position:

'The C.-in-C. is naturally anxious that the advance of the N.Z. Corps up the Liri Valley, astride Highway 6, should take place as early as possible. At the same time, he considers it essential to the success of that operation that the ground should be dry enough to permit the operation of armour off the roads, and that the weather, during any large scale daylight operations should be suitable for effective air support. The C.-in-C. therefore orders that any major operation by N.Z. Corps in the Liri Valley will not take place unless and until the physical conditions mentioned above obtain. This does not apply to the attack of 4 Ind. Div. to clear the high ground West of Cassino of the enemy, or to the establishment of a bridgehead over the Rapido River in the Cassino area, both of which operations will be carried out as quickly as possible, so that N.Z. Corps can begin to advance Westward from the Cassino Bridgehead as soon as the physical conditions laid down above are fulfilled . . .'

This Operation Instruction expanded and expressed the results of a discussion between Clark and Alexander on 8th February when they had agreed that 4th Indian Division, in Freyberg's Corps, should relieve 34th U.S. Division on a date to be decided later. In effect the Instruction committed the New Zealand Corps of two divisions to a task which was proving itself to be beyond the powers of 2nd U.S. Corps also of two divisions.¹ One may ask why?

¹ 78th Division from 8th Army joined the New Zealand Corps on 18th February, the last day of the second battle of Cassino, and was therefore not engaged in it.

In the first place Wilson and Alexander were under pressure. On 4th February the American Chiefs of Staff had remarked 'that in spite of a considerable weakening [sic] of German strength on main [5th Army] front there has been no heavily mounted aggressive offensive on main front . . .' On 6th February the Prime Minister had turned the American Chiefs of Staff's remark into a direct question which he asked Wilson. Neither Alexander nor Clark, however, had lost hope of forcing the Cassino Position. On 2nd February Clark had signalled to Alexander 'Present indications are that the Cassino heights will be captured very soon,' and on 8th February Alexander, in a signal to the Prime Minister about the forthcoming operations of the New Zealand Corps, declared ' . . . I have high hopes of a break through in this sector and if it looks promising I shall reinforce Freyberg with the 78th Infantry Division . . . and thus exploit success gained . . .' As seen at the time on small-scale maps the Americans were within a few hundred yards of the crests of Monastery Hill and only a mile and a half distant from Highway 6. Moreover from popular if distant view-points such as Mt. Trocchio and Cervaro (Tactical H.Q. of 5th Army and H.Q. New Zealand Corps) the terrain did not look too difficult. Success seemed within arm's reach given determination and some fresh troops of high quality. The second requirement was met by the New Zealand and 4th Indian Divisions, both justly celebrated fighting formations. The 4th Indian Division, moreover, was mountain-trained, commanded by a master of mountain warfare in the person of Toker, and had to its credit such mountain battles as Keren, the Jebel Tebaga Fatnassa and Jebel Garci. There was a further reason for persisting in attacking the Cassino Position. It was clear that the Germans were preparing a counter-offensive against 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio (see Chapter XIX). Determined action against the Cassino Position was likely to prevent Kesselring from sending reinforcements to von Mackensen for his counter-offensive.

General Freyberg, experienced commander that he was, had, since the creation of his Corps, been thinking of the Cassino Position as a whole and not simply of exploitation in the Liri valley. At a conference on 4th February at which Toker was present, an outline plan was made. Freyberg, like Keyes before him, favoured an attempt to turn the Cassino Position from the north but by a wider manœuvre in greater strength than Keyes had contemplated. Juin was to be asked to thrust a division westward through Terelle, while the whole 4th Indian Division embarked on a turning movement through the mountains north of Mt. Castellone perhaps through the Corno Pass. Simultaneously one New Zealand infantry brigade

would advance from Majola hill to capture Albaneta Farm and Pt. 593. The second New Zealand infantry brigade and 4th N.Z. Armoured Brigade would stand by in the valley east of the Rapido ready to burst into the Liri valley when a decision had been reached in the mountains. Tucker both influenced and approved this plan. It accorded thoroughly with one of his principles of mountain warfare which he expressed in a post-War book: 'Infantry in great numbers are needed in the hills as the terrain usually lends itself to infiltration . . . Almost, one might say that the side that can fill the hills with men will win.' Infiltration on many lines at once by infantry, supported by artillery and in particular by heavy aerial bombing, was Tucker's Open Sesame for defended mountain barriers.

It was not, however, to be Tucker's fortune to see this or any other plan carried out. A long-standing illness forced him to hand over command of his division to Brigadier Dimoline, its distinguished C.R.A., on 4th February. Tucker remained at his headquarters while the second battle of Cassino was being planned but was unable directly to influence the planning except as regards the bombing of the Abbey.

On 5th February Freyberg's outline plan was suspended, and by 7th February hopes for a favourable outcome to 2nd U.S. Corps' operations led to a tentative plan for the employment of the whole New Zealand Corps in exploitation in the Liri valley. This plan had a short life because it was decided by 9th February that if 2nd U.S. Corps were unable to seize the prizes which were so nearly within its grasp, the New Zealand Corps would apply the finishing touches, 4th Indian Division on Monastery Hill and the New Zealand Division at Cassino town. On 9th February Freyberg issued his plan for this operation.

There is no documentary evidence to show why Freyberg abandoned the wide flanking manœuvre which he had outlined on 4th February but something can be confidently inferred. Freyberg and his staff were inexperienced in mountain warfare and may have exaggerated the difficulties of a wide outflanking movement through roadless country. Then the essential animal transport was insufficient. Five Animal Transport Companies with 1,500 mules were allotted to the New Zealand Corps. This number of mules, if one allows a proportion for casualties and for carrying fodder, could just about maintain an infantry brigade up to six or seven miles beyond roadhead but was not enough to maintain a division.¹ Moreover,

¹ The Animal Transport Companies were often improvised units—American, French, Indian, and Italian. Their establishments are not recorded. As an illustration, an Animal Transport Company R.A.S.C. North Africa numbered 338 mules of which 308 normally were load-carriers. A mule, in theory, carries 160 lb and the 'lift' of the North African Company, again in theory, was 22 tons. Between 5% and 8% of mules in a company were spares to replace casualties. By rule of thumb an infantry brigade, operating six

there were too many 'ifs' in the plan for a wide outflanking manoeuvre. Success was possible if surprise could be achieved; if the attack met only field defences weak enough to be quickly overcome; if the impetus of the advance, supported by a precarious L. of C., could be maintained; if the outflanking force could sustain itself against the inevitable counter-blow by German reserves in the Liri valley. In contrast with these uncertainties a direct assault on Monastery Hill over a short distance from the positions won by the Americans seemed to offer better prospects of a success which would be decisive and which would gain immediate results.

Freyberg's plan of 9th February was, in a nutshell, to use 4th Indian Division in the mountains and the New Zealand Division in the valleys. One Indian Infantry Brigade, with a second supporting it, would capture Monastery Hill, then descend it southwards, and then turn eastwards towards Cassino town which the New Zealand Division would be attacking from the south-east. It was the task given to 4th Indian Division which raised the question of the bombing of the Abbey.

Much has been written and printed about every aspect of the bombing of the Abbey of Mt. Cassino. We shall therefore concern ourselves only with the military aspects of this sad event.

We have already said (Chapter XIV, p. 480 and p. 695 above) that the German government had assured the Vatican that German troops would not occupy the Abbey, and that the British and American governments had given an assurance that the Abbey's safety would be provided for. We have expressed our belief that no German troops occupied the buildings. On 5th November 1943 A.F.H.Q. informed Headquarters 15th Army Group of the results of the negotiations between the Allied governments and the Vatican and between the German government and the Vatican. Headquarters 15th Army Group was enjoined to take whatever measures might be possible to preserve the Abbey. 15th Army Group thereupon instructed 5th and 8th Armies that the Papal demesne at Castel Gandolfo and the Abbey of Mt. Cassino were to be preserved if possible but that 'consideration for the safety of such areas will not be allowed to interfere with military necessity'. On 29th December Eisenhower defined 'military necessity'. He wrote:

'If we have to choose between destroying a famous building and sacrificing our own men, then our men's lives count infinitely

or seven miles beyond roadhead, requires three or four Animal Transport Companies to maintain it. Facts often overlooked in considering mule transport are that a mule's daily ration weighs 19 lb and that the mule drinks between eight and twelve gallons of water daily.

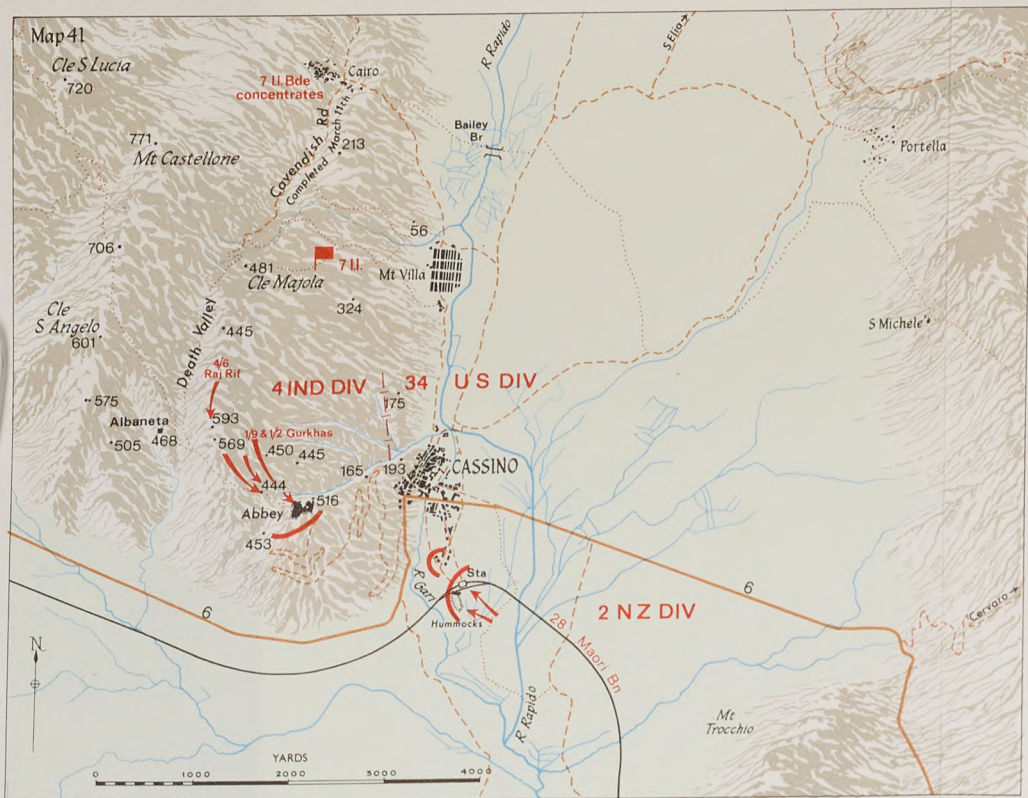
more and the buildings must go. But the choice is not always so clear-cut as that. In many cases the monuments can be spared without any detriment to operational needs. Nothing can stand against the argument of military necessity. That is an accepted principle. But the phrase "military necessity" is sometimes used where it would be more truthful to speak of military convenience or even of personal convenience. I do not want it to cloak slackness or indifference . . .'

He charged commanders of all ranks with the duty of complying with the spirit of his words.

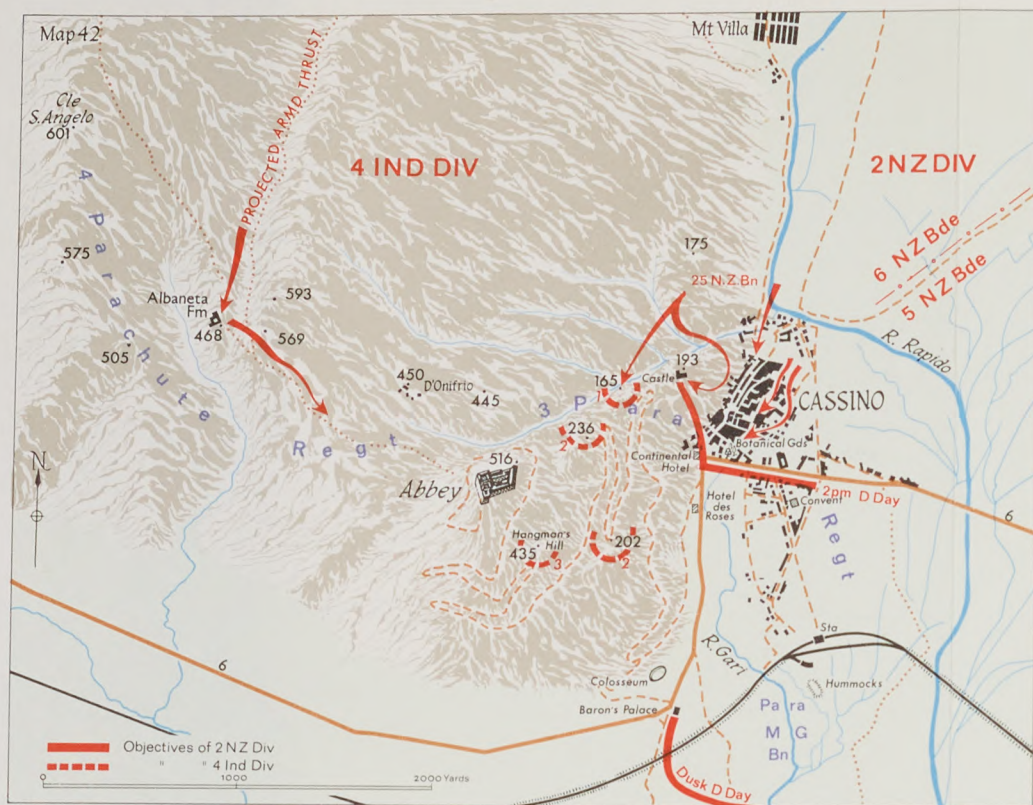
A case was not long in occurring. On 1st and 2nd February buildings in the Papal demesne at Castel Gandolfo were bombed by Allied aircraft (see Chapter XIX, pp. 741-42). Wilson and Eaker judged that this bombing arose from military necessity and the British Chiefs of Staff and the Combined Chiefs of Staff concurred in the judgment. We return now to Mt. Cassino.

Tuker, who was one of the boldest and most relentless fighting commanders, believed that a frontal attack on Monastery Hill was little short of a desperate enterprise. He hated Nazism, disliked the German army, and was unable to credit any German commander with good faith in an undertaking. He saw the Abbey as a fortress amidst the German defences on Monastery Hill and simply did not believe that a German commander would not use it either as a final defensive position or as a position in which a body of troops might safely await the right moment to counter-attack. He had found in a book-shop in Naples a volume which described the Abbey and which convinced him that the buildings were like a fortress in strength. On 12th February at a meeting with Freyberg and in two written notes Tuker asked, one might say demanded, that his division's attack on Monastery Hill should be preceded by saturation bombing of that feature including the Abbey. He pointed out the fortress-like construction of the Abbey and the fact that his division did not possess the means of subduing it.

Freyberg was impressed by Tuker's arguments and on the evening of 12th February telephoned 5th Army's Chief of Staff, Gruenther, to ask that the German defences on Monastery Hill should be 'softened up' before Tuker's attack. He suggested that thirty-six aircraft carrying heavy bombs should be used and confirmed that the Abbey was the target. General Clark was absent at Anzio and Gruenther therefore spoke on the telephone to Harding, Alexander's Chief of Staff, and informed him of Freyberg's request. He also told Harding that he knew that Clark believed that there was no military necessity to destroy the Abbey. Clark, on his return, confirmed Gruenther's statement and ordered him to repeat it to Harding. However, later on the evening of the 12th Harding telephoned



SECOND BATTLE OF CASSINO. N.Z. Corps plan of attack 17th/18th February 1944



THIRD BATTLE OF CASSINO Progress made by NZ Corps on the 15th March 1944

Gruenther to inform him that Alexander agreed to the bombing of the Abbey if Freyberg believed that its destruction was a military necessity. Gruenther again repeated Clark's view but Harding replied that Alexander had decided the matter. Gruenther thereupon telephoned Freyberg, gave him Alexander's decision, and also made clear to him Clark's view. To be brief, Freyberg was not to be moved from his request, and Gruenther at length said that the air attack was authorized. This was not quite the end. On the morning of 13th February Clark spoke to Alexander about the proposed bombing but Alexander did not alter his decision, and General Wilson later concurred in it.

The decision to bomb the Abbey was an unhappy one yet it was given in the letter and spirit of Eisenhower's instruction. 'If we have to choose between destroying a famous building and sacrificing our own men, then our men's lives count infinitely more and the buildings must go.' Believing as they did that this was a case of military necessity, Tucker was right in asking that the Abbey should be bombed, Freyberg was right in supporting Tucker's request, and Alexander was right in deciding as he did.¹ These three commanders believed that unless there was absolute proof that the Germans were not using, and would not even in extremity use, the Abbey for military purposes, its existence endangered the lives of their men. It was a calamity that a man like Tucker should have had to make the request and that a man like Alexander should have had to decide to grant it. As it happened, both men, besides being soldiers to their finger-tips, were lovers of the arts in whatever forms they might take and profoundly respected the legacies which the European past had left to its present. Both men had, as soldiers, to adopt a measure which as humane and cultivated men they deplored.

(iv)

13th and 14th February were, from the German point of view, quiet days in the Cassino Position and on the 15th von Senger made an appreciation. He read the signs to mean that a fresh Allied attack was imminent. Four Allied divisions had been identified between Terelle and Cassino town and the presence of a fifth division was suspected.² von Senger calculated that in the Cassino Position he could oppose 14 battalions to the Allies' 26, and 51 guns to the Allies' 292. The fighting strength of his units was becoming lower every day,

¹ According to the American official historian Keyes and Ryder shared Clark's belief that there was no military necessity to destroy the Abbey. This explains the fact that the Abbey was not bombed and was not shelled except by occasional mischance during 2nd U.S. Corps' attacks on Monastery Hill. Blumenson, Chapter XXIII, pp. 48-49.

² The identified divisions were 3rd Algerian, 34th and 36th U.S., New Zealand. 4th Indian Division was not certainly identified until 17th February.

not only owing to battle-casualties but also owing to sickness among the troops caused by exposure to the terrible weather in the mountains without special clothing and food. He had no reserves and therefore could not relieve his front-line units systematically, while they had insufficient numbers to occupy defensive positions in depth. He doubted whether his troops could withstand big attacks yet it was vital to hold the Cassino Position if the Gustav Line as a whole were to be held. He declared that if his troops were to hold out for a long time they needed reinforcements, replacement of equipment, special clothing and a special scale of rations. He also needed more medium and heavy artillery, and, especially, effective air support because his infantry felt that they were being 'left at the mercy of the enemy's material superiority'. von Senger's requests went unanswered by his superiors because their cupboards were becoming bare.

See Maps 41 and 42

4th Indian Division was to lead off in the operations which Freyberg had conceived in his plan of 9th February, and Dimoline issued his orders on 11th February. The division was to relieve 34th U.S. Division, and then 7th Indian Brigade would attack from Pt. 593 along the ridge to Pts. 569 and 444 and the Abbey. 5th Indian Infantry Brigade would establish a firm base on Mt. Castellone, and would take over Monastery Hill from 7th Indian Brigade on capture. When 5th Indian Brigade had taken over Monastery Hill the 7th would descend southwards to Highway 6 and then turn east against Cassino town which the New Zealand Division would be attacking from the south-east. 4th Indian Division's plan was based on the mistaken assumption, shared by Headquarters New Zealand Corps, that the Americans securely held the whole Pt. 593 feature. 4th Indian Division was to begin its attack during the night 13th/14th February.¹

¹ *4th Indian Division* (Brigadier H. K. Dimoline until 9th March, then Major-General A. Galloway until 25th March, then Major-General A. W. W. Holworthy). Main formations and units:

5th Indian Infantry Brigade (Brigadier D. R. E. R. Bateman):

1st/4th Essex Regiment, 4th Battalion 6th Rajputana Rifles, 1st Battalion 9th Gurkha Rifles.

7th Indian Infantry Brigade (Brigadier O. de T. Lovett):

1st Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment, 4th Battalion 16th Punjab Regiment, 1st Battalion 2nd Gurkha Rifles.

11th Indian Infantry Brigade (Brigadier V. C. Griffin):

2nd Battalion Cameron Highlanders, 1st Battalion 6th Rajputana Rifles, 2nd Battalion 7th Gurkha Rifles.

R.A. 1st, 11th, 31st Field Regiments, 149th Anti-Tank Regiment, 57th Light A.A. Regiment.

R.I.E. 4th Field Company K.G.O. Bengal Sappers and Miners

12th Field Company Q.V.O. Madras Sappers and Miners [continued opposite

Before 4th Indian Division could attack it was necessary for 7th Indian Infantry Brigade to relieve 34th U.S. Division and in doing so terrible administrative difficulties were discovered which dogged all later operations. The division's concentration area was in the neighbourhood of Cervaro and a staging-post and supply dump were established at S. Michele, two and a half miles south-east of S. Elia. The road to S. Michele was so bad and so deep in mud that the division's four-wheeled lorries stuck fast and 270 six-wheeled vehicles had to be borrowed from the helpful Americans. 100 Jeep trailers were also provided as were five Animal Transport Companies.¹ Each battalion of 11th Indian Infantry Brigade told off two companies to act as porters. From S. Michele one muddy track led to Cairo village, crossing the Rapido by a Bailey bridge and passable only to Jeeps and trailers. From Cairo village goat tracks led up along the slopes of Mt. Castellone and Majola hill and through a narrow valley to the forward positions some four thousand yards away to southward. These tracks were under the enemy's observation at several places including the sinister 'Death Valley' north of Majola. Because motor vehicles were so handicapped large quantities of ammunition, food, water, and equipment had to be carried from S. Michele to the forward positions, a distance of about seven miles, by mules and porters and it was essential that the convoys should make the round trip during the hours of darkness if they were not to be wiped out by observed artillery fire. But darkness did not give security. The German artillery had registered the Rapido bridge as a target for harassing fire and only too often this crossing became a shambles of dead, dying and panic-stricken mules, a sad fate for these courageous, hardy and patient beasts. Then came the journey up the grim slopes, and at a certain hour, no matter what point had been reached, loads had to be dumped and the return journey begun if S. Michele were to be reached before daylight. The dumped loads had to be collected and brought in at night by the reserve companies of forward battalions. The inevitable consequence of these conditions was that the troops suffered extreme privation.

In spite of all difficulties 7th Indian Infantry Brigade concentrated near Cairo village during the night 11th/12th February with the object of relieving the Americans on Pt. 593 during the night 12th/13th. The American positions ran along the reverse slope of the

21st Field Company Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners

11th Field Park Company Q.V.O. Madras Sappers and Miners.

Armoured Corps. Central India Horse.

M.M.G. M.G. Battalion 6th Rajputana Rifles.

¹ 12th and 17th Animal Transport Companies R.I.A.S.C., one American, one French and one Italian company.

d'Onifrio ridge (Pt. 450) but were very exposed and could not be approached in daylight. Early on 12th February the Germans attacked, as we have mentioned above, 36th U.S. Division's positions on Mt. Castellone and also began infiltrating southward from Manna Farm and Terelle. The situation at one time seemed so dangerous that Brigadier Lovett deployed two battalions to help the Americans. The danger passed but Lovett was forced to postpone the relief of the Americans facing Monastery Hill until the night 13th/14th February and his own attack against Monastery Hill until the following night.

After dark on 13th February the Royal Sussex and 4th/16th Punjabis set off along the goat tracks which led to the front. By 6 a.m. on 14th February the Royal Sussex had partly taken over from the Americans near Pt. 593, the 4th/16th Punjabis had taken over on the left of the Royal Sussex, and 2nd Gurkhas had occupied reserve positions further back. And now two unforeseeable circumstances upset all calculations. The Americans turned out not to be holding the whole Pt. 593 feature, as had been assumed, but to be clinging to terribly exposed positions on the feature's northern slopes. The situation had changed since Lovett had made his earlier reconnaissance. The consequences however were clear. While the Germans held Pt. 593 any advance towards Monastery Hill would be taken in enfilade from its right flank, if indeed it had managed to begin. Lovett decided correctly that he would have to take Pt. 593 as a preliminary to his main attack. The second circumstance was that some two hundred American troops in the Royal Sussex's area had suffered so extremely from exhaustion and exposure that while they could man positions they were unable to walk. These staunch men had to be carried from their positions and this could only be done after dark on the 14th. Lovett and Dimoline, on 14th February, had no choice but to ask Freyberg for a second postponement of 4th Indian Division's attack. They proposed to capture Pt. 593 on the night 15th/16th February, and to attack Monastery Hill on the night 16th/17th February. Freyberg, though most anxious to begin operations, was much too practical a soldier to override the convictions of two eminently experienced soldiers like Lovett and Dimoline who were on the spot.

And now the Abbey again enters the story. The Allied air forces had by 14th February received the request to bomb the Abbey and Monastery Hill in support of 4th Indian Division's attack. Although Eaker and Slessor found this task distasteful they had no choice but to acquiesce. The air forces required clear weather over the targets for precision bombing. The Abbey was a pin-point target, and the Allied troops were very close to Monastery Hill. As it happened the weather forecast was favourable for 15th February, but unfavourable for the days thereafter. 15th February therefore appeared to the

air commanders to be the only day on which to bomb. Freyberg learned this fact when he visited 5th Army's headquarters on the afternoon of 14th February, and on returning to his own headquarters urged Dimoline to begin his main attack on the night 15th/16th February after all. Dimoline stuck to his guns and maintained that he could not alter his plans. Not only had Pt. 593 to be captured in order to give 7th Indian Infantry Brigade a fair chance, but the essential supporting Brigade, the 5th, was at S. Michele and could not reach the forward area before the night of 16th February. Events were now moving with unalterable acceleration to an inevitable conclusion, even though the various air headquarters issued their final orders after delaying until the last moment.¹ Leaflets had already been fired into the Abbey in the special 'propaganda' shells to warn whoever might be inside that the building would be bombed on 15th February.

At 9.30 a.m. on 15th February, a fine but blustery morning, men on Monastery Hill heard the noise of aircraft. The diarist of 4th/16th Punjabis wrote 'We went to the door of the command post, a derelict farmhouse, and gazed up into the cold blue sky. There we saw the white trails of many high level bombers. Our first thought was that they were the enemy. Then somebody said, Flying Fortresses. There followed the whistle, swish and blast of the blockbusters as the first flights struck at the Monastery . . .' Between 9.25 a.m. and 10.5 a.m. 135 Fortresses, flying at heights between 15,000 and 18,000 feet, dropped 257 tons of 500-lb bombs and 59 tons of 100-lb incendiaries on the Abbey. Then between 10.35 a.m. and 1.32 p.m. 47 Mitchells and 40 Marauders dropped 283 bombs, each of 1,000 lb, also on the Abbey.² When the bombing was over the Abbey stood as a roofless shell. The great walls had been shattered although jagged remains still stood. Some bombs had penetrated to the cellars. The casualties among the civilian refugees within the Abbey will never be known but have been estimated as three or four hundred. The Allied air forces had performed a most remarkable feat of precision bombing which brought no military advantage of any kind. There were no German troops inside the Abbey and if the nerves of any outside it had been shaken by the onslaught, they had plenty of time to recover because 7th Indian Infantry Brigade was not ready, for reasons which we have described, to follow the bombing with an immediate attack. On the other hand German propagandists received the most

¹ Headquarters M.A.A.F. at 9.50 p.m. on 14th February and 1.14 a.m. on 15th February; H.Q.M.A.T.B.F. at 11.45 p.m. on 14th February.

² 142 Fortresses set out but one returned early and six brought their bombs back. 70 Mitchells set out but twenty-three returned early for unknown reasons.

excellent material and quickly presented the Allies to the world as the most savage, wanton and destructive barbarians known to history.

We now return to 7th Indian Brigade facing Monastery Hill. 1st Royal Sussex was given the task of capturing Pt. 593 during the night 15th/16th February. They had been unable to make any close reconnaissance. Pt. 593 was less than 500 yards away and no man could move about in daylight and stay alive. The lie of the ground was so difficult that patrols during the night 14th/15th February produced only hazy and confused reports. It seemed that there was room on the narrow ridge leading to Pt. 593 to deploy only one company. And so one company, some seventy strong, assaulted. The Germans, however, were alert and poured out fire, driving the Royal Sussex to ground. Their subsequent attempts to crawl or rush forward were baffled, in the darkness, by an obstacle described as a pitch of rock and as a deep gully, and which may have been both. To be caught in the open in daylight would have been suicide, and the company withdrew before dawn. Its casualties numbered thirty-four.

On the next night, 16th/17th, the Royal Sussex tried again and this time Colonel Glennie had arranged to use his whole battalion though still on a one-company front. Somehow or other 'D' Company found its way round the obstacle of the night before and a small party reached the summit, to be backed up by 'A' and 'C'. A wild fight was raging all over Pt. 593 when sheer bad luck intervened. The Germans fired one of their own signals, three green Verey-type lights, which by ill coincidence was the Royal Sussex's code-signal for a withdrawal. Back came the companies and Pt. 593 remained in German hands. The attack cost seventy casualties.

The postponements of 4th Indian Division's attack had not been altogether unwelcome to the New Zealand Division which had a great deal to do, particularly in making reconnaissances, in preparing to seize a bridgehead over the Rapido south-east of Cassino town. However, after the second failure to capture Pt. 593 Freyberg decided that 4th Indian Division and the New Zealand Division must begin their attacks during the night 17th/18th February. Apart from the fact that postponement is bad for the morale of troops who have keyed themselves up for a 'sticky' operation, the Germans were attacking strongly at Anzio. Alexander and Clark were eager for Freyberg's Corps to create at least a diversion. Freyberg, whose dash and determination captivated anyone who served under him, was not a man to let the grass grow under his feet. The attacks of the

4th Indian Division and the New Zealand Division were connected only by the fact that they were to begin on the same date. It will therefore be appropriate to tell their stories separately.

4th Indian Division had continued to concentrate while the Royal Sussex were struggling for Pt. 593. 4th/6th Rajputana Rifles and 1st/9th Gurkha Rifles, both from 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, moved forward and came under command of 7th Indian Infantry Brigade. Four companies of porters drawn from 11th Indian Infantry Brigade assembled at Cairo village. All available mules, now 800 in number, were allotted to 7th Indian Infantry Brigade. Dimoline's plan was a direct assault on Monastery Hill on a front of four battalions. At midnight 17th/18th February 4th/6th Rajputana Rifles, with three companies of the Royal Sussex under command, was to capture Pt. 593 and then exploit south-eastward to Pt. 444, the saddle which lay below the west face of the Abbey. At 2 a.m. on 18th February 1st/9th Gurkhas would attack on the left of the Rajputana Rifles, aiming at the area of the saddle. At the same hour 1st/2nd Gurkhas, on the left of 9th Gurkhas, would attack the Abbey itself. The starting line for the whole attack, from the neighbourhood of Pt. 593 along the ridge marked by Pts. 450 and 445, ran from north-west to south-east and therefore the general direction of the attack was south-west. The front was some fifteen hundred yards. When all the objectives had been taken the two Gurkha battalions would exploit down the southern and western slopes of Monastery Hill to Highway 6. Artillery support was to be provided by the divisional artillery, by 144 field and 32 medium guns of the New Zealand artillery, and by 144 guns of 2nd U.S. Corps Artillery including 48 8-inch howitzers. In all, about 394 guns would be in support. Because the opposing lines were so close together and because of the problems of crest clearance there was to be no attempt to support the infantry by concentrations and barrages, but all of the Germans' possible forming-up areas for counter-attack or reinforcements were to be drenched with shells and a heavy counter-battery programme was prepared. As regards air support the whole Tactical Bomber Force and U.S. XII Air Support Command had been switched to Anzio on 16th February. On that day, however, 40 R.A.F. Kittyhawks of the Desert Air Force crossed the Apennines in bad weather and dropped 14 tons of bombs on the Abbey, to which 10 American Kittyhawks added 4 tons. On 17th February 35 R.A.F. Kittyhawks from the Desert Air Force and 16 American Kittyhawks dropped 20 tons of bombs, again on the Abbey.

No one believed that the attack would be other than grim and bloody. The Germans were known to be strongly posted and the

ground was as bad as could be imagined. The historian of the 2nd Gurkhas has well written:

‘The higgledy-piggledy lie of the battlefield detracted from the value of aerial photographs and the commanding positions held by the enemy prevented any detailed examination by day. The ridge summits were sharp and even knife-edged; the slopes were boulder-strewn, cut by rocky ledges, clad with patches of scrub, small orchards and low bramble hedges. Pocket-handkerchief size fields and gardens surrounded the ruined and scattered cottages . . .¹

Pt. 593, to hold which had a few days earlier been believed to be the essential preliminary to attacking at all, had now become an objective no more important than any other. Was this change just subduing tactical facts by wishful thinking? 7th Indian Infantry Brigade was putting all its eggs, except 4th/16th Punjabis, in one basket and there were no reserves other than 1st/4th Essex and 1st/6th Rajputana Rifles over five miles away at Portella. On the other hand the Germans on Monastery Hill had been fighting for a fortnight and were not immortals. Their main positions were little more than five hundred yards away, admittedly as the deceitful crow flies. The American commanders who had been in the front line most recently believed that a strong push by fresh troops would win Monastery Hill. The Royal Sussex, the Rajputana Rifles and the two Gurkha battalions were fresh and self-confident, not foolhardy. Given some luck, they could well hope to add Monastery Hill to their battle-honours.

At midnight 17th/18th February two companies of 4th/6th Rajputana Rifles scrambled towards Pt. 593. Immediately a destructive fire met them but a few men reached the point of the ridge and a furious battle began fought mainly with grenades. The two follow-up companies were caught in a cross-fire from posts which flanked Pt. 593, and their advance was halted about one hundred yards from the objective. Small groups worked their way round boulders and along ledges and upwards but nearly all the men who composed them were killed or wounded. At 1.40 a.m. Colonel Scott, accepting one more risk when every moment was compacted of risk, called for a five-minute artillery concentration on Pt. 593, and under this a third company tried to outflank the feature from the left. The blind, bitter battle continued and a little after 3 a.m. all three companies reported that they were pinned down and

¹ *History of the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles*, G. R. Stevens, Aldershot 1952, p. 100.

expected counter-attacks. Scott then sent in his last company—without avail. The Rajputana Rifles were scattered over the approaches to Pt. 593 and had suffered 196 casualties. Weeks later, in May, the graves of Major Markham-Lee and of a number of riflemen were found in the heart of the defences.

The timing of 7th Indian Infantry Brigade's attacks had allowed for the capture or neutralization of Pt. 593 before 1st/9th Gurkhas advanced. Though neither of these intentions had been fulfilled, the 9th Gurkhas rose from their scanty cover at 2.15 a.m. and began to descend a slope. Of the two leading companies, 'C' on the right was to skirt Pt. 593 and make for Pt. 569, while 'D' on the left aimed to gain the same ridge and swing left to Pt. 444. The two follow-up companies were then to pass through and take the south-western corner of the Abbey. The Germans, thoroughly on the alert, instantly detected the Gurkhas' movement, and poured in their fatal cross-fire from both flanks. The leading companies gained three hundred yards and were beaten into the ground, whilst direct fire prevented the follow-up companies from advancing at all. 'C' and 'D' Companies' vain effort cost 94 casualties.

At 3.30 a.m. 2nd Gurkhas were ready to advance towards a ridge (Pt. 450) which was just half-way between Pt. 593 and the north side of the Abbey. 'C' Company was on the right and 'B' Company was on the left and they were given as objectives the northern face and the north-eastern corner of the Abbey. 'D' Company was to follow 'C', 'A' Company to follow 'B'. The objectives were about 500 yards distant, and 2nd Gurkhas would have first to descend into a sort of gorge and then pass through a belt of scrub and climb the opposite side. Colonel Showers had impressed upon his battalion that speed was all important in this attack. The leading companies in particular were to disregard whatever might be happening on their flanks, to by-pass any posts that lay in their paths, and to press on, leaving mopping-up to the companies behind them. The moon (in its last quarter) had been rising for nearly four hours and there was some light when the leading companies rose from their starting-points. Simultaneously the scything German cross-fire broke out. The leading companies dashed forward to the cover of the scrub and fell into a ghastly trap. The innocent-looking scrub proved to be a dense thicket of thorn bushes, which had been sown with 'S' mines and threaded with trip-wires connected to mines. A handful of 'C' Company tore their way through, but 'B' Company was more than decimated. After a little time the survivors fell back to the northern edge of the thicket and began to dig in. 'A' Company followed up to reinforce the survivors and with them came Colonel Showers who fell almost at once, severely wounded. 'D' Company followed 'A' but to little purpose. The 2nd Gurkhas had lost 149 officers and men

and further attempts to advance could only lead to murderous losses in the growing daylight.

It is a fact of battle that when a night attack by a battalion has come to a standstill there is very little chance of continuing it by daylight. During the darkness a high degree of confusion reigns. In early 1944 communication within a battalion usually broke down because 'walkie-talkie' radio sets were not the reliable instruments that they have become. Signallers laying line or using the Lucas lamp were usually shot down. Runners simply disappeared. Of the men who remained on their feet some filtered forward, some tried flanking moves, and some were pinned down. The battle was next to impossible to read. The streams of German tracer gave a rough impression of where the enemy's positions were but the flashes of bursting projectiles were all alike. Medieval-sounding but useful guides were war-cries if Companies used them. After a night attack which had failed, to sort out the confusion and restore organization was a dismal and hazardous business for everyone even if no counter-attack had to be met.

On the morning of 18th February all the battalions which had taken part in 7th Infantry Brigade's attack had failed at a total cost of 530 casualties, mostly in the rifle companies. At dawn all battalions filtered back to their starting-points and took up defensive positions among the rocks. Brigadier Lovett had some thoughts of attacking again under cover of smoke, if a New Zealand Brigade could join in on his left flank. This plan was turned down by Dimoline and Freyberg who decided that for the present 7th Indian Infantry Brigade must hold the ground it stood on while fresh plans were considered which would have to take into account the results of the New Zealand Division's operations in the Rapido valley.

For 4th Indian Division Monastery Hill was a rankling defeat but for von Senger and Baade, who were more worried by the New Zealanders' attack on Cassino station, it was a neat defensive battle which needed no citation. It was also—foretaste of things to come—a Parachutists' affair because the troops chiefly engaged were the Parachute M.G. battalion, 1st and 2nd Battalions of 1st Parachute Regiment and 3rd Battalion 3rd Parachute Regiment. For the Germans things were well enough provided that they could endure pounding by artillery, hardship, and a steady drain of casualties.

(v)

On 6th February Freyberg ordered reconnaissances of sites for bridges across the Rapido. These reconnaissances, which continued for several nights, showed that there were a number of points where the river could be bridged if only firm approaches could be built.

The whole floor of the valley however was sodden and waterlogged from deliberate flooding and from rain; in places the water lay an inch deep. Infantry might be able to plod along but it was evident that if wheels or tracks attempted to follow, the whole area would become an impassable slough. Apart then from the roads leading into Cassino town from the north, which the Americans had used, there were two possible ways of approaching Cassino town. One was along Highway 6 and was tactically too obvious to the enemy. The other was the embankment which carried the railway line to Cassino railway-station. The station was a little over a mile south of the town's centre. This embankment was thirty feet wide and it had been breached by twelve demolitions in a distance of little over a thousand yards measured from the railway-station towards the Allies' front. The rails and sleepers had been removed.

The New Zealand Division's attack on Cassino town, like 4th Indian Division's attack on Monastery Hill, was the first phase of Freyberg's plan to pass a substantial force into the Liri valley. It was not indeed necessary for the New Zealand Division to capture the whole town of Cassino. The requirements of the first phase would be satisfied if the railway-station were captured, if the enemy in the town were contained there by the New Zealanders with the help of the Indians descending from Monastery Hill, if the breaches in the embankment were repaired to make it a road, and if bridges were thrown across the Rapido, across one of its small tributaries, and then across the Gari. To solve these problems was the task of Brigadier Kippenberger who handed over command of 5th N.Z. Brigade to Colonel Hartnell and on 9th February took command of the New Zealand Division in the acting rank of Major-General.

Kippenberger was of course thoroughly in Freyberg's mind and by the 11th February his own plan was ready. 28th (Maori) N.Z. Battalion from Kippenberger's own brigade was to advance along the embankment during the night 17th/18th February and capture the railway-station. Simultaneously the 6th and 8th Field Companies New Zealand Engineers, working at top speed, would repair the breaches in the embankment and bridge the Rapido and its tributary before dawn on 18th February. Then 19th N.Z. Armoured Regiment and some anti-tank guns would go forward to support the Maori Battalion. Further stages of the plan need not concern us. There were obvious drawbacks and risks. A very small force of infantry was attacking on a very narrow front, and the engineers would be working to a very tight timetable. However, the route was the best available for the infantry who would have heavy artillery support, and the choice of route might come as a surprise to the Germans. As regards the engineers, their stealthy nocturnal patrols had collected a great deal of information about the demolitions which they would

have to repair, and they had discovered that the Rapido was fordable. The postponement of 4th Indian Division's attack, too, enabled them quietly to repair the first four demolitions by 16th February. The enterprise was risky but so was the New Zealand Corps' whole operation. Freyberg believed the chances of success to be no better than 'fifty-fifty'.

In more detail the New Zealand plan was as follows: at 8.45 p.m. on the night 17th/18th February 28th Battalion would advance on a two-company front to its start-line six hundred yards away. 'B' Company was on the right, 'A' Company on the left. 'B' Company's first objectives were the railway-station and engine-shed, and the second objective was a group of houses standing three hundred yards north of the station in the fork of two roads which led into the town. 'A' Company's objective was a group of mounds three hundred yards south of the engine-shed and named the 'Hummocks'. 'B' Company had to advance about eight hundred yards, 'A' Company about four hundred. The New Zealand Division's artillery, supplemented by guns from the Corps' artillery and from 2nd U.S. Corps, was to bombard the objectives until the infantry had been advancing for ten minutes, and was then to lift. The New Zealand engineers were to follow on the infantry's heels to bridge the Rapido and its tributary and to repair all demolitions up to the railway-station before day broke on 18th February. At that time 19th New Zealand Armoured Regiment would dash forward. The New Zealanders had a good idea of who was holding the town (in fact Major Knuth's 211th Grenadier Regiment of two battalions, 3rd Battalion 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, a battery of assault-guns, and a few tanks), and they knew the sort of defences which they would have to storm. On the other hand it might be hoped that the American attacks in the first battle of Cassino would have drawn most of the garrison to the northern part of the town. Moreover 24th N.Z. Battalion and the Divisional Cavalry Regiment were to create a diversion by fire and smoke lower down the Rapido.

'B' and 'A' Companies began their approach to the start-line punctually at 8.45 p.m. on the 17th February, and almost at once the timetable began to go amiss. The embankment was choked by the engineers and their paraphernalia, and the going on either side proved deeper than had been expected, and scattered mines were disconcerting. The Germans were vigilant and soon opened defensive fire with mortars and machine-guns. Men began to fall in both Maori companies. Slow as the advance was it was resolute. As 'B'

Company neared the station, flares showed two German posts behind coils of Dannert wire. The leading Maori platoon swept into the characteristic Maori charge, crashed over the wire, and destroyed both posts. The rest of the company, following, cleared the railway-station and engine-shed. It was now midnight. 'B' Company tried to work forward to its second objective but the German fire proved too heavy. By 3 a.m. the company had gone to ground but was waiting for the diversion which might be caused by 'A' Company's attack on the Hummocks in order to advance once more. By misfortune 'A' Company's attack never came. Air photographs had shown that the Hummocks were defended by a ditch of sorts, seemingly a trivial obstacle. In reality the ditch turned out to be twenty feet wide, deep with flood water, protected by wire and covered by machine-gun fire. 'A' Company was halted and, though looking for a flank route, could find none. Day began to break but orders came from Kippenberger that the Maoris must hold their positions no matter how exposed they might be.

Meanwhile the engineers had been striving to complete their tasks under intermittent showers of small-arms and mortar fire. By 5 a.m. they had bridged the Rapido—five hours behind time. Two large demolitions still barred the way of vehicles to the railway-station, but with daylight engineer work became impossible under observed fire. The engineers had lost their race against time.

The two Maori companies were now in an unpleasant position. Soon after sunrise at 7.6 a.m. on the 18th, a small German force was seen to be assembling for counter-attack and was obliterated by the New Zealand artillery. Yet a better prepared counter-attack was certain to follow and observed German fire from guns, mortars and automatic weapons was constant. The Maoris nevertheless were in good heart and called only for cover by smoke. The artillery fired some 9,000 rounds of smoke on 18th February. Under the smoke a platoon was sent up to reinforce 'A' and 'B' companies and their wounded were brought back. Kippenberger and Freyberg hoped that the engineers would be able to complete their tasks after dark on the 18th and that then the 28th Battalion's bridgehead could be enlarged.

The Germans had indeed been surprised by the direction of the New Zealand attacks, but soon recovered and Knuth sent all his reserves to the point of danger. Baade, however, knew how exhausted were the troops in Cassino town and doubted if they would be able to dislodge the New Zealanders. But at about 3.15 p.m. Knuth made a great effort, with a handful of tanks attacking from the north and infantry from the south-west under heavy covering fire from guns, mortars and machine-guns. The Maori companies' communications with their battalion headquarters had broken down, and the appearance

of German tanks decided the battle because the New Zealand infantry had no tanks or anti-tank guns with which to oppose them. Between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. 'A' and 'B' Companies retreated across the Rapido. About two hundred infantrymen had attacked on 17th February and 130 of them had become casualties. The Germans were relieved to see the New Zealanders retreat because their own casualties had numbered 192 and the garrison, in spite of reinforcement by 2nd Battalion 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, was in no condition to withstand a heavy attack.

With 4th Indian Division's failure to take Monastery Hill and with the repulse of 28th New Zealand Battalion at Cassino town the second battle of Cassino ended. It had cost 4th Indian Division 590 casualties and the New Zealand Division 226. American casualties during the first battle of Cassino are not yet known to us. On the other hand the casualties of 14th Panzer Corps between 1st and 20th February amounted to 4,470, including divisions fighting on other parts of the front. In grisly terms of killed, wounded and missing, the battle of attrition on 5th Army's main front was progressing in favour of the Allies. In other terms the results of the two battles showed nothing that favoured the Allies. The main Cassino Position was intact in German hands, the Germans were obstinately defending it, and their defence had been too strong for 2nd U.S. Corps and the New Zealand Corps, in succession, to overcome. Freyberg nevertheless was full of fight, his task was unchanged, and on 22nd February he issued the plans which resulted in the third battle of Cassino. This is described in Chapter XX. Alexander and Clark agreed with Freyberg's plans, but Alexander had some reservations. He was anxious that the New Zealand Corps should not be prematurely used up because he had already plans in mind for a great regrouping of his Armies to enable him to attack the Cassino Position in much greater strength in the Spring. Meanwhile a renewed attempt to capture Monastery Hill and to break into the Liri valley seemed just to be worth-while.

CHAPTER XIX
THE FIRST BATTLE FOR ROME:
THE GERMAN COUNTER-
OFFENSIVE AT ANZIO
(February–March 1944)

(i)

See Map 36

WE left 6th U.S. Corps on 2nd February when it was turning temporarily to the defensive on the ground which it had gained between 22nd and 31st January. This line ran from the Mussolini Canal on the east towards the west, a little northward of Isola Bella, Ponte Rotto, and Carano. Two miles west of Carano there began a northward-pointing salient which had Campoleone railway-station at its apex. This salient was about seven thousand yards deep, two thousand six hundred yards wide at the apex, and three thousand five hundred yards wide at the base. From Campoleone railway-station the Allied line ran southward, taking in most of the Vallelata ridge, until it met the Moletta wadi whose course it followed to the sea.

By 3rd February 6th U.S. Corps had received welcome reinforcements: the remainder of 45th U.S. Division (Major-General William W. Eagles), 1st Special Service Force (Colonel Robert T. Frederick), and 168th Infantry Brigade (Brigadier K. C. Davidson) detached from 56th Division. 45th U.S. Division came from 5th Army reserve, the Special Service Force and 168th Infantry Brigade from the Garigliano front.¹ General Lucas had disposed his Corps in the following way. On the east 504th Parachute Infantry and the Special Service Force held the line of the Mussolini Canal and so protected the right flank of the beachhead. Next came 3rd U.S. Division with two Infantry Regiments forward and one in reserve, holding a sector

¹ *45th U.S. Division. Main units*

157th, 179th, 180th Infantry Regiments

158th, 160th, 171st, 189th Field Artillery Battalions

645th Tank Destroyer Battalion

168th Infantry Brigade: 10th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment,

1st Battalion The London Scottish, 1st Battalion The London Irish Rifles

1st Special Service Force: Three regiments. XIV, p. 513.

which included Isola Bella, Ponte Rotto, and Carano. The 1st Division stood on the left of 3rd U.S. Division, occupied the Campoleone salient, and took in, on its left or western flank, part of the Vallelata ridge, and the Buonriposo ridge. 1st Division and 3rd Infantry Brigade in particular were in a most exposed and dangerous position. From the southern end of the Buonriposo ridge along the Moletta wadi to the sea 157th Infantry (45th U.S. Division) held the line. In Corps reserve 1st U.S. Armoured Division (less Combat Command 'B') was in the Padiglione woods, and 45th U.S. Division (less 157th Infantry) north-east of Nettuno.

All the evidence from Intelligence sources and from air reconnaissance indicated that the Germans were on the point of attacking and that their main thrust would be along the Via Anziate. Lucas intended that 6th U.S. Corps should hold the ground which it had won. But to guard against the worst he ordered a final line of resistance to be prepared. This line corresponded to the beachhead perimeter which 6th U.S. Corps had set out to seize on 22nd January.¹ Withdrawal to this line would be a last resort, and from it there would be no withdrawal.

By standing on the defensive 6th U.S. Corps handed the initiative to the enemy but the point is scarcely important since the German high command had already decided to seize the initiative as soon as might be. It will make for understanding to follow German thinking to some extent before describing the actions to which it led. Hitler made several pronouncements of which the most important was his directive to Kesselring on 28th January. He declared that the impending 'Battle for Rome', as he named it, would decide the fate of *AOK 10* because if that Army's L. of C. were cut its positions would be untenable. The battle would decide also the fate of the defence of central Italy, and was important in a field that was wider than Italy. The Allied landing at Anzio, he said, was the beginning of the invasion of Europe which was planned for 1944. Its aim was to pin down and exhaust strong German forces, and German soldiers, sailors, and airmen must not rest until the last of their opponents had been destroyed or driven into the sea. On other occasions Hitler came down to the level of the battlefield by decreeing that *AOK 14* must counter-attack only when weather bad for flying handicapped the Allied air forces, and that the counter-attack should be made with massed field and anti-tank artillery. At the end of January he favoured massed tanks also, but we shall see later that he changed his mind about them.

On 3rd February, however, von Mackensen gave a guarded

¹ Beginning, on the east, at Torre di Foce Verde on the sea-coast; thence northward to where the Sessano-Le Ferriere road crossed the Mussolini Canal; thence westward to the Fosso della Moletta, and along this to the sea. See Chapter XVII, pp. 657-58.

appreciation to Kesselring. He was by no means certain that he would be able to drive the Allies into the sea because they still had strong powers of attack and equally could make a tough and determined defence. Their main strength, apart from a vastly superior air force, lay in their artillery. He had been compelled to commit a large part of the force which he had assembled for counter-attack in stopping the Allied thrusts on 30th and 31st January. He now intended to regroup his forces for a general counter-attack but to make, while doing this, a series of local attacks with the objects of improving his front, of weakening the Allies and of preventing them from concentrating their troops and artillery. The first attack would be on the Campoleone salient (it began in fact on 3rd February) and would be followed by a southward thrust. Future developments would depend upon what happened in the field, and upon what reinforcements could be given to him. He hoped for a complete, well-trained division.

Kesselring too was eager for reinforcements. The dangerous situation at Cassino prevented him from drawing from *AOK 10* any more troops for *AOK 14*, yet unless *AOK 14* were reinforced a decisive success at Anzio was doubtful. Unless such a success could be achieved, his tentative plans for an offensive by *AOK 10* were unlikely to come to anything. On 4th February he produced his own appreciation as follows. The 5th Army had failed during January to 'unhinge' the wings of 14th Panzer Corps, yet was now making ready a concentrated frontal assault on the 'Cassino block' with the object of breaking through to Rome and to central Italy. *AOK 10* had been badly strained by months of fighting and by the removal of troops to Anzio. It required first-class reinforcements if it was to hold the vital Cassino sector, and so he was bringing over 1st Parachute Division from the quiet Adriatic front. As regards *AOK 14*, its troops were very uneven in quality and the best had been flung into battle anyhow in the emergency of Anzio. 6th U.S. Corps' attacks had upset von Mackensen's plans and had weakened his fighting strength. He required the reinforcement of a first-rate formation, preferably armoured. If this reinforcement was impossible, von Mackensen would attack only if the tactical situation permitted, and when some exchanges of troops had been made between *AOK 14* and *AOK 10*.

Hitler now summoned von Mackensen to report in person on 6th February. von Mackensen then said that he had created a fairly firm defensive front, and that he could plan a counter-offensive, to begin about 15th February. Hitler approved, specified once more his tactical conditions, and refused to give von Mackensen a fresh division although *OKW* supported his request and suggested transferring 9th S.S. Panzer Division from *OB West*. Jodl however persuaded Hitler to agree to transfer the Infantry Lehr Regiment from

Germany to *AOK 14*. This was a Demonstration Regiment which enjoyed great prestige and was highly prized. With this regiment, some Tiger tanks, and some 'new' weapons von Mackensen had to be content.¹

As a result of these deliberations, and of others to be notified later, *AOK 14*'s operations took the following shape:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3rd-4th February. | Attack to eliminate the Campoleone salient. |
| 7th-12th February. | Attacks to gain the area of Aprilia as a jumping-off place for a counter-offensive. The description counter-offensive is justified by the importance of von Mackensen's intentions and the numbers engaged. |
| 16th-20th February. | First counter-offensive. |
| 29th February-
2nd March. | Second counter-offensive. |

See Map 38

3rd Infantry Brigade held the apex of the Campoleone salient. Its forward battalions were 1st K.S.L.I. on the right of the Via Anziata and 1st Duke of Wellington's Regiment on the left of that road. Both battalions were a little south of the east-west railway line which ran through Campoleone. 2nd Sherwood Foresters were in reserve, astride the Via Anziata about one thousand yards behind the forward battalions. 24th Guards Brigade held the left flank of the salient and faced west. Its four battalions (for 2nd North Staffordshires of 2nd Infantry Brigade were temporarily under command) lay in a line which ran south-west from the positions of 1st Irish Guards on the Vallelata ridge. Next to the Irish Guards were 1st Scots Guards at Colle Vallelata (Pt. 95) and next to the Scots Guards were 5th Grenadier Guards on the disused railway bed north-west of Carroceto. Then came 2nd North Staffordshires on the Buonriposo ridge. 2nd Infantry Brigade held the right flank of the salient. 6th Gordon Highlanders were between the Via Anziata and Colle della Mandria. South-east of the Gordons 1st Reconnaissance Regiment prolonged the line between Aprilia and the Fosso di Spaccasassi whose course it followed as far as Torre Spaccasassi. Then came 1st Loyals on the line of the Carano-Campoleone road, making touch with the left of 3rd U.S. Division at Carano.

¹ The weapons, new to Italy, were:

- (a) *The Sturmpanzer*. A close support weapon. A short-barrelled 15-cm assault howitzer mounted on a Pzkw IV chassis.
- (b) *The Goliath*. A small, tracked, expendable, vehicle which carried 83 kg of T.N.T. The vehicle was steered and the charge detonated by remote control, electrical impulses transmitted by a cable.
- (c) *The Demolition Carrier B IV*. A larger Goliath carrying 550 kg of T.N.T.
- (d) *The Ferdinand or Elephant*. An 8.8 cm L/71 anti-tank gun mounted on a Tiger P. chassis. It carried 200 mm front hull armour, and 170 mm front armour on the fighting compartment.

168th Infantry Brigade was in divisional reserve on the Via Anziante where this ran through the western part of the Padiglione woods. The 1st Division therefore was strung out on a perimeter of about ten miles, and three of its brigades were in the cramped and vulnerable Campoleone salient. Everyone was busily improving defences to meet the German attack which all knew to be imminent.

The terrain in which the severest of February's battles would be fought was difficult and full of traps. North of 3rd Infantry Brigade ran the east-west railway line on embankments and in cuttings, all of which gave excellent cover, and which were in German hands. East of the Via Anziante the Fosso di Spaccasassi and the Fosso della Ficocchia ran in the general direction north-west to south-east and, besides these large gullies, the ground was seamed with ditches which ran north and south. Scattered trees and patches of wood lay on this flank. West of the Via Anziante the principal features were the Vallelata and Buonriposo ridges which ran from Campoleone south-westwards. These ridges, at most no more than twenty or thirty feet higher than the general level of the country, yet commanded the ground which lay east of them. The western sides of these ridges were stabbed, and the ridges themselves were often penetrated, by a multitude of wadis which were deep, filled with brakes of scrub, of brambles, and thorn, and which twisted this way and that in serpentine bends and coils. In some of the wadis large caves and galleries had been cut for the extraction of gravel, as at Cava di Pozzolana. The worst of the 'wadi country', which was to earn an evil reputation, lay at the southern end of the Buonriposo ridge. Here and there, and in particular along the Via Anziante, solid farm-buildings were scattered. The battlefield, taking all its features together, presented a deceitful air of openness from the few vantage points, but was very blind to men who were dug-in at ground level or who were moving about at night. The British battalions had to cover wide fronts, and company positions therefore supported one another more often in theory than in fact. The ground was admirably suited to the tactics of infiltration and counter-infiltration and both sides used them. Thus though the battles are simple in outline, their innumerable details were confused and can be followed only in regimental records and in regimental histories. If a general impression is attempted it is one of scores of actions fought by companies and by platoons. It was possible in a battalion for one company to be advancing while another was withdrawing; one company or platoon might be overrun while its neighbours had no immediate enemy to fight. Most of the fighting occurred at night, and at the headquarters of battalions commanding officers and others had to read the battle as best they could from the sound of firing, from faint voices conjured out of the air by wireless sets, and from the reports

of officers and other messengers sent in from the dark. Days and nights passed, scarcely linked to dates, and a man might feel that now and then time had stood still because his watch told him that what had seemed an eternity of fighting had lasted just two hours. Rain, mud, shells, and mortar bombs, the arrival of food, ammunition, and water were the realities of an existence which fatigue sometimes made dream-like.

von Mackensen's local attacks began on 1st and 2nd February, under the direction of Schlemm's 1st Parachute Corps, with unsuccessful attempts by parts of 71st Infantry Division, 26th Panzer Division, and Hermann Göring Panzer Division to make ground near Carano and Isola Bella.¹ Schlemm intended that 65th Infantry Division, and part of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, should attack the Campoleone salient during the night 1st/2nd February. However, on 1st and 2nd February Allied Mitchells, Bostons, Kittyhawks, and Mustangs dropped 181 tons of bombs in the areas of Marino and Albano and on roads leading to the front, wrecked 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division's artillery communications, and prevented supplies of ammunition reaching the guns. In consequence von Mackensen and Schlemm postponed the attack on the salient, apart from reconnaissances, until the night 3rd/4th February. The plan was not altered, and its object was to eliminate 3rd Infantry Brigade and to establish the German troops firmly on the line Pt. 102-Pt. 74. 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of two battalions (attached to 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division) was to strike from the east through Colle della Mandria to the Anzio-Campoleone railway-line. 145th Grenadier Regiment (two battalions; 65th Infantry Division) was to attack Tufello from the west, while 147th Grenadier Regiment (two battalions; 65th Infantry Division) was to attack towards the same place from the south-west.

The German attacks began in fact during the afternoon of 3rd February with small thrusts, quite easily defeated, against the Duke's and the K.S.L.I. The main attacks, heralded by heavy shelling, began at 11 p.m. and were directed at the eastern and western shoulders of the salient, well in rear of the Duke's and the K.S.L.I. On the east 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment circled round 6th Gordons' outer flank, infiltrated, and by 7.30 a.m. on 4th February had overrun a company, split the battalion in half, and had occupied a ridge east of the Via Anziate and just north of Aprilia. The experience of the Irish Guards west of the Via Anziate

¹ As has been mentioned above, 76th Panzer Corps did not take command of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, 71st and 715th Infantry Divisions, and 26th and Hermann Göring Panzer Divisions until 4th February.

had been much the same. Up to three battalions of 65th Infantry Division attacked from north-west, west, and south-west, and at length overran the Irish Guards' westernmost company, No. 3, and began to work round No. 4 Company which was astride the railway to the east of No. 3. The composite No. 1 and 2 Company and Battalion Headquarters, some eight hundred yards north of No. 4, were also under pressure. Early on 4th February three actions were being fought by the Irish Guards: the composite company and Battalion Headquarters fighting their way southwards and No. 4 Company attacking northwards with the object of preventing the enemy from cutting the Via Anziante behind 3rd Infantry Brigade. In this they were successful. 3rd Infantry Brigade however was still under attack, and as the day wore on, the likelihood of its being cut off increased. At noon on the 4th however General Penney reinforced 2nd Infantry Brigade with 1st London Scottish (168th Infantry Brigade), and at 4 p.m. Brigadier Moore launched this battalion and two squadrons of 46th R.T.R. to recapture the ground which the enemy had gained from the Gordons north of Aprilia. This most determined attack was successful, and the risk of the Via Anziante being cut was warded off for the time being. Penney wisely decided to use the respite to withdraw 3rd Infantry Brigade from its dangerous and profitless positions. The enemy had had enough, and 3rd Infantry Brigade withdrew in good order. 1st Division established a new line on the base of its former salient, covering Carroceto and Aprilia, with 24th Guards Brigade (including 2nd North Staffshires and 3rd Battalion 504th Parachute Infantry (U.S.) under command) on the left, 168th Infantry Brigade in the centre, and 2nd Infantry Brigade on the right. 3rd Infantry Brigade went into divisional reserve five miles south of Carroceto.

1st Division had balked the enemy of half his object—the destruction of 3rd Infantry Brigade—but at a high cost. The Duke's had lost 260 officers and men, the Gordons 320, the London Scottish over 100, while the Irish Guards were reduced to 270 strong. Total casualties in the division were about 1,400.

Elsewhere than on 1st Division's front Schlemm had neither attempted nor achieved very much. *AOK 14* announced that the Allies must be given no rest, and that 76th Panzer Corps must make local attacks during the night 5th/6th February to gain ground south-west of Cisterna including Isola Bella and the area north-west of this place as far as the railway line. But *AOK 14's* main care was to mount a concerted attack on Aprilia, to begin during the night 7th/8th February. In Kesselring's opinion Aprilia was such a tough nut that he rather doubted whether von Mackensen would succeed in cracking it.

(ii)

We have already described 6th U.S. Corps' final line of resistance, and this was not altered in consequence of the loss of the Campoleone salient. Lucas however did define an additional defensive line half-way between the forward positions of 1st Division and 3rd U.S. Division and the final line of resistance. Work on the defences had to be done under difficult conditions, mostly at night, sometimes when actions were going on, and always under the handicap of keeping the forward positions fully manned. Clark inspected the whole front on 6th February and ordered a few adjustments including the move from Corps' reserve of a battalion of 180th Infantry to Carano, and of another to Padiglione to strengthen the junction of 1st Division and 3rd U.S. Division. His written orders confirming the defensive role of 6th U.S. Corps included also the instruction that plans were to be made for a possible attack from the beachhead towards Velletri or Albano.

See Maps 36 and 39

At 7.30 p.m. on 6th February parts of 71st Infantry Division and of 26th Panzer Division attacked 3rd U.S. Division's front between the Fosso Formal del Bove and Ponte Rotto. The attack drove in the American outposts but American counter-attacks regained all the ground that had been lost except at Ponte Rotto itself. The only consequence of the operation was that General Truscott took measures to ensure that the ground upon which his troops stood was the ground upon which they would fight, whatever orders might have been given about intermediate and final defensive lines.

Meanwhile von Mackensen, Herr, and Schlemm went on with their plans to capture Aprilia and Carroceto. The tactical importance of these places was that they commanded the surrounding countryside, the main road to Anzio, and two secondary roads leading south-east into the beachhead. They were an excellent jumping-off place for a heavy attack against the beachhead, and would also make a very good defensive position if the luck turned.

The capture of Aprilia was entrusted to Battle Group Gräser of 76th Panzer Corps which for this operation included 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (three battalions; 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division), 725th and 735th Grenadier Regiments (each of three battalions; 715th Infantry Division) and the reconnaissance battalion of 26th Panzer Division. An unspecified battle group of 71st Infantry Division was to advance on Gräser's left towards Torre Spaccasassi. For 1st Parachute Corps' simultaneous attack on Carroceto Schlemm intended to use 65th Infantry Division to seize

the Buonriposo ridge and then turn north-eastwards against Carroceto. 4th Parachute Division, south of the 65th, was to take S. Lorenzo and to advance eastwards towards Campo di Carne. Besides the main attacks of 76th Panzer Corps and 1st Parachute Corps, 26th Panzer Division and Hermann Göring Panzer Division were to make diversionary attacks on 3rd U.S. Division's front. The operations were to be supported by massed field-guns and nebelwerfer.¹ von Mackensen did not at present give objectives for operations after the capture of Aprilia and Carroceto, but 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, 26th Panzer Division and 65th Infantry Division were warned to be ready for further tasks and 1st Battalion 4th Panzer Regiment was held in Army reserve west of Albano.

1st Division after withdrawing from the Campoleone salient had three brigades in the line. 2nd Infantry Brigade was on the right, with 1st Loyals, 'C' Squadron 1st Reconnaissance Regiment and 'B' Company 6th Gordons holding positions from Carano to the Fosso di Spaccasassi, and the rest of the Gordons at Padiglione. 168th Infantry Brigade had 1st London Irish in Aprilia, 10th Royal Berkshires some distance north-east of Aprilia, and 1st London Scottish in reserve behind the forward battalions. 24th Guards Brigade had under command, besides the three battalions of Guards, 2nd North Staffordshires and 3rd Battalion of 504th Parachute Infantry (U.S.). 1st Scots Guards were astride the Via Anziate and the Anzio-Campoleone railway a little north of Carroceto railway-station. 5th Grenadier Guards, on the left of the Scots Guards, held the disused railway bed north-west of Carroceto station, and the northern end of the Buonriposo ridge. 2nd North Staffordshires, in echelon to the left rear of the Grenadiers, held the remainder of the Buonriposo ridge. The American Parachute Battalion and 1st Irish Guards were in reserve on the Via Anziate two thousand yards south of Carroceto station. The divisional reserve consisted of 3rd Infantry Brigade, 46th R.T.R., and 1st Reconnaissance Regiment less 'C' Squadron. The general area of this reserve was five thousand yards south of Carroceto station where the lateral Padiglione-S. Lorenzo road crossed the Via Anziate on 'Flyover Bridge'.

It was a busy time for 1st Division. Patrolling and making defences were the main tasks. Defence works were not easy to make when water might be struck at as little as twenty-four inches below the

¹ On 5th February 76th Panzer Corps had 156 field guns and 1st Parachute Corps had 87. Army artillery included a Long Range Group: 6 guns of 17-cm calibre, 2 K5 railway guns, and 2 French 24-cm railway guns. 56th Werfer Regiment: 27 15-cm werfer, 6 21-cm werfer, and 8 15-cm panzerwerfer. Against the 243 German field-guns 6th U.S. Corps had approximately 432. The Germans also possessed an unknown number of assault guns.

surface of the ground. Continual, icy rain was a plague and created that other plague for the soldier, mud. Reports from every source indicated that a large attack was imminent and on 6th February Intelligence predicted that it would begin in the early hours of the 7th. The divisional artillery gave the enemy no rest and revived counter-preparation of the type of World War I. In this the guns, mainly at night, methodically 'worked over' likely concentration and assembly areas and the routes to and between them. The divisional artillery in the height of February's battles was firing some 160 tons of shells a day.¹ Brigadier Pasley, the division's C.R.A., was entirely accurate in writing to his gunners . . . 'You in your gun-pits never see them [the infantry], and they never see you. But they know that you are always there. They see the worst side of the war, and they need something to depend on . . .' The Royal Artillery magnificently met this need, and in its turn was splendidly served, in a country lacking observation points, by the Gunner pilots of No. 655 A.O.P. Squadron R.A.F. in their small Auster aircraft.

During the first week of February the Allied medium bombers, light bombers, and fighter-bombers dropped 389 tons of bombs in direct support of 6th U.S. Corps and 120 tons in indirect support. Targets were found and attacked on every important road leading into the battle area and within it, and particular attention was paid to the enemy's medium and heavy guns.

The Germans began their attack on 1st Division at 9 p.m. on 7th February with heavy artillery and mortar fire on both flanks of the division. On the left flank both battalions of 145th Grenadier Regiment (65th Infantry Division) infiltrated into the positions of the North Staffordshires on the southern part of Buonriposo ridge. On the right flank the Royal Berkshires, 1st Reconnaissance Regiment's 'C' Squadron, the Gordons' company, and the Loyals, all met attacks by parts of 71st Infantry Division which, however, were not pressed. It was otherwise on the left flank. Here 145th Grenadier Regiment did its best to destroy the North Staffordshires in a series of fierce struggles among the slit trenches on the scrub-covered ridge. Part of the German regiment turned north-east against the left flank of 5th Grenadier Guards which lay on the northern part of Buonriposo ridge. Nothing could have been less welcome to the Grenadiers because already their No. 1 Company astride the disused railway bed, and No. 3 Company south-east of it, were being assailed by both battalions of 147th Grenadier Regiment from the west and north-west. And so in the early hours of 8th February a very danger-

¹ Royal Artillery: 2nd, 19th, 67th Field Regiments, 24th and 78th Army Field Regiments, 80th Medium Regiment (Scottish Horse).

ous situation was facing the Guards Brigade. The North Staffordshires had been pushed off the southern end of Buonriposo ridge with the loss of half their strength. Nos. 1, 3 and 4 Companies of the Grenadiers had been almost eliminated and what was left of them had been withdrawn some twelve hundred yards south-east to Battalion Headquarters. This was situated on the left of the Anzio-Campoleone railway line a thousand yards south of Carroceto station. Immediately west of Battalion Headquarters lay a very deep bramble-filled ditch with a single crossing-place. It was against this ditch, held by Major W. P. Sidney and a handful of his Support Company, that a fresh German attack was directed, and in particular at the crossing. And here the Germans were met by Major Sidney, like Horatius at the bridge in the brave days of old, at first alone and then joined by two Guardsmen who handed him grenades to hurl at the enemy. No German passed even when a grenade, exploding prematurely, wounded Sidney and killed one Guardsman. The German attack died away. For his astonishing defence Major Sidney was later awarded the Victoria Cross. Elsewhere the Gräser Battle Group had moved into contact with the Scots Guards, and a fierce assault on the 10th Royal Berkshires east of Aprilia had overrun two companies. The Germans indeed had planned to attack Aprilia at 6 a.m. on 8th February but the toughness of the British in defence and the casualties inflicted by their artillery caused a change of plan. The German commanders decided to reorganize after dark on the 8th February, and to attack Aprilia during the night 8th/9th.

Penney took advantage of the apparent respite to reinforce the North Staffordshires on his extreme left flank with two squadrons of 1st Reconnaissance Regiment, and strengthened his right flank by sending the remainder of 6th Gordons and with them 238th Field Company R.E., acting as infantry, to the positions of 'C' Squadron of the Reconnaissance Regiment and of the Gordons' 'B' Company. Besides these defensive moves he decided to counter-attack the Buonriposo ridge with the K.S.L.I. and the Sherwood Foresters of 3rd Infantry Brigade and a squadron of 46th R.T.R. This attack went in at 1.30 p.m. and although both battalions made some ground their losses were so high that they came to a halt in insecure positions below the ridge. The rain came down in torrents to add hardship to the anxieties and trials of the day.

On the German side two measures of reorganization were put in hand. The first, which immediately concerns us, was to form a strong new Battle Group in 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division under Colonel Schönfeld. This was composed of 103rd Panzer Abteilung, 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (three battalions), 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (two battalions), and 735th Grenadier

Regiment (three battalions) which was transferred from the Gräser Battle Group. Gräser's Group was left with 725th Grenadier Regiment's three battalions. The second measure of reorganization was caused by Kesselring's decision to re-transfer to *AOK 10* those units of 71st Infantry and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions which had been sent to *AOK 14*. In exchange von Mackensen was to receive 29th Panzer Grenadier Division which at the moment was to take part in the main counter-attack. 71st Infantry Division's positions in the front line were taken over by 114th Jäger Division, brought down from south of Rome on 9th February.¹

The German attack on 1st Division was renewed about midnight on 8th/9th February, and the Schönfeld and Gräser Battle Groups concentrated their efforts against Aprilia and the positions of 10th Royal Berkshires east of it. In Aprilia the London Irish fought with extreme determination, and, when forced out of a position, counter-attacked to regain it. 10th Royal Berkshires fought with an equal fierceness. But the odds were too great, something like eight to one. By about 9 a.m. on the 9th 725th Grenadier Regiment had worked down the western side of Aprilia while 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment on the eastern side had penetrated between the London Scottish and the Royal Berkshires. The movement was completed by 735th Grenadier Regiment striking into Aprilia from the north. The London Irish withdrew to the southern fringes of Aprilia. The London Scottish were on their right. 10th Royal Berkshires, not more than a company strong, withdrew to positions just behind the London Irish and the London Scottish. Although 168th Infantry Brigade had lost Aprilia it still presented an unbroken front to the enemy. Meanwhile two companies of Stuart tanks of 1st Battalion 1st Armoured Regiment (U.S.) had attempted unsuccessfully to counter-attack Buonriposo ridge, losing seven tanks, and at about noon on the 9th two companies of Shermans of the 3rd Battalion counter-attacked towards Aprilia with no better success. The fighting now slackened for some hours because both British and Germans had suffered heavy losses and were becoming exhausted.

To complete their tasks the German troops still had to capture the area of Carroceto railway-station. This, and a thin salient extending astride the railway to the north, was held by the Scots Guards, reinforced by No. 4 Company of the Irish Guards and 23rd Field Company R.E. acting as infantry. The loss of Buonriposo ridge and of Aprilia meant that the Scots Guards were dangerously isolated, and upon them, during the night 10th/11th February 65th Infantry

¹ By these exchanges Kesselring intended to strengthen *AOK 14* for the next attack, and to re-unite all of 71st Infantry and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions under *AOK 10*. His second intention was not fulfilled for some weeks because of the tactical situation and the difficulty of extracting 29th Panzer Grenadier Division from the line.

Division and the Gräser Battle Group made a concerted attack. The attack was of the now familiar pattern, thrusts past the flanks followed by infiltration. Every company position became the scene of a fiercely fought action, while Colonel Wedderburn organized a series of counter-attacks with whatever troops came to hand in the mêlée. But as at Aprilia the odds were too high, and on the morning of the 11th February the Scots Guards and their attached units had fallen back to positions a little south of Carroceto station.

von Mackensen had now succeeded in his main local attacks, although lesser ones by the Hermann Göring and 26th Panzer Divisions against 3rd U.S. Division had achieved nothing. The full cost in lives of the operations is not recorded in German documents, but was certainly high. Success had been costly in another way. 1st Division's defence had profoundly impressed the German troops and they were by no means eager for the next round of the contest. At worst, something like defeatism had begun to fester in their spirits. Yet Hitler and Kesselring still required them to destroy the Allied troops in the beachhead, and the near future offered no prospects other than more fighting and further sacrifice. The point was underlined by the Allied air forces. These had dropped 687 tons of bombs in direct support between 8th and 10th February, and during the period before the next major German attack, that is from 11th February until the 16th, they would drop another 1,100 tons.

Lucas, like von Mackensen, had to review the state of his Corps and his policy. It was clear that 1st Division had been reduced to something like half of its full effective strength.¹ On the night 9th/10th Lucas relieved 2nd Infantry Brigade by 180th Infantry (45th U.S. Division) from Corps' reserve, but early on 10th February Penney reported that a counter-attack, which his division was too weak and exhausted to make, must be made at once if the Germans were to be prevented from making their positions in Aprilia, Carroceto, and on the Buonriposo so strong as to be perfectly secure. Lucas then sent up 1st Battalion 179th Infantry, during the night 10th/11th, both to relieve 3rd Infantry Brigade and to prepare to attack Aprilia, supported by two companies of 191st Tank Battalion. As a result of these reliefs 1st Division was able to shorten its front which now extended from the Via Anziate, south of Carroceto, to the southern end of Buonriposo ridge. 3rd Infantry Brigade took over this front from the

¹ If one assumes, for a rough calculation, that British infantry battalions had gone into action at full war establishment, their effective strength on 10th February, expressed in percentages, was:

5th Grenadier Guards	50%	2nd Foresters	65%
1st Scots Guards	55%	1st K.S.L.I.	65%
1st Irish Guards	60%	10th Royal Berkshires	30%
2nd North Staffords	55%	1st London Scottish	40%
6th Gordons	65%	1st London Irish	40%
1st D.W.R.	65%		

Guards Brigade and placed the Duke's astride the Via Anziate and the K.S.L.I. and Sherwood Foresters in positions south of Buonriposo ridge. The Irish Guards, under command of 3rd Infantry Brigade, remained in the wadis south of Cava di Pozzolana. 2nd Infantry Brigade withdrew to the neighbourhood of 'Flyover Bridge', and 24th Guards Brigade and 168th Infantry Brigade further to the south into the Padiglione woods.

Early on 11th February two companies of the 1st/179th Infantry and two companies of tanks attacked Aprilia and came to a standstill. At 1 p.m. they renewed the attack and penetrated the southern edge of Aprilia, only to be driven out by counter-attack. At 2 a.m. on 12th February two fresh companies attacked Aprilia, and although they, like their predecessors, reached the German positions they were driven out by the inevitable counter-attacks. After these brave efforts by 1st/179th Infantry, foredoomed by the wholly inadequate strength of the troops committed, the front settled down to a short, uneasy lull.

(iii)

While 6th U.S. Corps was fighting its battles in February, the American Chiefs of Staff, the Prime Minister, and Clark and Alexander to some extent, were beginning to show uneasiness about the operations in Italy in general, and in particular about those at Anzio. Telegrams began to pass, often crossing one another, containing inquiries about plans and about the abilities of commanders. We shall follow these two kinds of inquiries separately.

On 4th February Sir John Dill, representing the British Chiefs of Staff in the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee, reported that the American Chiefs of Staff were concerned over the progress of operations in Italy. They felt that these might be becoming a battle of attrition with steadily mounting losses and without decisive gains. Although information suggested that the Germans had withdrawn troops from the 5th Army's main front there were no indications that 5th Army was mounting a heavy offensive. They did not know Wilson's plans for the immediate future and would like to be informed.¹ On 5th February therefore the British Chiefs of Staff asked Wilson for an appreciation, and informed the Prime Minister of their action and the reasons for it. Wilson replied to the Chiefs of Staff on 10th February in a telegram, repeated to the American Chiefs of Staff, which gave them much information about recent operations

¹ It will be noticed that the American Chiefs of Staff were studiously following the formal channels of communication, that is to say first to the C.C.S., then from the C.C.S. to its agents in the Mediterranean theatre, the British Chiefs of Staff, and from them to Wilson, the Supreme Allied Commander. They were not going behind anyone's back by, for example, privately asking Clark what he was doing.

which they already knew, but almost nothing about plans except a general hopefulness. Meanwhile the Prime Minister had taken a hand.

On 6th February Mr. Churchill sent a telegram to Wilson saying that he did not wish Alexander to be bothered with questions, and asking Wilson to explain 'why no attempt had been made to occupy the high ground, and at least the towns of Velletri, Campoleone, and Cisterna within twelve to twenty-four hours after the "unopposed landing"' and 'why has there been no heavily mounted aggressive offensive on the main front to coincide with the withdrawal of troops by the Germans to face the [Anzio] landing'. Wilson replied on 7th February saying that Alexander and Clark had visited the beach-head during the first 48 hours to hasten the advance from it. Therefore there had been no want of urging from above. Wilson believed that Lucas had failed to understand the value of the surprise that he had gained and to take advantage of it. Lucas also had suffered from a 'Salerno complex' which had led him to expect a counter-attack to be inevitable, and to believe that his first task was to defeat it. Lucas, moreover, had been disinclined to risk advancing before 1st U.S. Armoured Division had arrived. As regards 5th Army's main front Wilson explained that the failure to cross the Rapido on 19th and 20th January had caused Clark to transfer the weight of his attack to the Cassino sector. There the mountainous terrain and minefields 'so break up formations that any advance devolves now to the forcing forward of such troops as can make progress. This leads to company fighting.'

Mr. Churchill sent the substance of Wilson's telegram to the President and General Marshall, but could not resist turning to Alexander on 10th February, albeit with an apology. He also asked, on 8th February, Sir John Cunningham to say how many vehicles had been landed at Anzio by the fourteenth day. Cunningham replied that a net total of 17,940 vehicles had been landed, and the Prime Minister, comparing this figure with some not very exact returns of the ration and fighting strengths of 6th U.S. Corps, began to complain about the proportions of 'Teeth' and 'Tail' and to ask for explanations. A small digression is therefore permissible.

The proportion between 'Teeth' and 'Tail' in the Mediterranean theatre had been a subject of complaint and inquiry by Mr. Churchill on several occasions since September 1940, especially when operations were disappointing. It is fair to say that no exposition could make the Prime Minister understand why a very large number of fighting and administrative vehicles and of administrative units were required to enable large, heavily armed, heavily equipped forces to exist, move, and fight. In particular he could not understand how long and powerful the 'Tail' had to be in a theatre where distances

were vast, and which did not possess the splendid network of roads, railways, telegraphs, and telephones enjoyed by the small island of Britain. Mr. Churchill was accustomed to travel far and wide but the regal, unobtrusive perfection of the arrangements which were made for him caused him to disregard such things as space, time, and scarce resources. The present investigation, pursued without excessive enthusiasm by various authorities, led in the end to a rather conjectural discovery that the proportion of administrative men to fighting men in *AOK 14* might be as 1 to 3 and in 6th U.S. Corps perhaps 1 to 2.7.

To return, however, to the Prime Minister's telegram to Alexander on 10th February. He remarked '... I am sure you realize how great a disappointment was caused at home and in the United States by the standstill at Nettuno. I do not of course know what orders were given to General Lucas, but it is a root principle to push out and form contact with the enemy...' Then came a few sentences dealing with the hapless vehicles, the question of why the Allied forces were on the defensive, and the speed and elasticity of German movements. Then the Prime Minister turned to the question of command:

'I have a feeling that you may have hesitated to assert your authority because you were dealing so largely with Americans and therefore urged an advance instead of ordering it. You are however quite entitled to give them orders, and I have it from the highest American authorities that it is their wish that their troops should receive direct orders. They say their Army has been formed more on Prussian lines than on the more smooth British lines, and that American Commanders expect to receive positive orders which they will immediately obey... I trust that you are satisfied with leaving Lucas in command at the bridge-head. If not you should put someone there whom you trust...'

General Wilson's report of 10th February and an informative telegram from Alexander to the Prime Minister led to general expressions of confidence in the Italian operations and of hopes for a satisfactory outcome. The Prime Minister's inquiry about command had been anticipated.

On 9th February Dill reported to the Prime Minister that General Marshall had sent 'a most secret message to Devers which no one else will see to tell him to speak to Wilson at once and find out if in Wilson's unbiased and untrammelled view any or all of the U.S. Commanders in Shingle [Anzio] have failed. If Wilson's answer is in the affirmative the necessary removals will be made from Washington in order to save the British Commander from undesirable repercussions. When I suggested that Clark might be the man to ask, Marshall said Clark might be the man to go.' On 10th February Dill again reported 'Marshall has already heard from Devers who has

seen Wilson. Wilson is quite satisfied with Clark and although he thinks that Lucas might, initially, have done more, he is now entirely satisfied with the way he is doing.' So much for the opinions of the Supreme Allied Commander and of the senior American officer in the Mediterranean theatre. Clark and Alexander, however, were thinking on other lines. On 30th January Clark had written in his diary 'I have been disappointed by the lack of aggressiveness on the part of VI Corps, although it would have been wrong in my opinion to attack to capture our final objective [Alban Hills] on this front . . . reconnaissance in force with tanks should have been more aggressive to capture Cisterna and Campoleone.' On 16th February Alexander told Clark that he was disappointed with Lucas's handling of his Corps and that he believed him to be too physically and mentally tired to keep abreast of the constantly changing tactical situation. Clark continues in his memoirs:

' . . . I also was inclined to agree with Alexander's viewpoint and had for some time been considering a change.

My own feeling was that Johnny Lucas was ill—tired physically and mentally—from the long responsibilities of command in battle. I said that I would not under any circumstances do anything to hurt the man who had contributed to our successes since Salerno . . .'¹

And so it was agreed to follow the procedure which had been used when Dawley was removed from command of 6th U.S. Corps after Salerno. Two deputy Corps commanders would be appointed, Major-General Truscott, American, and Major-General Eveleigh, British. When the present battle ended, Lucas would become Deputy Commander 5th Army, Truscott would take command of 6th U.S. Corps and Eveleigh would disappear. In consequence, on 16th February, Alexander informed the C.I.G.S. 'I have arranged with Clark that Truscott . . . will take over command of Six Corps from Lucas . . . This together with despatch of Eveleigh to Six Corps tonight will strengthen the Command. Devers will I hope agree to this set up and General Wilson will be consulted when he arrives tomorrow . . .' In the event the change was made on 22nd February, and after three weeks at Clark's headquarters Lucas was appointed to the command of an Army in the United States.

(iv)

See Map 26

We have already mentioned the activities of the Allied air forces in direct and indirect support of 6th U.S. Corps during the first week

¹ *Calculated Risk*, Mark W. Clark, Harper and Row, New York, 1950, p. 296, 306.

of February, but we should now look more closely at these activities during the first fifteen days of the month.

In the first place the weather was sufficiently unfavourable to restrict flying on six days out of the fifteen.¹ Unfortunately three of these days of restriction occurred when the Germans were making their final preparations to eliminate the Campoleone salient and one day coincided with one full day of their attacks. Three more occurred within the period of the German attack on Aprilia. Nevertheless during the fifteen days all types, except coastal, of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces' striking aircraft were represented in direct support of 6th U.S. Corps. The Strategic bombers, the Tactical Bomber Force, XII U.S. Air Support Command, and the Desert Air Force were called upon, and heavy, medium, and light bombers, and the fighter-bombers, all played a part within and just beyond the battlefield. On the 10th, for example, the Strategic Air Force came to the rescue with heavy air support to compensate for the restrictions placed on the Tactical Air Force's activities by the bad weather.

The aims of all this air activity were by now almost customary: to prevent, as far as possible, movement into the battlefield and within it, and to attack specific targets such as gun positions and particular concentrations of troops when 6th U.S. Corps called for such attacks. Attacks therefore had a geographical pattern suggested by the principal roads leading into or traversing the battlefield, that is to say, roads in the Alban Hills; the Via Anziate; and Highway 7. Besides there were side-blows on the battlefield's flanks—on the west at Ardea, on the east at Valmontone, Colferro, Cori, and Sezze. The largest number of attacks, and the largest tonnage of bombs were of course attracted by principal bottlenecks and points of tactical importance, for example:²

Place	Number of Times Attacked	Approx. Tons of Bombs
Albano	9	400
Cecchina	5	217
Campoleone	12	514
Velletri	3	133
Cisterna	12	261

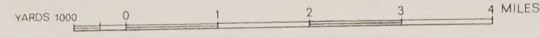
¹ 1st, 3rd, 4th, 8th, 10th, 11th February.

² A more complete analysis shows:

Place	Number of Times Attacked	Approx. Tons of Bombs
<i>Alban Hills</i>		
Grottaferrata	1	15
Marino	1	47
Albano	9	400
Genzano	2	5
<i>Via Anziate</i>		
Cecchina	5	217
Campoleone	12	514

] continued opposit

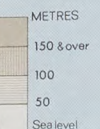
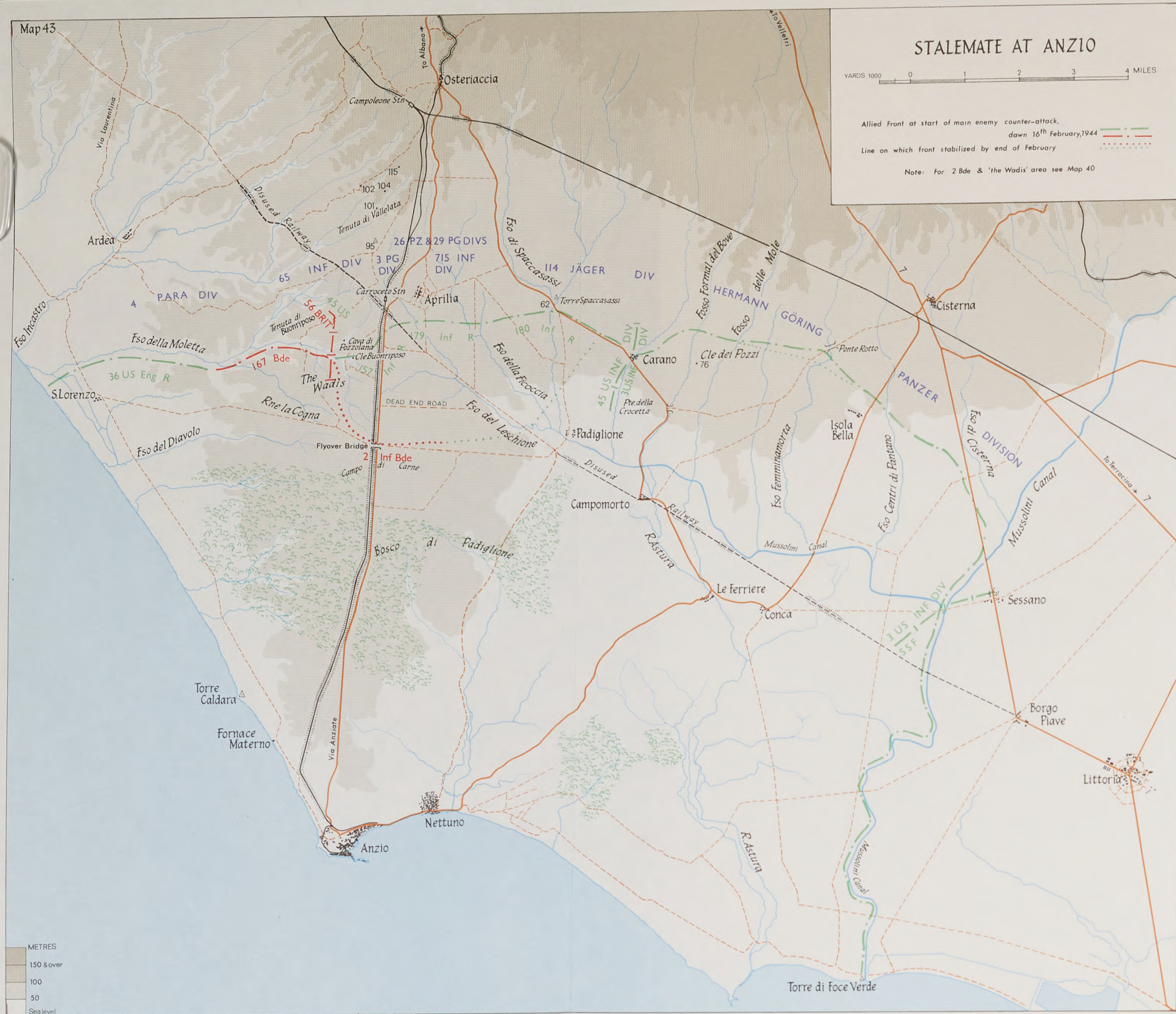
STALEMATE AT ANZIO



Allied Front at start of main enemy counter-attack,
dawn 16th February, 1944 — — —

Line on which front stabilized by end of February - - - - - -

Note: For 2 Bde & 'the Wadis' area see Map 40



A type of specific target was the German Long Range Group of artillery which persistently harassed the administrative areas of the beachhead and the ships and craft lying off Anzio. The four railway guns were very hard to deal with because of their habit of lying concealed in tunnels and their excellent camouflage when they emerged for action.

The maids of all work in the air actions were the fighter-bombers in the order Kittyhawks, Mustangs, Thunderbolts. Next came the Boston light bombers, and the Mitchell medium bombers. Very interesting interventions in direct support came from the heavy bombers—Fortresses and Liberators—on 10th, 12th, and 15th February.¹

Attacks on the road-junction at Albano on 1st and 2nd February had other than purely military results. A part of the Papal estate of Castel Gandolfo touched the outskirts of Albano. Some thousands of civilian refugees from the battlefield were accommodated within the Papal estate; and just outside it, in Albano, a convent of nuns, a cathedral, and other buildings of ecclesiastical use were situated. Most unfortunately Allied bombs, on 1st and 2nd February struck the convent, killing seventeen nuns, killed and wounded six persons

<i>Highway 7</i>		
Lanuvio	2	16
Velletri	3	133
Cisterna	12	261
<i>West Flank</i>		
Ardea	2	34
<i>East Flank</i>		
Palestrina	1	13
Valmontone	5	59
Colleferro	3	29
Cori	6	84
Sezze	3	52

A further 335 tons of bombs were dropped in direct air support on a variety of targets at unspecified locations.

¹ If one analyses the types and numbers of aircraft committed to attacks during the first fifteen days of February, remembering that any one aircraft flew many sorties, the pattern is in terms of sorties:

<i>Fighter-Bombers</i>	
Kittyhawks	820 (46 from D.A.F.)
Mustangs	338
Thunderbolts	20 (from D.A.F.)
<i>Light Bombers</i>	
Bostons	359 (40 from D.A.F.)
Baltimores	41 (from D.A.F.)
<i>Medium Bombers</i>	
Mitchells	254
Wellingtons	233
Marauders	95
<i>Heavy Bombers</i>	
Liberators	173
Fortresses	121

within the Papal estate, and damaged the cathedral. The Vatican very understandably protested to the United States Minister at the Holy See, and the protests were considered by the British Foreign Office and the Chiefs of Staff. The result was a reaffirmation of the principle that Papal property was to be respected as neutral in so far as respect accorded with military necessity. The purely military results of Allied air activities during the first half of February were that German movements were much hampered, and almost always had to be made at night, and that air attack, added to artillery counter-preparation, caused German attacks to get off to bad starts. Apart from these results, the Allied man in the ranks enjoyed the satisfaction that undoubtedly came from seeing his own aircraft in action. Very few men have the knowledge and imagination to realize the benefits that arise from air action that is out of sight beyond the battlefield, but it is a different matter when a stream of bombers passes overhead, and when the thunder of exploding bombs can be heard.

See Maps 26 and 43

From 9th February von Mackensen, Herr, and Schlemm gave most of their attention to the counter-offensive which was to destroy the Allied forces in the beachhead by a concentrated infantry attack on a sector bounded on the east by the Fosso di Spaccasassi and on the west by the Buonriposo ridge. The first phase of the counter-offensive would be the breaching of the Allied defences in this sector; the second phase would be an infantry advance towards Nettuno, with which would be linked a wave of motorized and armoured troops which would either drive through to Nettuno or destroy Allied centres of resistance by flank attacks. 76th Panzer Corps was to have the more important part in the operations and was to use 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, the Infantry Lehr Regiment, 715th Infantry Division, and 114th Jäger Division to break the Allied defences. The wave of motorized and armoured troops would consist of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, 26th Panzer Division, and 1st Battalion 4th Panzer Regiment. This mobile force would begin by making a diversion near Cisterna, and would cross later to the axis of the main attack, the Via Anziante. This diversion was later changed to an attack by the Hermann Göring Panzer Division, having Isola Bella as first objective. 1st Parachute Corps would protect the right (western) flank of 76th Panzer Corps.¹

¹ 76th Panzer Corps
 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division (Gräser)
 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (three battalions)
 Infantry Lehr Regiment (three battalions)

[continued opposite

The above skeleton Order of Battle gives only the infantry (76th Panzer Corps: 30 battalions; 1st Parachute Corps: 15 battalions). The artillery amounted to:

<i>Army Artillery</i>	<i>76th Panzer Corps</i>
Railway guns 4	10-cm guns 11
17-cm guns 6	Medium Field hows 38
10-cm guns 18	Light Field hows 80
21-cm hows 3	
21-cm nebelwerfer 14	
15-cm nebelwerfer 54	
<i>1st Parachute Corps</i>	
	10-cm guns 10
	Medium Field hows 8
	Light Field hows 34

Six Reconnaissance Battalions were also in the field as well as the usual divisional engineer, anti-tank, and signal units. The new weapons, which we mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, were given to 76th Panzer Corps, as were the Panthers of 1st Bn 4th Panzer Regiment and the Tigers of Panzer Abteilung 508. 1st Parachute Corps had a few assault guns and a company of the anti-tank guns named 'Hornets', that is to say 8·8-cm guns on modified Pzkw III chassis.

Kesselring estimated on 9th February that the Allies had a superiority of five battalions if his own 'battle-worthy' battalions alone were counted, and of anything up to one hundred and thirty tanks; undoubted superiority in artillery; and supremacy in the air. Kesselring was not depressed by his arithmetic, and neither was Herr. Schlemm however was not cheerful because 65th Infantry

- 715th Infantry Division (Hildebrandt)*
 - 725th Grenadier Regiment (three battalions)
 - 735th Grenadier Regiment (three battalions)
- 114th Jäger Division (Bourquin)*
 - 721st Jäger Regiment (three battalions)
 - 741st Jäger Regiment (three battalions)
 - 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (two battalions)
- 29th Panzer Grenadier Division (Fries)*
 - 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (three battalions)
 - 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment (three battalions)
- 26th Panzer Division (Hecker, acting for von Lüttwitz)*
 - 2nd Battalion 26th Panzer Regiment
 - 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (two battalions)
 - 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (two battalions)
- 1st Parachute Corps*
 - 65th Infantry Division (Pfeifer)*
 - 145th Grenadier Regiment (two battalions)
 - 147th Grenadier Regiment (two battalions)
 - 4th Parachute Division (Tretner)*
 - 10th Parachute Regiment (three battalions)
 - 11th Parachute Regiment (three battalions)
 - 12th Parachute Regiment (three battalions)
 - 1027th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (two battalions) was split between the two divisions of 1st Parachute Corps.

Division had lost heavily at Aprilia while 4th Parachute Division had not yet fought as a division. Hitler, Kesselring, von Mackensen and both Corps Commanders issued several tactical instructions of which two are interesting. The days when tanks led the infantry into the attack were over if only because of the numbers of the Allies' anti-tank guns and mines. Infantry and tanks must now attack as it were hand in hand, but on 12th February Hitler decreed that the 'most valuable tanks' must not be exposed needlessly to the hazards of minefields, anti-tank ditches, and swampy ground. Some 7,400 tons of artillery ammunition might at best be available for the whole operation which had the curious code-name *Fischfang* (Catching Fish), and no ammunition would be expended in barrages. Apart from counter-battery work, concentrations and observed fire would be the rule. von Mackensen fixed 6.30 a.m. on 16th February as the beginning of the operation, and on 15th February warned all formations that the Allies would be expecting a large attack because their air reconnaissance must have discovered German preparations. Kesselring nevertheless was convinced that everything necessary for success had been done. He intended, after the destruction of 6th U.S. Corps, to turn on 10th Corps on the Garigliano, drive it across the river, and to go on to destroy as much as possible of 5th Army.

After the loss of Aprilia and Carroceto the front held by 6th U.S. Corps astride the Via Anziata and east of that road was reorganized. On 10th February Alexander decided that because of the high losses in 1st Division he would transfer the whole of 56th Division (Major-General G. W. R. Templer), and not only 168th Brigade, from the Garigliano to Anzio. 56th Division was battle-worn yet it was the division that could be moved most easily and most quickly. Clark made it clear that a reinforcement was required and that there could be no replacement of any part of 1st Division. Accordingly Templer with part of his staff arrived at Anzio on 12th February, followed by 167th Brigade on the 13th. 169th Brigade was to arrive on 19th February.¹ By the 15th February the 56th Division had taken over a sector stretching from the coast along the Moletta wadi to the Rione la Cogna (south of the Buonriposo ridge) and thence to a meeting point with 45th U.S. Division about a mile west of the Via Anziata.² 167th Brigade held the Rione la Cogna and 168th Brigade and 46th R.T.R. were in divisional reserve. 36th U.S. Engineer Combat Regiment held the line of the Moletta under 56th Division's Com-

¹ *167th Brigade (Brigadier J. Scott-Elliot)*: 8th and 9th Battalions Royal Fusiliers, 7th Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

169th Brigade (Brigadier L. O. Lyne): 2nd/5th, 2nd/6th, 2nd/7th Battalions Queen's Royal Regiment.

² *Rione*, a word which seems to have no English equivalent, denotes a locality.

mand. 1st Division's artillery remained in support of 56th Division, while 1st Division itself had withdrawn south of Campo di Carne as part of the Corps reserve.

On 167th Brigade's right lay 45th U.S. Division. 2nd Battalion 157th Infantry was astride the Via Anziate, and the other two battalions were in reserve. On the right of 157th Infantry, 179th Infantry held ground from just east of the Via Anziate as far as the Fosso della Ficocchia. On the 179th Infantry's right the 180th Infantry continued the line to Carano, where 3rd U.S. Division rested its left flank.¹ 1st U.S. Armoured Division was in the Padiglione woods in Corps reserve.

'Catching Fish' began punctually on 16th February in spite of the fact that the Allied air forces had dropped more than 700 tons of bombs during a period of 72 hours before the opening of the battle. The outcome of the five-day battle would be that *AOK 14* would gain an area of ground two and a half miles deep by four miles wide immediately east of the Via Anziate, and would then have shot its bolt. But this is knowledge after the event, and between 16th and 20th February the situation at times seemed to the American and British commanders to be very threatening.

The German opening artillery concentrations were mostly counter-battery, and were not approved by Kesselring who informed both Corps that he believed that the artillery ammunition expended during 16th February had been mostly wasted in tasks other than helping the infantry. The Hermann Göring Panzer Division's diversionary attacks gained about one thousand yards of ground near Ponte Rotto but failed elsewhere. On the main line of attack 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division advanced for a mile astride the Via Anziate and penetrated some of the forward positions of 157th Infantry; 715th Infantry Division, on the left of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, advanced about the same distance, but made no greater impression on 179th Infantry. West of the Via Anziate parts of 4th Parachute and 65th Infantry Divisions infiltrated into 167th Brigade's positions south of Buonriposo ridge but could not break through. In short, from the German point of view 6th U.S. Corps' main defences had nowhere been breached. There had been one notable failure. The Infantry Lehr Regiment, on the Via Anziate, had broken under shell-fire and turned its back on the enemy. The attributed cause was the fact that half of the Regiment's officers and

¹ On 17th February General Truscott became Deputy Commander 6th U.S. Corps. Brigadier-General John W. O'Daniel took over command of 3rd U.S. Division. On the same day General Eveleigh became British Deputy Corps Commander. In effect he acted as a liaison officer, explaining British views to the Americans and vice versa.

men had not experienced battle while none had become acclimatized to the conditions of campaigning in Italy. After this failure the Regiment fought fairly well. All German formations referred to tough Allied resistance, to the weight of Allied artillery fire, and to the activity of Allied aircraft. During the 16th February, in fact, the Mitchells, Marauders, and Kittyhawks of XII U.S. Air Support Command and 36 Baltimores of the Desert Air Force dropped 174 tons of bombs on the battlefield, and after dark Wellingtons and Bostons continued the attacks. On the evening of 16th February von Mackensen gave Schlemm and Herr orders to continue to attack during the night, and to take as their objective on the 17th the lateral S. Lorenzo-Padiglione road which crossed the Campo di Carne. von Mackensen did not think that the time had yet come to use 26th Panzer Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. The Allies' front showed no signs of crumbling and the ground was so soft that tanks could not leave the roads. The German tanks so often reported by the Allied infantry were in most cases self-propelled guns. The mistake was easy to make.

During the night 16th/17th the Germans pursued their now usual infiltration, and succeeded in making a gap between 2nd/157th Infantry astride the Via Anziante and the 2nd/179th Infantry on their right between the road and the Fosso del Leschione. During the 17th 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division and 715th Infantry Division tried hard to deepen and widen this gap, and by noon had penetrated about a mile on a front of two and a half miles. During the afternoon the Germans attacked constantly, very often by single battalions, one following another in an attempt to maintain momentum. On the other hand 45th U.S. Division and 167th Brigade were offering a very stubborn defence, and almost the whole of the artillery of 6th U.S. Corps was engaging targets in the threatened sector. Besides the artillery, the Allied bombers of all types from heavy bombers to fighter-bombers flew 724 sorties during the hours of daylight and dropped 833 tons of bombs. This, together with 62 Wellington sorties that night during which 95 tons of bombs were dropped, was the largest amount of direct air support yet given in one day in the Mediterranean. Elsewhere than on the main axis of the German attack, west of the Via Anziante, the intrepid 2nd Battalion 157th Infantry and 167th Brigade held firmly in their now almost isolated positions. The Hermann Göring Panzer Division gained no ground from 3rd U.S. Division.

During the 17th Lucas ordered 1st Division, less 3rd Brigade which he held back in Corps reserve, to occupy part of the Corps' final defence line on either side of 'Flyover Bridge'. General Penney was wounded (he returned to duty on 23rd February) and Templer took command of both British divisions. Lucas also ordered Eagles,

whom he had reinforced with a battalion of infantry, to counter-attack to restore the situation on 179th Infantry's front. Truscott, who arrived at Corps headquarters during the morning to act as Lucas's deputy, found Lucas and his staff in an unhelpful mood. On the other hand when he visited Eagles and Harmon (1st U.S. Armoured Division) Truscott found both commanders in good spirits, aware that the situation might take a worse turn, but unworried. This was an example of the bad habit of Lucas and his staff of not seeing things for themselves. They relied on reports and when these were confused or conflicting or did not arrive at all, inferred the worst.

The Germans were fairly satisfied with the results of the fighting on the 17th, even though they had not gained the S. Lorenzo-Padiglione road. von Mackensen ordered his Corps' commanders to keep up their pressure during the night 17th/18th and decided to commit 26th Panzer Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division on the 18th in an attempt to reach Nettuno. The 18th February therefore would see the crisis of the battle.

Although the Germans held the initiative, the cost of using it was high. An incomplete return gives a total of 2,569 German casualties incurred on the 16th and 17th February, and a number of battalions now had a fighting strength of no more than 150 men each. The terrible fire of the Allies' artillery was the main cause of these losses.¹ During the night 17th/18th February 715th Infantry Division infiltrated between 179th Infantry and 180th Infantry on the line of the Fosso del Leschione on the east of the Via Anziate. West of the Via Anziate parts of 65th Infantry Division and of 4th Parachute Division closed around 2nd Battalion 157th Infantry in the caves and wadis at the south end of the Buonriposo ridge. This magnificent battalion, although completely surrounded, gave no ground until it was relieved by 2nd/7th Queen's on the night 21st/22nd February. It came out of action with some 225 men remaining from a strength of 800, but its splendid defence had been the main cause of the German failure to cut deeply into the Allied positions by a drive from the west. During the night 17th/18th Eagles counter-attacked with the object of retaking ground on 179th Infantry's front to a depth of a thousand yards, and of regaining touch with 2nd/157th Battalion. This attack was made, on the east of the Via Anziate, by 2nd and 3rd 179th Infantry (each battalion about 270 strong) and 191st Tank Battalion. 3rd/157th Infantry attacked northwards along the Via Anziate. The Germans, however, had consolidated the ground which they had won on the 17th, and the counter-attack failed.

¹ The guns of 6th U.S. Corps fired about 158,000 rounds during the period 17th to 20th February.

See Map 40

Meanwhile 2nd Infantry Brigade had occupied the Corps' main line of resistance with 6th Gordons west of 'Flyover Bridge', the Loyals east of it, and the North Staffordshires in reserve. 24th Guards Brigade gave extra depth and protected the west flank by holding positions echeloned back on the left rear of 2nd Infantry Brigade. This redistribution turned out to be fortunate because at dawn on the 18th February 1st Parachute Corps and 76th Panzer Corps resumed their effort to reach the S. Lorenzo-Padiglione road. 67th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (26th Panzer Division) entered the battle on the line of the Via Anziata, and 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (29th Panzer Grenadier Division) in 715th Infantry Division's sector east of the road. 1st Parachute Corps engaged in hard and profitless fighting at the southern end of Buonriposo ridge. 114th Jäger Division, 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, 67th and 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiments, however, took advantage of the weakness of 179th Infantry and the disorganization caused by its unsuccessful counter-attack to strike hard towards the south. The main weight of the attack fell on the Loyals who gave no ground and restored the local situation by immediate counter-attack. On the Loyals' right the remains of 179th Infantry and the 2nd Battalion 180th Infantry stubbornly stood their ground. Five devastating shoots by the concentrated artillery of 6th U.S. Corps caused very high losses among the German infantry. It was unfortunate that bad weather grounded the Allied bombers. By evening the most advanced German troops were a little north of the S. Lorenzo-Padiglione road. This was to be the southward limit of the German penetration, except for a short time early on the 19th February.

While at 6th U.S. Corps headquarters the tone was gloomy, in Truscott's words 'We still had assets,' including 169th Infantry Brigade which landed at Anzio during the morning of 18th February. Truscott urged Lucas to counter-attack and was supported by Clark who was visiting the beachhead. Under pressure, Lucas agreed to counter-attack and a simple, converging attack was planned. The 6th Armoured Infantry (less a battalion) and a battalion of Shermans of Harmon's 1st Armoured Division, with the 30th Infantry withdrawn from 3rd U.S. Division, were to advance along the line of the Padiglione-Carroceto road. 169th Infantry Brigade was to attack northward along the Via Anziata. The objective was a minor road called 'Dead End Road' which ran directly eastward from the Via Anziata and was about fifteen hundred yards north of the S. Lorenzo-Padiglione road.

Only Harmon's force attacked, because the unloading of 169th Brigade's equipment had been much delayed owing to the fact that German aircraft had dropped mines in Anzio harbour. Harmon's

force which began its advance at 6.30 a.m. on 19th January caught the German troops off balance. To begin with, the Allies' artillery and bombers had, by 19th February, almost wrecked the German signal system and with it the co-ordination of German attacks. Moreover the German offensive was coming to a standstill of its own accord. 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division and 26th Panzer Division tried to resume their attack along the Via Anziante in the early hours of 19th February but could make no headway in face of the Allies' artillery, and east of these divisions the 1st and 3rd Battalions of 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (29th Panzer Grenadier Division) were on the point of annihilation. 1st Parachute Corps' divisions were entangled in the wadis south of the Buonriposo ridge, and were not making progress. By the early afternoon of 19th February Harmon's force reached its objective, and 2nd Infantry Brigade (the Loyals, North Staffords, and a squadron of 46th R.T.R.), seizing the opportunity, advanced for about a mile northwards along the Via Anziante.

All the signs now indicated that *AOK 14*'s counter-offensive had been defeated, or that, at least, its back was broken. Indeed *AOK 14* now found itself in a situation very like that of 6th U.S. Corps' 1st Division at the end of January. The Germans had created a salient which they were unable to enlarge and which they might have difficulty in defending. On the afternoon of 19th February Hitler sanctioned Kesselring's proposal to suspend the counter-offensive temporarily. Kesselring, reporting to *OKW* late on the 19th, stated that 6th U.S. Corps was fighting for every inch of ground in well-prepared defences. The Allied commanders had identified the direction of von Mackensen's main thrust and had concentrated their forces, especially artillery, to block it and to begin to attack the flanks of the German salient. *AOK 14* therefore had been ordered to regroup for another large attack on another axis east of the Via Anziante and on a broader front.

Kesselring still believed that 6th U.S. Corps would have to be driven into the sea sooner or later because to continue to fight on the fronts of *AOK 10* and *AOK 14* would drain both Armies of men and supplies and would in the end make *AOK 10*'s front untenable. He told von Mackensen, on 20th February, that his first task still was to clear the beachhead. Stocks of ammunition and fuel were reckoned to be adequate as yet; 369 trains reached Italy during the first half of February, and the 'lift' of load-carrying motor-transport at Kesselring's disposal was 12,580 tons. But in terms of men *AOK 14*'s attempt to break through to Nettuno had cost 5,389 casualties during the period 16th to 20th February.¹

¹ For comparison German casualties in the Salerno battle amounted to 3,472, while *AOK 10*'s casualties during the period 1st-20th February numbered 5,122.

Between 20th and 29th February the fighting in the beachhead died down except for bursts of hard local fighting at the shoulders of the German salient, that is to say the wadis south of Buonriposo ridge, and east of the Via Anziate. *AOK 14* was reorganizing and a new axis of attack was being chosen for it. In 6th U.S. Corps General Lucas handed over command to Truscott on 22nd February, and on 24th February a fresh British brigade arrived. This was 18th Infantry Brigade detached from 1st Armoured Division.¹

(v)

By the time that the first counter-offensive had been halted, the Allied leaders had given up hope of a decisive success at Anzio in the near future. On 20th February Wilson had this to say in a short appreciation which he sent to his subordinate commanders and to the British and American Chiefs of Staff.

'The Anzio Front. It is essential to win the defensive battle now in progress. All our resources, including all our air resources, must be used for this purpose. Once the enemy is defeated, the bridgehead must be made safe against the future and organized to hold out for a considerable time in order to eliminate the factor of haste on the other fronts [i.e. 5th Army and 8th Army], maintenance must be carried out to the full limit . . .'

He then went on to give directions for a renewed offensive at Cassino and added:

'The situation at Anzio must *not* be allowed to cause plans to be rushed or attacks launched until everything is ready. We *cannot* afford a failure.'

In this fashion the operation at Anzio fell from its former proud position as the key which would open the deadlock on 5th Army's front. Alexander was already thinking of fresh plans for the longer term future. These were to bring most of the 8th Army over to the west coast, and with these fairly fresh troops to capture Cassino and advance up the Liri valley. By bringing most of the 8th Army over to the west coast Alexander believed that he might secure the local superiority of three to one in infantry which recent experience had suggested was necessary for success. Alexander thought that his preparations would not be complete until the middle of April. Any fears that Wilson and Alexander may have had that they might be forced to divert forces to a landing in France on a date determined

¹ 18th Infantry Brigade (*Brigadier M. D. Erskine*):
1st Battalion The Buffs, 14th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters, 9th Battalion King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

by the needs of Overlord, were allayed by a message from the Chiefs of Staff on 26th February:

‘Combined Chiefs of Staff have agreed, and President and Prime Minister have approved, that Mediterranean operations should be governed by following policy:

- (i) The campaign in Italy must, until further orders, have overriding priority over all existing and future operations in the Mediterranean and will have first call on all resources land, sea, and air in that theatre . . .’

A day earlier, 25th February, Wilson had given a fresh directive to Alexander. The gist of this was that operations in Italy must be conditioned mainly by the air factor, and Wilson’s general plan for Italy was to use the air to deprive the enemy of the power to maintain his present positions or to withdraw divisions from Italy in time to oppose Overlord. Wilson expected that the programme of bombing by the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces would make itself felt by the end of April, and the effect would be to compel the enemy to withdraw to the Pisa–Rimini line. Alexander’s general task, complementary to the air plan, was to maintain pressure with his land forces, and his present task was ‘to link up the bridgehead and take Rome’. Wilson’s essay in air warfare, however, found no favour with anyone. Mr. Churchill noted it as ‘very woolly’ and asked the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff. On 8th March the Chiefs of Staff invited Wilson to reconsider his plan. The immediate policy in Italy was to be defence at Anzio and attack at Cassino.

General Truscott’s appointment to command the small world of the Anzio beachhead very quickly caused a change in its atmosphere. Lucas, in some ways a good commander, yet had been accustomed to exercise his command by sitting in his cellar-headquarters receiving reports and holding rather rambling conferences in which he leaned heavily on his staff, and after which he seldom gave clear-cut positive decisions and orders. His staff followed his lead and in Truscott’s opinion had never been positive and confident in planning or directing operations. They saw very little for themselves. Neither Lucas nor his staff had established really good relations with their British subordinates. Lucas’s unbounded admiration for the American soldier led him to believe that all others were necessarily inferior, and he was too incurious to inform himself about British military organization, methods, and characteristics. General Penney, a highly strung and energetic man, could never find common ground with Lucas, and felt that his problems were not understood and that Lucas never gave him clearly defined tasks or unambiguous

decisions. As regards the impression that Lucas made on British troops the historian of the Irish Guards tells an informative story of an inspection before the 6th U.S. Corps sailed for Anzio. The Irish Guards looked forward with interest to seeing their Corps Commander. 'They saw a pleasant, mild, elderly gentleman being helped out of layers of overcoats. The Corps Commander remarked that they were big men, . . . that the main guard . . . was mighty fine . . . and drove away, leaving the Battalion slightly puzzled.'

Truscott's methods were the opposite of his predecessor's. Although his personality was quiet, he believed in seeing and being seen, and constantly visited all parts of the beachhead. He kept his staff officers on their toes, and insisted that they mastered at first hand all that concerned their duties. He gave decisions and orders in a manner that showed that he was master, and he kept a sharp eye on the execution of his orders and decisions. His service on the staff of Combined Operations Headquarters in London had given him a very good understanding of British ways, and this and his forthcoming personality soon led to very good relations between himself and his British subordinates. In short under Lucas the atmosphere had become negative. Men were puzzled to account for the way in which they had become penned in the beachhead, and were doubtful of the prospects of breaking out of it. Truscott created a positive and purposeful atmosphere, and gave the impression that he knew what he was doing, and had definite ends in view. Morale rose.

See Map 43

As the first German counter-offensive tailed off into actions which the Germans chose to consider as mopping up, Kesselring and von Mackensen began to prepare a second counter-offensive to be launched on or about 26th February. Kesselring believed that 6th U.S. Corps was hard pressed and seriously short of reserves. His new plan was that 76th Panzer Corps should make the thrust between Ponte della Crocetta and Isola Bella, aiming to reach an objective defined by the northern edge of the Padiglione woods as far as Campomorto. Hitler, however, did not approve and made one of his strange interventions in detailed tactics. He decreed, on 22nd February, that the proposed main thrust was too close to the main axis which had been used between 16th and 20th February. The new main thrust must be made between the Astura river and the Mussolini Canal where the 'going' appeared to be suitable for tanks. He believed that a successful thrust in this direction would compel 6th U.S. Corps to divert part of its 'main concentration' in the area of Campo di Carne to meet it, and that therefore the way would open for a drive on Nettuno. Kesselring and von Mackensen bowed to their master's tactical wisdom and revised their plans.

First it was necessary for von Mackensen to regroup his battered formations, a process which was impeded for some three days by the fact that 1st Parachute Corps had first to clear the Buonriposo ridge of its stubborn defenders. He transferred 362nd Infantry Division from coast-defence north of the Tiber to 76th Panzer Corps, thus securing a fresh formation for the coming battle.¹ 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division was transferred to 1st Parachute Corps from 76th Panzer Corps which then became free from any responsibility for operations in the Via Anziate sector. 26th Panzer Division was extracted from this sector, as was 715th Infantry Division, of which a part was sent round to the eastern side of the beachhead in the area Borgo Piave-Littoria. von Mackensen chose for his new counter-offensive 362nd Infantry Division (on the right or west), 26th Panzer Division (centre), and Hermann Göring Panzer Division (on the left or east).

von Mackensen intended to break 6th U.S. Corps' line of defence south-west of Cisterna and then to form bridgeheads over the Astura river south-west of Conca. The Hermann Göring Panzer Division was to break through at Isola Bella, and 26th Panzer Division a little west of Ponte Rotto. These divisions were to begin their attacks at 4 a.m. on D-Day without artillery preparation in the interest of surprise. As soon as they had broken through 6th U.S. Corps' line these divisions were to drive straight on to the Astura river near Conca and to a point a mile and a quarter north-west of that place. 362nd Infantry Division was to enter the battle at 5.30 a.m., after a short artillery preparation, and to capture successively Colle dei Pozzi and Ponte della Crocetta. The three divisions therefore would attack on a front of about five miles and aimed at penetrating to a depth of about seven miles. As measures of deception 1st Parachute Corps was to simulate the assembly of an assault force at Ardea, and was to make a local attack in the Buonriposo area; 76th Panzer Corps was to make demonstrations on the eastern flank near Sessano. The counter-offensive was to begin on 28th February, but in the event heavy rain on the 26th and 27th caused a postponement until the 29th. Another cause of delay was that the Germans could move only at night because of the Allies' supremacy in the air. von Mackensen was not too confident of success if one reads between the lines of a short report which he sent to Kesselring on the 27th. He referred to the youth, inexperience, and incomplete training of some of the troops, and to the recent high casualties among officers and non-commissioned officers. He remarked that difficult offensive

¹ 362nd Infantry Division (Lieutenant-General Heinz Greiner): 954th, 955th, 956th Grenadier Regiments, each of two battalions.

The embryo 92nd Infantry Division, which was forming with 1026th Grenadier Regiment as a nucleus, took over coast-defence north of the Tiber on 21st February.

operations should be entrusted only to old, seasoned formations. An observer from *OKW*, however, reported that the fighting value of the German infantry was greater than that of the British or American, and he noted the accuracy and flexibility of the Allied artillery. In contrast with Hitler's opinion that the ground gave good 'going', he noted that the ground presented great difficulties in the very many gullies and ditches, which lay at right angles to the line of advance, and which, though they gave cover, were obstacles to mechanized movement.

Although the Allied air forces possessed supremacy, bad weather between 21st and 28th February reduced its application. Only on 22nd February was much direct support possible. During the twenty-four hours light bombers and fighter-bombers, 214 aircraft in all, dropped 95 tons of bombs at Campoleone and Valmontone. Nevertheless, as we have noticed, fear of air attack restricted German movements to the night, and the great activity of American and British spotter aircraft, which were unaffected by the weather because they hopped off and on to their airstrip and flew very low, gave the Germans the impression that all their preparations were observed, and lowered morale.

6th U.S. Corps, on the other hand, had a few days in which to improve its defences, although 1st and 56th Divisions were harassed by local attacks. Truscott was seriously worried by the weakness, particularly in infantry, of these divisions which was caused by a steady drain of casualties and insufficient replacements.¹ 3rd U.S. Division took over 1,500 yards of front west of Carano from 45th U.S. Division which then was able to withdraw some units in turn from forward positions for a very short rest. 30th Infantry (3rd U.S. Division) was moved to Campomorto, and 6th Armoured Infantry (less one battalion; from 1st U.S. Armoured Division) to Padiglione as immediate reserves. Before the German offensive, 30th Infantry became responsible for the area of Carano; 7th Infantry held the sector Fosso della Mole to Ponte Rotto; then came 15th Infantry opposite Isola Bella. 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment and the Special Service Force held the eastern side of the beachhead on the line of the Mussolini Canal. Aerial observation and wireless intercepts kept Truscott well informed of the nature of the German preparations, and he deduced that the main blow would be struck at 3rd U.S. Division, south-west of Cisterna. On 28th February an intercepted message gave the date of the German attack: 29th Feb-

¹ On 27th February Truscott reported to Clark that 1st Division was 2,486 under strength in infantry and artillery, and 56th Division 2,520. We have examined the problem of reinforcements in Chapter XII.

ruary. Truscott also suspected that a strong feint would be made along the Via Anziate. He arranged therefore that all the artillery of the Corps should begin to fire a counter-preparation programme at 4.30 a.m. on the 29th. The targets were all likely assembly areas, reserve positions and gun positions.

The heavy rain of the 26th and 27th February led to one addition to the German plan. The sodden ground made it very desirable that every possible road should be used for the advance of armoured fighting vehicles. The road Spaccasassi–Carano–Ponte della Crocetta–Campomorto was added to the list of approaches, and 114th Jäger Division was ordered to capture Carano before 362nd Infantry Division jumped off, and then to join that division in attacking Ponte della Crocetta. In the event the soggy ground restricted the German armoured fighting vehicles to the road Velletri–Cisterna–Ponte Rotto and they played a very small part in the battle.¹

It is hard to connect the attacks by 1st Parachute Corps on 1st and 56th Divisions between 28th February and 1st March with the main attack by 76th Panzer Corps. The fighting belonged rather to what was almost a 'private war' of singular beastliness which was fought in the Wadis Bottaccia and Caronte, in 'The Boot' between them, in Pantoni, and in 'North and South Lobster Claws', which lay south-west of the Wadi Bottaccia. Nevertheless, whether by accident or design strong attacks were made on 28th February against 168th Brigade's positions west of the Via Anziate, and upon the Sherwood Foresters and 2nd/6th Queen's who were in the midst of an inter-battalion relief in the 'Wadis' and Pantoni. Hard fighting, during which the Sherwood Foresters lost a company, produced no change on this western flank of the beachhead.

The main German attack on 3rd U.S. Division began punctually in the small hours of 29th February. It was accompanied by unusually heavy fire from the German field artillery which in fact fired 1,183 tons of ammunition on the 29th. In return the artillery of 6th U.S. Corps fired its counter-preparation programme but this appears to have been too late to catch the German troops as they formed up. Nevertheless no German division made any real impression on the American defence. 114th Jäger Division on the German right (west) wing failed to capture Carano. 362nd Infantry Division came to a standstill at Colle dei Pozzi, and although 1st Battalion 955th Grenadier Regiment infiltrated to within three hundred yards of Ponte della Crocetta it could advance no further. 26th Panzer

¹ Armoured fighting vehicles in 76th Panzer Corps on the morning of 29th February amounted to: 29 Sturmpanzer, 43 assault guns, 19 Hornets, 11 Ferdinands, 32 Tiger tanks, 53 Panther tanks, and 110 tanks of unspecified types.

Division's 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment failed to pass Ponte Rotto, and efforts to form a battle-group under Colonel von Heydebreck were delayed all day by the difficulties of bringing 1st Battalion 4th Panzer Regiment to the front along the bomb-pitted Velletri-Cisterna road and by a breakdown in signal communications.¹ When at 7.15 p.m. the battle-group began to advance south-westward from Cisterna the tanks went astray, and no engineers could be found for mine-sweeping. As regards the Hermann Göring Panzer Division, its tanks stuck in the mud, and although the infantry advanced south-eastward from Isola Bella for a few hundred yards they were driven back again by a local American counter-attack. Diversionary attacks by 715th Infantry Division on the eastern flank of the beachhead failed. All in all *AOK 14* had very little to be pleased with, and von Mackensen issued almost the same orders for 1st March as he had given for 29th February. 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, however, was available for use, and Herr ordered it to exploit any success which von Heydebreck's battle-group might win on 1st March.

Rain fell for the whole of the night 29th February/1st March and during 1st March. All movement of German vehicles came to a standstill, but whenever an opportunity presented itself, 3rd U.S. Division made local counter-attacks. This aggressive defence put paid to the German hopes. At 6.40 p.m. on 1st March Kesselring issued instructions that the offensive was to be broken off. The policy for the immediate future was to be one of local attacks, and whenever possible units were to be withdrawn to rest and to refit. As far as can be ascertained from incomplete returns *AOK 14's* casualties on 29th February and 1st March amounted to 2,731, a loss without any compensating gains.

On 2nd March the weather was brilliant and while the fighting on the ground was subsiding the Allied air forces came out in a lively onslaught. 201 Fortresses and 96 Liberators, escorted by 176 Lightnings and Thunderbolts, dropped 349 tons of fragmentation bombs in the areas of Cisterna and Velletri and on the road between them. Mitchells and Marauders dropped a further 60 tons near Cisterna, and other Marauders dropped 31 tons near Carroceto. Bostons, and Baltimores of the Desert Air Force, dropped 44 tons, divided between Campoleone and Velletri. 100 fighter-bombers from U.S. XII A.S.C. and 160 from the Desert Air Force swept

¹ von Heydebreck commanded the Hermann Göring Panzer Regiment of which only a part was present with its division. von Heydebreck's Battle Group consisted of 1st Battalion 4th Panzer Regiment, Hermann Göring Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Battalion 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (26th Panzer Division), and some Goliaths—an assortment which was varied even for a German battle-group.

along the Albano–Genzano road and across the front of 6th U.S. Corps, dropping in all 82 tons. The total quantity of bombs dropped during the daylight hours was 566 tons. On 3rd March the weather became unfavourable for flying, and in contrast with the 2nd only 43 tons of bombs were dropped. Nevertheless they brought the total weight of bombs dropped by M.A.A.F. in direct support of 6th U.S. Corps since 1st February to 4,804 tons.

After 3rd March there were no large land operations in the beach-head until in May the Allied forces broke the stalemate. Between 22nd January and 3rd March British battle-casualties had been about 10,168 and 3,860 sick. American battle-casualties for the same period had been about 10,775. German records account for 10,306 battle-casualties, but because *AOK 14's* casualty-returns were often incomplete the loss may well have been greater. On 13th and 14th March 18th Infantry Brigade (1st Division) tried unsuccessfully to drive the enemy out of his positions which, in the Wadi Caronte west of the Via Anziate, were too close and too dangerous neighbours of the British. On 15th March the 509th U.S. Parachute Battalion made a very effective raid near Carano, and on 19th March 17th Infantry Brigade of the newly arrived 5th Division tried to improve its positions in the 'wadi country' without much result. In that sector, where the lines were in places no more than a grenade-throw apart, life was nasty and brutish and too often short.

The Anzio beachhead now settled down to trench-warfare of which a sketch will follow. However on 28th February Alexander had conferred with Clark and Leese to plan a regrouping of the Armies with a view to a great offensive in the Spring. As regards Anzio Alexander's immediate purpose was to relieve some part of the battered troops there, and to send in an extra division to strengthen the weak reserves of the 6th U.S. Corps and to make counter-offensive operations possible. Accordingly 5th Division from the Garigliano front relieved 56th Division between 5th and 11th March. 56th Division departed to Egypt to refit before returning to Italy in July. 24th Guards Brigade withdrew to Naples between 7th and 9th March and was replaced in 1st Division by 18th Infantry Brigade. During the last week of March 504th Parachute Infantry left Anzio to join 82nd U.S. Airborne Division in the United Kingdom, and during the same week 34th U.S. Division arrived at Anzio from Naples. At the end of March Truscott had under his command five infantry divisions and one armoured division (less one Combat Command). Necessity had greatly augmented the self-sufficient force of two divisions which the Allied leaders had imagined enough for a decisive descent at Anzio.

Between March and May the life of the confined and crowded beachhead recalls the ironical title of Erich-Maria Remarque's

famous novel of the First World War, 'All Quiet on The Western Front'. The irony of that title lay in the contrast between the inertia of the campaign as seen from an Olympian General Headquarters and the soldier's routine of boredom and inaction, of bursts of apparently senseless fighting, of perpetual fatigues, of death, wounds, and sickness suffered for no visible gain. At Anzio the front lines lay apparently lifeless by day. Nobody except the foolhardy moved about visibly except for compelling reasons. At a surprisingly short distance from the so-called rear areas appeared notices inscribed 'No Traffic In Daylight Past This Point'. Although the front lines seemed lifeless, concealed observers watched vigilantly, ready always to call into activity guns or machine-guns or mortars. Snipers brooded patiently and murderously. There was a feeling of tension. At night the beachhead came to life. Men continued to dig their trenches, fox-holes, and shallow dug-outs or to repair those that had been blown in or had caved in. They beat off patrols or raiding parties and stalked snipers or themselves patrolled, raided, and sniped. They worked like beasts of burden to carry forward from delivery points the supplies and stores brought up by cautious convoys of vehicles. They evacuated the wounded and buried the dead. There were bursts of harassing and retaliatory fire although both sides were soon compelled to ration the shells used for these purposes. It was an unpleasant feature of 6th U.S. Corps' beachhead that there were no real rear areas, that is places out of range of artillery, and too inconspicuous to attract air attacks. In the so-called rear areas everyone lived at risk, even the wounded and the sick who lay, awaiting evacuation to Naples, in Casualty Clearing Stations and their American equivalents.¹

The necessarily compressed sketch of life in the beachhead given above is misleading. Life was not lived by all under a sense of doom, and it was not everywhere and always an existence hag-ridden by lassitude, anxiety and fear. The beachhead did acquire an unenviable reputation—which 'old Anzio hands' seldom talked down. Leaders and led lived under the intense strain which static trench-warfare imposes. But remedies existed, sometimes unpleasant in the shape of apparently useless raids which yet reminded men that they were fighting men, or that strict discipline which yet breeds self-discipline and self-respect. There were alleviations, periods of rest however imperfect, and recreations, some very ingenious as for example the noble sport of beetle-racing which became a craze

¹ The principal British medical units up to 7th March were:

Field Ambulances: 2nd, 3rd, 137th, 140th, 167th, 214th.

Casualty Clearing Stations: 2nd, 15th.

British and American wounded and sick were evacuated in British hospital-carriers, and in L.C.T. From 29th January to 3rd March British casualties from sickness amounted to 3,860.

among the British. It is not simply complacent whitewashing to say that Anzio produced its own esprit de corps, its own brand of comradeship, its own sense of purpose.

Whichever way the fighting might go 6th U.S. Corps depended for existence upon supplies, ammunition, and equipment brought in by sea. During February some 62,048 tons of cargo were delivered to the beachhead, a daily average of just over 2,000 tons, and in March 157,173 tons were delivered, a daily average of a little over 5,000 tons. Although these figures, seen in retrospect, seem ample there were several reasons for worry and even for anxiety in the early months of 1944 because regular and sufficient maintenance depended upon things that were variable or uncertain, for example the weather, the strength and effects of German air attacks, and the number of ships and craft available. The weather proved to be on the whole no worse than had been expected yet was bad enough to restrict or prevent discharges of cargo on about fifteen days out of the first sixty. German air attacks proved to be no more than nuisances thanks to the very strong defence provided by the Allied fighter aircraft, a very large concentration of anti-aircraft guns, and the skilful use of heavy smoke-screens. As regards ships and craft a most difficult situation arose in early March concerning, it is almost needless to say, the invaluable but scarce L.S.T.

These landing-ships had been the means of delivering the greater part of the cargo required in the beachhead, and at the end of February it became clear that the total requirement for 6th U.S. Corps must increase. On 29th February Alexander estimated that the force then in the beachhead required 2,700 tons daily for maintenance. For the increased force that he proposed he would require a daily total of 3,200 tons plus 800 tons daily to put towards reserves, that is a combined daily total of 4,000 tons. As things were the average daily discharges seemed to amount to rather more than 3,000 tons, but the Royal Navy could not, with its available resources, *guarantee* to deliver daily more than 2,500 tons. Therefore it was most important that those resources should not be cut down. On the other hand, in accordance with the plans for Overlord, 13 British L.S.T. were under orders to sail from the Mediterranean for the United Kingdom on 29th February, followed by 28 more on 1st April. Thus a crisis developed in a matter of hours, and so urgent was the need to gain time that on 29th February the First Sea Lord, on his own responsibility, ordered the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean to postpone the sailing of the first batch of L.S.T. for 48 hours. On the same day the British Chiefs of Staff explained the matter to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, and proposed that 26 American L.S.T.,

which were earmarked for the Mediterranean at a later date, should instead sail to the United Kingdom for Overlord, while 26 of the British L.S.T. in the Mediterranean should be kept there.

So simple a proposal seems to require only a stroke of the pen for acceptance yet in real life very stubborn difficulties arose. In a whirl of telegrams the authorities in Whitehall, Washington, and the Mediterranean, discussed such intractable matters as sailing dates, length of passages, and their effects upon timetables of Overlord and of landings in the South of France ('Anvil'), training of crews, refitting of L.S.T.s, which were not indifferently suitable for both cross-Channel and Mediterranean operations. It was not until 10th March that a workable solution was found, and approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. It was agreed that 13 British L.S.T. should remain temporarily in the Mediterranean but should leave it in time to take their place in the Overlord forces on 11th May. A further 28 British L.S.T. already in the Mediterranean were to refit there and sail in time to join the Overlord forces by 1st May. 26 American L.S.T., adapted for operations in the Mediterranean, should sail from the United States in time to reach the Mediterranean between 31st March and 10th April. This compromise however was by no means the last word in the matter of L.S.T.

The general organization of the administrative backing for the force at Anzio had reached by 1st March something like the 'final' phase which had been foreseen in the plans.¹ Headquarters 5th Army had taken control and was maintaining American troops, but the maintenance of British troops was controlled by the British 'Q' staff-sections in Army Headquarters and not by Headquarters 10th Corps as had been planned. Maintenance over beaches had not ceased entirely but continued as a supplement to maintenance through the port of Anzio. British scales of reserves had been fixed: for ammunition 10 days plus a 3 days' working margin; for supplies 21 days plus a 3 days' working margin. British administrative installations in the beachhead were few and simple.² The Americans provided all supplies of petrol which was being consumed at the rate of 60,000 gallons a day. On 13th March the vehicle population at Anzio, apart from tanks, half-tracked vehicles, and towed guns was 7,660 British and 13,536 American.³

The sea L. of C. was extremely busy. Departures from Naples for

¹ The administrative phases have been described in Chapter XVII, p. 659.

² Detailed Issue Depots R.A.S.C., 511th Advanced Ammunition Depot R.A.O.C., two Ammunition Supply Points 21st Advanced Ammunition Depot R.A.O.C.

On 27th March No. 21 Beach Group relieved No. 3 Beach Group and remained at Anzio until 12th June.

³ The other types of vehicle were:

	<i>British</i>	<i>American</i>
Tanks and half-tracked	190	1,852
Towed guns	361	635

Anzio during February and March were: L.S.T. 529, L.C.T. 41, merchant vessels 41. At Anzio L.S.T. and L.C.T. unloaded as far as possible at berths in the harbour, or at 'hards'. Merchant vessels anchored at distances of from one to three miles off shore to avoid shelling and were unloaded by L.C.T. and a fleet of 500 DUKWs.¹ On average six L.S.T. sailed daily to Anzio, each carrying 50 lorries each of which was double-loaded with 5 tons. Of the 1,500 tons delivered in each trip the British share was 625 tons, usually distributed in the proportion ammunition 60%, rations 20%, fuel 20%. As regards merchant ships the plan provided for a convoy to arrive at Anzio at ten-day intervals. These ships were loaded almost to capacity in North African ports and then sailed to Naples where they were top-loaded with 'balancing' or special items of cargo. The ships were then called forward as required by Headquarters 6th U.S. Corps. This system did not work well because for various reasons the unloading of merchant vessels at Anzio turned out to be a slower business than had been allowed for. In consequence a number of loaded ships lay idle at Naples, and it seemed that the number would increase. This was an undesirable state of affairs, and on 8th March the administrative authorities decided that only one ship would be loaded with 4,000 tons of cargo for Anzio every ten days. It seemed likely, however, that this economy in the use of merchant vessels would lead to a heavier burden being laid on the L.S.T., and this was one of the reasons for Mediterranean anxiety about any proposal to reduce the number of L.S.T. in the theatre.

Taken all in all the administrative side of the Anzio operation was extremely successful, and even when the period of 28 days' operations, which had been accepted at Marrakesh as the base for administrative calculations, vanished there was no question that the force at Anzio could be maintained for whatever period might be necessary.

After the undeniable failure of the German counter-offensives Kesselring and von Mackensen accompanied their deliberations upon fresh plans with inquiries into the reasons for failure. The reasons given by one or the other can be summarized. The troops overestimated their enemies because of the strength of American and British resources in the air, and on the ground especially in artillery. Many of the German reinforcements were young and inexperienced, some formations and units were collectively inexperienced, and there was a general shortage of seasoned officers and non-commissioned officers. In consequence some formations had lost their self-confidence

¹ The British DUKW unit was No. 239 (DUKW) Company R.A.S.C. Six volunteers from this company took their DUKWs to sea in bad weather on 23rd January to help in rescuing survivors from H.M.S. *Janus*, sunk on that day. One DUKW foundered.

and drive and had been easily beaten. Weaknesses in training existed, particularly in co-ordinating the use of the various arms in battle. Kesselring and von Mackensen agreed that if *AOK 14* was to drive the enemy out of the beachhead it would have to be reinforced by two battle-proven divisions.

Kesselring's Chief of Staff, Westphal, was sent post-haste to Hitler's headquarters, where he arrived on 2nd March, to report the results of the inquiries and to explain Kesselring's and von Mackensen's ideas about the future. Hitler pronounced that *AOK 14* must not abandon offensive intentions, that its weaknesses in training must be corrected on the spot, that no divisions were available to reinforce Italy, and that Kesselring must do the best he could by regrouping the formations already under his command. Hitler also took the very unusual, perhaps unique, step of commanding that a party of 'front line' officers from *AOK 14* should be sent to him for his personal interrogation in order to help him to shape a policy for *AOK 14*. The party, led by Lieut.-General Walter Fries, commander of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, arrived on 7th March. In fact they added little to the reports from Kesselring and von Mackensen, but they were unanimous in declaring that the main cause of German failures had been the overwhelming power of the Allies' artillery.

OKW, speaking for Hitler, issued no directive until 14th March, but meanwhile Kesselring and von Mackensen had been making provisional plans. At a conference on 4th March Kesselring said that the Allies must be expected to hold on to the Anzio beachhead, in order to pin down German forces to oppose them and for reasons of prestige, until they could assemble strong forces for another attempt to break out. On *AOK 10's* front the 5th Army was now the stronger, and the Allies had not given up their plans for a thrust into the Liri valley. Further sea-borne descents were likely, for example at Pescara, or Civitavecchia, or Leghorn, or Genoa, but descents were more likely on the west coast than on the Adriatic coast. *AOK 14's* object remained, in theory, to expel the Allies from the beachhead, but in practice was to improve its present positions, to give 6th U.S. Corps no rest, and to take bites out of its line. Some regrouping was necessary. The Hermann Göring Panzer Division was to move at once from *AOK 14's* command to Lucca as a reserve against a sea-borne attack. 114th Jäger Division was to leave *AOK 14* to reinforce 51st Mountain Corps on the Maiella sector of *AOK 10's* front because the appearance of Polish formations in the 8th Army suggested that that front might come to life when the snows melted, 26th Panzer Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division were to be taken out of the line to form an Army Reserve for *AOK 14*. Several exchanges of units between the Armies were ordered, but these as a rule balanced each other.

The effect of the larger regroupings on 76th Panzer Corps (*AOK 14*) was to leave to it only 362nd and 715th Infantry Divisions, and on 5th March von Mackensen told Kesselring that his weakened infantry must have time to regroup and refit.¹ Further large operations therefore would depend upon support by tanks which could not be effective until the ground dried in the Spring. He proposed to restrict his operations until 25th March to patrols and raids and the capture of one or two positions near Carano. On 12th March however he told both his Corps to assume that the Allies intended to attack, and that both Corps must concentrate for the time being on improving their defences.

OKW's directive of 14th March prescribed the offensive as the strategy for *AOK 14* and then became an essay in tactical instruction. This need not detain us except to say that *OKW* ordered the German commanders to study, teach, and use the tactics of Ludendorff's offensives between March and July 1918. This directive had little practical effect because, for example, von Mackensen did not possess the 6,000 guns which opened fire on the British Fifth Army on 21st March, 1918. '1918', however, was for some time a bee in the bonnets of Hitler and *OKW*. On the other hand von Mackensen worked out, and Kesselring accepted, a plan for 1st Parachute Corps to clear the 'wadi country' and then to strike south to the road S. Lorenzo-Padiglione, while 76th Panzer Corps attacked Carano. The date was set as 29th March. Before that however both commanders had come to the conclusion that they could not provide the large amount of artillery ammunition which would be needed. Both Corps commanders reported that the ground was too soggy to allow armoured fighting vehicles to move off metalled roads. On 24th March Hitler announced that he would not sanction an offensive unless three 'issues' of ammunition could be provided and unless tanks could move across country. After Kesselring had replied that he could not predict when these conditions could be met, the offensive was officially postponed, and in the end dropped. As for the Allies, so for the Germans it was stalemate. It is interesting to notice that Kesselring attributed the impossibility of accumulating ammunition to the growing dislocation of rail traffic in Italy by air attack as well as to heavy expenditure in the battles at Cassino.

¹ The fighting strength of *AOK 14* on March 10th was:

German Army troops	49,745
German Air Force troops (parachute formations and units)	13,296
	63,041

Administrative troops numbered about 43,000

On 1st March Herr went on sick-leave, and until the middle of April 76th Panzer Corps was commanded by Lieut.-General Dietrich von Choltitz.

The administrative shoe was pinching. Kesselring estimated that *AOK 10* and *14* needed a quantity of maintenance stores of 2,261 tons daily from outside Italy. During the second half of March it had been impossible to bring forward more than 1,357 tons daily.

(vi)

See Map 16

We have already mentioned in this chapter examples of the Allied air forces' direct support of 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio, and Chapter XVIII has given some account of air operations directly connected with 5th Army's front at Cassino and on the Garigliano. It remains to give an outline of air attacks upon railways in Italy and upon airfields, of operations in support of the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany, and of some miscellaneous operations. The period of the outline is from dawn 1st February to dusk 3rd March.

During this period the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces flew 31,768 sorties in all, excluding attacks against shipping and ports. The total is the equivalent of 992 sorties every 24 hours. Details of the sorties flown are given in the table at the end of the chapter. This daily effort is some 25% lower than the daily effort in January and reflects the worsening weather which affected all air operations and particularly those of the fighter-bombers and of the night-flying Wellingtons. During the period the Allies lost 324 aircraft, and the Germans lost 103 destroyed by Allied action, and another 35 which failed to return from operations for reasons unknown.

February and March 1944 saw very important decisions on the bombing policy of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, particularly in regard to the attack upon the railway system of Italy. On 28th December 1943 Professor S. Zuckerman had issued a report on an investigation which he had been invited to make of the effects of strategic bombing in the Mediterranean theatre. His analysis of operations showed that air attacks upon rolling stock and repair facilities had been the most successful means of damaging the enemy's rail communications in Sicily and Italy during a period which ended at the middle of October 1943. Professor Zuckerman therefore advised that air attack should in future be concentrated upon marshalling-yards which held important repair facilities and handled large quantities of rolling stock. There were not very many marshalling-yards in Italy which satisfied both these conditions. Somehow or other, however, Zuckerman's advice was misinterpreted to mean air attack on marshalling-yards in general rather than on

marshalling-yards of the special kind which he described. His proposals even acquired a misleading title, 'The Marshalling-Yards Plan'. As a result a debate, so heated as to deserve the name of a controversy, sprang up between the air authorities who favoured 'The Marshalling-Yards Plan' and those who favoured the policy known as 'Interdiction'. 'Interdiction' had come to mean attacks on sections of railway track, bridges, viaducts, power-stations and other electrical installations, and some other types of target, all within specified belts of territory stretching across Italy from coast to coast. Zuckerman's opinion was that 'Interdiction' might achieve more immediate results than attack on his chosen type of marshalling-yard, but that it would cost far more air effort, and would be worth-while only in an area of battle. On 11th February Air Marshal Slessor, Deputy Air C.-in-C. of M.A.A.F., took a first step towards reconciling apparently contrary points of view by ordering a review of bombing policy in general and an investigation of 'Interdiction'.

As a result of Slessor's enquiries the Air C.-in-C. of M.A.A.F., General Eaker issued, on 18th February, a new policy for bombing. The policy applied chiefly to the Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force and to the Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force, because the Mediterranean Allied Bomber Force was dissolved on 1st March owing to a reorganization.

For M.A.S.A.F. the first task in order of importance was to attack targets connected with the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany whenever the weather allowed. The second task was the disruption of rail communications in Italy. The object of air attack for this purpose had regard to the concentration of German forces south of Rome because it was to make impossible the maintenance of these forces, and thus to compel their withdrawal to the line Pisa-Rimini at least. The method was as follows. M.A.S.A.F. was to destroy, by day and night attacks, the marshalling-yards, repair shops and kindred installations situated at (east to west) Padua, Verona, Bolzano, Milan, Turin, and Genoa. A second, alternative set of targets was formed by Treviso, Mestre, and Vicenza—all situated on the busy north-eastern rail route connecting Italy with the Balkans—and Alessandria in north-west Italy. The second set of targets might be suitable, for example, for night-flying Wellingtons when visibility precluded attack on the Padua-Genoa set. If bad weather prevented attacks on the first and second sets of targets, a third set was to be chosen from other large 'Zuckerman-type' marshalling-yards situated north of a line Rimini-Florence-Pisa. M.A.S.A.F.'s third task was to give such support to the land forces as Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force might request. For example if an emergency arose in a land battle, as had happened at Salerno, tactical air support would claim first priority for as long as

the emergency lasted.¹ M.A.S.A.F.'s fourth task was to attack targets in the Balkans.

For Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force the first task in order of importance was to support the land forces. Second came attacks on marshalling-yards and repair facilities and other railway targets south of a line inclusive Pisa-Rimini but exclusive of Florence. Alternative targets in bad weather were to be fixed on the western coastal line Ventimiglia-Genoa-Spezia. Whenever possible targets were to be chosen at points about 100 miles from the land fronts, not only in order to interfere with rail traffic entering areas of battle, but also to augment the strain on the hard-worked German motor transport. M.A.T.A.F.'s third task was to co-operate with Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force in attacking the terminals of German coastal sea-traffic on the east coast of Italy.

The first task of M.A.C.A.F.'s medium bombers was to destroy shipping and the facilities in ports and harbours, for example Piombino and S. Stefano on the west coast, and S. Benedetto on the east coast. The Mosquito Intruder Squadron (No. 23 Squadron R.A.F.) was to concentrate on attacking trains, preferably moving, on the Ventimiglia-Genoa-Spezia line.

Eaker's directive, it will be seen, was a compromise, so far as attacks on the railway-system were concerned, between the Zuckerman and the Interdiction theories. To plump for one or the other on the grounds of the knowledge available early in 1944 would have been unwise to say the least. Slessor's enquiries began a period of experiment and accumulation of knowledge which was progressive. It will be described in our sixth volume.

On 20th February, as a result of reorganization, Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force took over 42nd and 57th U.S. Medium Bombardment Wings which had constituted M.A.T.B.F. This Bomber Force ceased to exist on 1st March. Under Air Commodore L. F. Sinclair it had made a distinguished career since its official birthday on 20th March 1943. It had flown 28,372 sorties, day and night, and had dropped 24,295 tons of bombs on targets in Tunisia, Pantelleria, Lampedusa, Sicily, and Italy. 384 members of aircrew had been killed or were missing, and 135 had been wounded. 161 aircraft had been destroyed or were missing on operations, and 1,873 had been damaged. Since 10th December 1943 M.A.T.B.F. had been composed of U.S. air formations only, and it may seem strange that since then an officer of the Royal Air Force should have controlled the operations of an entirely American air force through an

¹ For Salerno see Chapter IX, Sections (ii) and (iii).

all-American staff. The arrangement had been found to be 'wholly workable', a laconic description which is a fine tribute to the men who made it so.

On 25th February Major-General Cannon, commander of M.A.T.A.F., gave his medium day bombers a directive which accorded with the 'interdictory' barrel of Eaker's double-barrelled bombing policy of which the overriding aim was completely to interdict the railway system in central Italy. The air formations concerned were U.S. 42nd Wing (Marauders) based in Sardinia, and U.S. 57th Wing (Mitchells) based in Italy. The first task of the 42nd Wing was to destroy marshalling-yards, facilities for railway repair and kindred targets, principally bridges, west of a line Terni-Foligno-Ancona and south of, but including, a line Pisa-Rimini. When bad weather covered central Italy the Marauders were to attack targets on the railway route Ventimiglia-Genoa-Spezia. The Marauders' second task was to attack the harbours of coastal shipping on the west coast, for example Piombino and S. Stefano. The first task of 57th Wing was exactly the same as the first task of 42nd Wing but was directed at the rail routes Foligno-Terni-Orte, and Perugia-Terni. The 57th Wing's second task was the same as 42nd Wing's second task.

During the period 1st February to 3rd March M.A.A.F. flew 1,392 sorties against targets on the Italian railway system outside the areas of battle and dropped 2,454 tons of bombs.¹ The reader will recall that we grouped the railways of Italy roughly in four main areas: Western, Central, Central Alternative, and Eastern.

During our chosen period it was targets on the Central route that were largest in number.² There was a ruthless continuity in the

¹	Sorties	Tons of Bombs
M.A.S.A.F. Heavy day bombers	617	1,401
M.A.S.A.F. Medium night bombers	86	134
M.A.T.B.F. Medium day bombers	575	857
D.A.F. Light day bombers	8	9
D.A.F. Day fighter-bombers	82	40
U.S. XII A.S.C. Day fighter-bombers	24	13
	<u>1,392</u>	<u>2,454</u>

² Places in order roughly north to south:

Western	Central	Central Alternative	Eastern
Pisa	Prato	Certaldo	Ferrara
Leghorn	Pontassieve	Poggibonsi	Rimini
Cecina	Bucine Viaduct	Siena	Ancona
Piombino	Arezzo		Pedaso
Orbetello	Castiglione		S. Benedetto

[continued overleaf]

attacks because many of the targets had been well battered during January. To list all the targets which were attacked on all the routes and the effects of each attack so far as these were known, would result in a detailed and possibly tedious catalogue of destruction and damage. But by taking a few examples from the Central route it is possible to give an impression of the disruption which was occurring on the whole railway system. Traffic from Orte to Rome which had been almost halted by air attacks in late January was interrupted again by air attacks on the marshalling-yards at Orte on the 6th February, on a bridge south of it on the 7th and on the Orte-Rome track itself on the 8th. On 13th February attacks near the Bucine Viaduct again halted traffic. On 14th February air attacks sealed the marshalling-yards at Perugia, and the exits were not cleared until the 25th, while the station at Arezzo was closed. On 16th February further damage to the marshalling-yard and station at Orte caused very serious delays and by the 19th only single-line working by steam trains was possible; the electrified lines were out of action. On 21st February attacks on Orte blocked the line once more. On 3rd March 88 Fortresses and 84 Marauders attacked railway targets in Rome, the Littorio, Tiburtina, and Ostiense marshalling-yards and two stations. 388 tons of bombs were dropped. Attacks by Mustang fighter-bombers added to the confusion, and through traffic came to a stop.

The above examples could be multiplied. Although the Germans were becoming skilful and swift in railway repair, and though the 'catastrophe service' (see Chapter XVII, pp. 681-83) was expanding, German reports give the impression that a creeping paralysis, small in its beginnings, was afflicting the railways.

During the period which we are considering the aircraft of M.A.A.F. flew 503 sorties against German airfields in Italy, the

<i>Western</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Eastern</i>
Montalto di Castro	Perugia	<i>Alternative</i>	Giulianova
	Orvieto		Sulmona
	Foligno		
	Terni		
	Orte		
	Viterbo		
	Littorio (Rome)		
	Tiburtina (Rome)		
	Ostiense (Rome)		
<i>Northern Italy</i>			
Vicenza			
Verona			
Padua			
Mantua			
Brescia			
Modena			

Balkans, and the Aegean and dropped 576 tons of bombs. 461 of the sorties and 492 tons of bombs were spent on airfields in Italy, and if one compares these figures with the 1,392 sorties and 2,454 tons of bombs spent on railway targets the comparison suggests how far the German Air Force in Italy had fallen from a position of pre-eminence as a target.

The German fighters and fighter-bombers which were nearest to the fighting fronts on land were believed to be based at Orvieto, Viterbo, and Tarquinia, and to use advanced landing grounds at Fabbrica di Roma and Canino. The tonnage of bombs dropped on these targets was:

Orvieto	89
Viterbo	144
Tarquinia	48
Fabbrica di Roma	108
Canino	34

The dates of attacks and the numbers and types of aircraft which made them are given in the footnote.¹ German reports say little of these attacks except that ten aircraft were destroyed on the ground and that a moderate amount of damage was caused at the airfields.

Allied attacks on German airfields outside Italy were light. 28 Fortresses dropped 72 tons of bombs at Zagreb in Yugoslavia, and two Spitfires of the Coastal Air Force attacked Berat in Albania. R.A.F. Middle East gave a little attention to the Aegean and on 11th February and the two nights following 6 Marauders, 4 Venturas, and 2 Baltimores dropped 11 tons of bombs on the Calato and Maritza airfields in Rhodes. On the other hand Balkan targets other than airfields received some attention. On the night 1st/2nd February 30 Wellingtons dropped 41 tons of bombs on a factory near Maribor in Yugoslavia, and on 2nd March No. 12 S.A.A.F. Squadron (Marauders) marked its return to Italy after re-equipping with medium day bombers by attacking roads in Yugoslavia. On 2nd February 42 Liberators dropped 87 tons of bombs on the radar station at Durazzo in Albania. Fighters strafed a number of targets in the

¹ *Orvieto.* 8th February: 40 Liberators (Heavy bomber)
Viterbo. 8th February: 40 Liberators
 29th February: 60 Marauders (Medium bomber)
 3rd March: 30 Liberators
Tarquinia. 8th February: 26 Liberators
 20th February: 12 Mitchells (Medium bomber)
Fabbrica di Roma. 12th February: 12 Mustangs (Fighter-bomber)
 24th February: 45 Mitchells
 3rd March: 30 Liberators
Canino 28th February: 42 Mitchells
 3rd March: 12 Liberators

Balkans; and fighter-bombers, including Italian co-belligerents, attacked targets on the islands of Corfu and Saseno.

As regards the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany the U.S. Fifteenth Air Force, and at night R.A.F. Wellingtons, took their part in operations between 22nd–25th February which became known as the 'Big Week'. The object of these operations was to deal a shattering blow against the air defence of Germany and thus to reduce the resistance to the Combined Bomber Offensive. M.A.S.A.F.'s contribution amounted to 1,310 tons of bombs of which 1,040 tons were dropped on plants manufacturing aircraft and ball-bearings, that is to say on part of the industrial foundations of German air defence. It was unfortunate that the weather was very adverse and that M.A.S.A.F.'s losses were heavy.

The principal targets were plants at Regensburg in Bavaria and at Steyr in Austria. On 22nd February 65 Fortresses and 118 Liberators attacked Regensburg and 5 Fortresses and 15 Liberators were lost. The next attack was by 46 Fortresses and 103 Liberators on 25th February when 19 Fortresses and 20 Liberators were lost. Attacks on Steyr were made on 23rd and 24th February. During the first of these 16 Liberators out of 109 were destroyed and during the second 16 Fortresses out of 87. An unknown number of escorting fighters was destroyed during daylight attacks. On 22nd February for the first time the attack of U.S. Fifteenth Air Force by day was in unison with an attack by U.S. Eighth Air Force from the United Kingdom, and similarly on the night 24th/25th February an attack by M.A.S.A.F. Wellingtons was co-ordinated with the attack of R.A.F. Bomber Command from the United Kingdom. The results of the attacks on Regensburg were recorded. In January the two factories had produced 435 aircraft but in March the total was 135, and normal production was not restored until four more months had passed.

Apart from the attacks on Regensburg and Steyr M.A.S.A.F. flew 115 sorties against marshalling-yards, an oil refinery, and an airfield, variously situated in Germany and Austria, and dropped 197 tons of bombs. On 24th February 27 Fortresses became separated from a force which was heading for Steyr and, instead, dropped 73 tons of bombs on an oil refinery and a torpedo factory at Fiume.

(vii)

In Chapter XVII we have ventured some comments on the operations of 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio during the ten days after the landings. We now consider questions of a more general nature, bear-

ing in mind that it is useless to discuss the Anzio operation by putting forward hypotheses which cannot be tested.

First, it is interesting to examine the origins of the operation. Sir Alan Brooke has written in his diary for 20th January 'how I hope that the Rome amphibious op. will be a success. I feel a special responsibility for it as I resuscitated it after my visit to Italy. It may fail, but I know it was the right thing to do, to double the amphibious op. and carry on with the outflanking plan'.¹ In fact the idea of an operation at Anzio scarcely required resuscitation. When the plan for a landing by a single division was dropped on 20th December 1943, Alexander and Clark in particular continued to think of ways and means of mounting another operation. Clark's chief concerns were that the operation should be undertaken with sufficient strength, that its success must not depend on the 5th Army breaking through the Gustav Line and joining hands with the force in the beachhead, and that the force sent to make a beachhead should be strong enough to face a period of isolation there. He put forward no estimate of the size of the force that would in the end be required, but clearly foresaw that the force of two divisions would have to be augmented.

Mr. Churchill, dismayed by the 'stagnation' of the Italian campaign, most eagerly seized upon the idea as a means of restoring momentum to the campaign. On 25th December, the day of the meeting which he had called to consider the launching of an operation at Anzio, he telegraphed to the British Chiefs of Staff '... We cannot leave the Rome situation to stagnate and fester... The case for finishing up the Rome job is not the capture of the City, important though that may be, but the violation of a portion of the enemy's army in Italy and securing of a line protecting Naples-Foggia airfields from counter-attack...'. These were not very strong arguments in favour of a risky venture, especially because Eisenhower and Alexander were of the opinion that the airfields were in no danger. By the time of the meeting at Marrakesh on 7th and 8th January, however, Mr. Churchill had revised his arguments. He then said '... As to Anzio it was plain that we could not leave a series of half-finished jobs in the Mediterranean. Affairs in the Aegean had gone against us and it would be nothing short of a tragedy if now the campaign in Italy were to drag on to an inconclusive end. Our prestige would suffer immeasurably if we failed to make a success of the Italian campaign. This was a vital matter and a supreme effort was therefore required to clean up the Italian campaign and to enable the large American and British forces to go on full steam ahead on Overlord with a clean record in the Mediterranean behind them. It was unthinkable that we should admit failure in the Mediterranean...'

¹ *Triumph in the West*, Arthur Bryant, Collins, London 1959, p. 139.

This speech by Mr. Churchill and a study of his messages and memoranda about the Italian campaign up to January 1944 convey the feeling that he wished for a visible, brilliant victory in Italy and was not content with the policy of unspectacular advance and containment which had been defined by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 17th August 1943.¹ In January 1944 Northern Italy seemed to him to be very far away while Rome glistened only just beyond arm's reach. Overlord appeared to be a strait-jacket with its fixed date, its demands for assault shipping and craft and so on. He began to think of the Anzio operation as the key to unlock the gateway to Rome—'. . . the enemy must therefore annihilate the [Anzio] force by withdrawals from the Fifth Army front or immediately retreat . . .' He was so anxious to obtain agreement to the Anzio operation that he 'did not dare to demand the necessary weight and power for the "cat-claw"' [Anzio].

The force and enthusiasm of the Prime Minister carried the Christmas Day and Marrakesh conferences although at the former General Wilson said that 'he was in agreement with the general conception of the operation but emphasized the importance of putting in a force of sufficient strength at the outset'. Wilson, like Clark, made no estimate of what a sufficient force might be. No more did anyone else, and in fact the size of the force was decided by the numbers of assault ships and craft available, having regard to the Overlord programme, by the force which this shipping could lift, and by the number of divisions that could be spared. When Alexander at Marrakesh stated that the available force was a little more than two divisions plus a small highly mobile striking force, and that with these, success was highly probable, there was no further discussion at this, the highest level. On 19th January the distant Combined Chiefs of Staff gave approval, rather formal in view of the fact that the assault convoys were to sail on the 22nd, that planning and arrangements for Anzio should proceed.

We have examined the origins of the Anzio operation at some length because they lead to this conclusion. The operation, largely owing to Mr. Churchill's influence, was given quite an extraordinary degree of importance. It was fathered by wishful strategical thinking and was not made the subject of a searching tactical analysis. It was perhaps unfortunate that two officers who might have made such an analysis were not present at the Christmas Day and Marrakesh meetings. They were Clark who was not invited to attend owing to an oversight, and Brooke, who was invited to attend by the Prime Minister but who did not accept because he felt that since Wilson

¹ '. . . Third phase. The maintenance of unremitting pressure on German forces in Northern Italy, and the creation of the conditions required for Overlord and of a situation favourable for the eventual entry of our forces . . . into Southern France.'

would be present his presence was not necessary, and because his colleagues felt that if he were present General Marshall also should be invited, which was not possible at short notice.

Next comes the question of the opposition to be expected. The detail of Intelligence estimates naturally varied with the position of the Intelligence Staffs which composed them, but in general terms there was not much difference between estimates. Mr. Churchill's meetings took note of the estimates prepared by the Intelligence Staff of the Supreme Allied Commander, headed by General Strong. These estimates, presented at Marrakesh, forecast that the Germans could assemble in the beachhead two divisions by D+3. At the Christmas Day conference it had been agreed that the Germans would probably be unable to bring reinforcements quickly from northern Italy particularly in view of Allied air superiority. On the 3rd January however Eisenhower had given warning that the Germans might be able to assemble three divisions and two battle-groups if operations on *AOK 10's* front did not completely engage that army.

At the best then it seemed, early in January, that the Allied and German forces would be equal. However, later in the month Allied intelligence staffs forecast that by D+16 of the operation the Germans might increase their strength to five divisions and perhaps four regiments, two of them armoured. If this increase occurred the Germans would be much stronger than the force which the Allies proposed to land. It therefore seems that an already rather risky enterprise became more risky while it was being planned.

The operations at Anzio were regarded as being independent of 5th Army's attacks on the Gustav and Hitler lines. It was hoped that 5th Army's attacks would succeed and that the Army would advance to link up with 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio. Nevertheless General Clark was unwilling to bank on the fulfilment of these hopes, and he could see no chance in any event of a link up within fifteen days after the landing at Anzio and probably longer.

A successful outcome of 6th U.S. Corps' operation therefore depended upon its being able, on its own and against possibly superior German forces, to capture objectives twenty miles inland from its beachhead. Moreover if the Corps went forward in strength, the garrison left behind to hold the beachhead could only be weak, while sea-borne supplies to maintain it depended upon good weather which could not be guaranteed. Besides these considerations it was probable that, if 5th Army failed to break through, the Germans would have on call strong forces with which to attack the flanks of the Corps as it advanced towards the Alban hills, and its beachhead as well. If such attacks succeeded, disaster would be the consequence for 6th U.S. Corps. It seems clear then that the Corps' operations

would be extremely hazardous. If this view is correct, the policy followed by Clark and Lucas—to create a defensible beachhead before plunging inland—was wise.

Finally there was the question of what would be the nature of the German answer to the Allies' challenge at Anzio. It was assumed, because the point was not debated publicly at Mr. Churchill's meetings, that the threat to the communications of *AOK 10* would compel the Germans to withdraw from the Garigliano and Rapido fronts. Never was an assumption more mistaken. We have seen that 6th U.S. Corps' landing caused Kesselring acute alarm for forty-eight hours and led to improvised defensive measures. After that period Kesselring's policy remained offensive until 1st March, and for much of this time he saw the destruction of the Allied force at Anzio as the prelude of an offensive to be launched from either the western or the eastern wings of *AOK 10*.

Apart from the many strategical and tactical points which arise from the operation at Anzio and which can be discussed at length, there is the question what were the results of the operation? First, there was a complete failure to resolve the deadlock on 5th Army's front and to decide the battle for Rome. Second, there was eminent success in a principal object of the campaign in Italy: to attract and contain German reserves, and to destroy Germans. Third, the continued presence of a strong offensive force miles behind the right flank of *AOK 10* was a permanent threat to that Army's communications and proved to be of great value to the Allies in their final offensive to secure Rome. The Germans could never ignore this threat and were forced into considerable dispersion in their efforts to contain it.

TABLE
Sorties flown by Mediterranean Allied Air Forces dawn 1st February—dusk 3rd March 1944
(excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports)

Command	Land Rece	Fighters (Shipping protection shown in brackets)	Bomber and Fighter-Bomber										Bomber Totals		
			France	Italy	Germany	Austria	Yugoslavia	Albania	Greece	Agean	Day	Night			
			L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields and L.G.s	Day	Night	
M.A.A.F.*† (excl. M.E.)	1,287‡	17,346‡ (1,637)	33	1,778	189	353	221	30	—	28	42	—	—	2,674	—
H.B.			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
M.B.			—	1,610	159	—	—	—	13	—	—	—	—	1,782	—
			—	448	—	—	—	41	—	30	—	—	—	519	—
L.B.			—	1,019	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,019	—
			—	169	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	169	—
F.B.			—	4,313	113	—	—	—	—	—	18	2	61	4,507	—
			2	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	—
H.Q., R.A.F.† M.E.	235‡	2,207 (1,790)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	6	—
M.B.			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
L.B.			—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	1,522	19,553 (3,427)	33	8,720	461	353	221	30	13	28	60	2	61	9,988	6
			2	626	—	—	—	41	—	30	—	—	—	6	705

Total Sorties Flown = 31,768 or 992 every 24 hours.

* The sorties flown by M.A.A.F. include A.H.Q., Malta but not H.Q., R.A.F. M.E.

† The sorties flown by M.A.A.F. and H.Q., R.A.F. M.E. have been taken from a single consolidated record amended by other documents as necessary and are considered reasonably accurate for our purpose.

‡ Estimated.

CHAPTER XX

THE FIRST BATTLE FOR ROME:
THIRD BATTLE OF MT. CASSINO
(March 1944)

(i)

See Map 42

EVEN before the battle at Cassino railway-station had died down, Freyberg, on 18th February, was thinking over fresh plans to reduce Cassino town and Monastery Hill. He took it for granted that the New Zealand Corps would be required to renew its attacks almost immediately in order to help 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio where the situation still seemed to be dangerous. Freyberg did not think that the courses open to him were promising. To make a second attempt on the same plan that was even now failing was to invite another defeat. As an alternative there was a kind of pincer movement. The New Zealand Division might force a crossing over the Rapido well below Cassino, say at S. Angelo, and then move up to the Liri valley to meet 4th Indian Division descending from the mountains north-west of Monastery Hill after making a wide turning movement north of Mt. Castellone. But the fate which had befallen 36th U.S. Division's attempt to force a crossing at S. Angelo in January was not encouraging, and there were not enough Jeeps and mules available or likely to become available to maintain 4th Indian Division in a wide outflanking manoeuvre. Freyberg's thoughts returned to Cassino town and Monastery Hill. He decided in outline that the New Zealand Division would attack Cassino town from the north on the heels of an immense air bombardment of the town and with the strongest possible artillery support. At the same time 4th Indian Division would help the New Zealand attack and guard its right flank by attacking across the eastern slopes of Monastery Hill to capture Pt. 236 and Pt. 435 ('Hangman's Hill') and finally the Abbey.¹ Such small advantages as this plan promised were as follows. The approach to Cassino town from the north was along two hard roads, and the 133rd U.S. Infantry were still holding

¹ 'Hangman's Hill' was a rocky outcrop which had been the end of a funicular connecting the Abbey with the town. The pylon of the funicular looked rather like a gibbet. Hence the name.

positions on the northern outskirts of the town which would form jumping-off places. The air bombardment would be so heavy, if Freyberg's wishes were met, that Cassino town, the defences there, and the men who held them would be blown to pieces while any survivors would be finished off by the artillery. The prospects for the unfortunate 4th Indian Division were, however, no better than they had been in the second battle of Cassino unless a narrower front of attack could be seen as an advantage.

Freyberg consulted Dimoline who had been forward to see Monastery Hill for himself, and on the evening of 18th February presented his outline plan to Clark. No decision was then taken because Wilson and Alexander were expected to visit Clark's and Freyberg's headquarters on 19th February. When these high commanders had discussed the situation, on the 19th, they and Clark gave general approval to Freyberg's outline plan. Wilson and Alexander were at this time planning changes in the general policy of operations in Italy and their plans will be described in Chapter XXI. Both, however, were determined that 5th Army must win its defensive battle at Anzio and also keep up its pressure in the Cassino sector. As Wilson cabled to the British and American Chiefs of Staff on 20th February—

'The Anzio Front. It is essential to win the defensive battle now in progress. All our resources, including all our air resources, must be used for this purpose. Once the enemy is defeated, the bridgehead must be made safe against the future and organised to hold out for a considerable time in order to eliminate the factor of haste on other fronts . . . The situation at Cassino is one of considerable difficulty . . . To produce results, simplicity of plan must be combined with greater weight and the attack must be given full air support including strategical bombers . . . The situation at Anzio must *not* be allowed to cause plans to be rushed or attacks launched until everything is ready. We *cannot* afford a failure.'

In this directive Wilson ruled out urgency in renewing the attack at Cassino. And yet time pressed because it was obvious that the Germans were determined to prolong their defence of the Cassino position, and if they were granted a lull, they would use every day to strengthen their defences. Freyberg particularly was bound to view askance this prospect of still stronger German defences because he could expect no reinforcements other than 78th Division, and had also been charged to see that his Corps was not used up prematurely. There was some ambiguity in the instructions which were given to him.

One matter, however, was soon settled. General Eaker readily agreed that whatever weight of direct support was required would

be provided by the Allied air forces when required. The attack on Cassino town would temporarily be given first priority. Here it is interesting to remark a difference of opinion among the air commanders concerning the tactical results of a devastating air attack. Major-General John K. Cannon, commander of Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force, was confident that Cassino town and its defences would be blown out of the path of the land forces. Eaker, however, pointed out that the ruins might constitute a formidable obstacle, especially to tanks. To this warning Freyberg replied that if ruins prevented him from using tanks, they would also prevent the Germans from using them. He believed, moreover, that bulldozers would be able to clear any necessary paths. Eaker was not convinced and indeed wrote prophetically to the American Air Chief of Staff—

‘Little useful purpose is served by our blasting the opposition unless the Army does follow through. I am anxious that you do not set your heart on a great victory as a result of this operation. Personally, I do not feel it will throw the German out of his present position completely or entirely, or compel him to abandon the defensive role, if he decides and determines to hold on to the last man . . .’

Alexander now laid down two conditions for the new attack: it must be preceded by three fine days in order that the ground should be dry enough not to impede tanks, especially in exploitation into the Liri valley; and there must be good visibility on the day of the attack for the benefit of the bombers. The exact date of the attack would be fixed in consultation with the air commanders but would not be before 24th February. As things happened, the weather broke on 23rd February and until 15th March alternating rain, sleet and snow, and lowering skies condemned the troops on both sides to endure existence in a cold, wet, squalid hell.

On the German side of the hill the most important event after the second battle of Cassino was the relief of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division by 1st Parachute Division. We noticed in Chapter XVIII that it was decided to make this relief at the beginning of February, but because the weather and the fighting prevented the exchange in a single comprehensive move, the parachute battalions went south one by one. On 25th February Major-General Richard Heidrich took command of the Cassino Position, and the relief was completed by the 28th. By that date there had been a change of plan for 90th Panzer Grenadier Division which had been ordered to join 51st Mountain Corps after refitting at Pescara. However the German

commanders decided on 21st February that Pescara was too far from the danger-points of the fronts and that the division would refit in the nearer area of Frosinone.

When Heidrich took over on 25th February, 211th Grenadier Regiment left Cassino town which it had so splendidly defended, and 2nd Bn 3rd Parachute Regiment moved in. The Parachute M.G. Battalion was south of the town. Mt. Cassino and Castle Hill were held by 1st Bn 3rd Parachute Regiment which was the first German unit to move into the ruined Abbey when a detachment of eighty men made a strong-point there on 23rd February. To the left of 3rd Parachute Regiment were the three battalions of 4th Parachute Regiment in the area of Colle S. Angelo and Pt. 593. 1st Parachute Regiment (two battalions) was on the left of the 4th, and the Mt. Cairo area was held by 4th Alpine Battalion. The 1st Parachute Division's fighting strength (on 14th March) was about 6,000, and its men were well fed, well clothed, and in high fettle.¹ On 14th March the division held 13 Italian assault guns and 28 medium anti-tank guns of which eight were self-propelled. Besides the division's own artillery of one battery of 10-cm parachute guns and one of 7.5-cm mountain guns, the supporting artillery consisted of two batteries of medium guns and three light batteries. 71st Werfer Regiment with 88 'barrels' was also in support.²

In spite of the very bad weather the lull at Cassino gave 14th Panzer Corps a very useful breathing space during which units, which had become dispersed to answer February's calls for reinforcements here, there, and everywhere, rejoined their various parents. The positions on Monastery Hill were more systematically developed, and all usable cellars in Cassino town were strengthened with concrete roofs. Supplies were accumulated in forward positions to ensure against possible interruptions of the supply-lines.

After this fairly detailed survey of part of *AOK 10's* front a summary of the views on the Italian campaign held at various parts of the German hierarchy of command may be apposite. By early March the High Command's Intelligence staffs had come to believe that the invasion of north-western France was the paramount future Allied operation, and that it might be preceded by the landing of American and French forces in southern France. Large Allied operations against the Balkans or in the Aegean were thought to be very unlikely. Movements, known or conjectured, of Allied divisions from the Mediterranean to the United Kingdom, coupled with a reduction of assault shipping and craft in the Mediterranean Sea suggested

¹ The Parachute Division's total War Establishment was 16,891.

² The 15-cm nebelwerfer had six barrels and the 21-cm nebelwerfer had five barrels. In this instance we do not know how many equipments of each type were held by 71st Werfer Regiment.

that the Allies now ranked the Mediterranean theatre as secondary. The object of the Allies' operations in that theatre was to keep German forces away from northern France and Belgium. In spite of this generally accurate appreciation *OKW's* policy for Italy was to continue to hold the Gustav Line, and to expel the Allies from the Anzio bridgehead.

Kesselring, on 4th March, had little to add to *OKW's* forecasts. He expected that the Allies would remain on the defensive at Anzio, but that they had by no means given up their design of thrusting into the Liri valley. This second deduction was based on the identification of the New Zealand, 4th Indian, and 78th Divisions in the Cassino sector, but in fact the Intelligence staffs at Kesselring's headquarters and at *AOK 10* were mystified by this new array. They were uncertain whether the replacement of 34th and 36th U.S. Divisions was in train, and there were, moreover, puzzling indications that the French Expeditionary Force was being strengthened. All in all, however, Kesselring, von Vietinghoff, and von Senger agreed that 5th Army would once more attack the Cassino Position when the weather improved. Nevertheless Kesselring felt that the situation in his command was stable enough to allow him to go on short leave about 11th March.¹ von Senger, who was as it were waiting for the next round to begin, was content enough with his situation except for one thing. This was the dominance of the Allied artillery guided by its cloud of 'spotter' aircraft. He appealed to *AOK 10* for German fighter aircraft to be based near the front on permanent call, and for more heavy anti-aircraft guns. He had however to be content with the promise only of two anti-aircraft batteries.

(ii)

On 21st February Freyberg issued an Operation Instruction which confirmed earlier verbal instructions. He intended that his Corps would 'attack and capture Cassino, exploiting so as to establish bridgehead over the river Rapido'. In a first phase the New Zealand Division was to relieve 133rd U.S. Infantry in the northern outskirts of Cassino and deploy for the main attack. 4th Indian Division was to capture Pt. 445 on the descending spur which faced the north front of the Abbey across a deep ravine, and then to establish posts along this spur in order to cover by fire the eastern slopes of Monastery Hill and the western outskirts of Cassino town. In a second phase the Allied air forces would bomb Cassino town for

¹ Kesselring also set in motion planning to counter fresh Allied landings on the Italian coasts, and the improvement of defensive positions behind the Gustav Line, and the planning of new defensive lines. These matters need not occupy us in this chapter.

some three and a half hours with the object of destroying it. The third phase was to begin immediately after the end of the air attack, and in this phase the New Zealand Division was to capture Cassino town and Castle Hill. 4th Indian Division was to take over Castle Hill. The final phase was defined as exploitation. During this phase the New Zealand Division was to make itself master of Highway 6 south of Cassino town, and, east and south-east of the town, to clear any enemy from the ground between the Gari and Rapido rivers in order that crossings could be built over the Rapido. 4th Indian Division was to protect the New Zealand right flank by attacking in a southerly direction across the eastern face of Monastery Hill.

The first phase was accomplished almost as planned. During the night 21st/22nd February 6th New Zealand Brigade relieved the Americans in the northern fringes of Cassino town, and its battalions discovered that in some places German posts lay just across a street, and that Castle Hill threateningly overlooked them. A battalion from 5th New Zealand Brigade, with detachments of the division's anti-tank and machine-gunners acting as infantry, took up positions east of the Rapido and facing the east side of Cassino town.

4th Indian Division had, during the night 19th/20th February, reorganized on a two-brigade front facing Monastery Hill, having 7th Indian Infantry Brigade on the right and 5th Indian Infantry Brigade on the left. It was necessary to hold this sector during the coming attack in which 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, as the fresher of the two brigades, was to take part. The third (11th) brigade's battalions had been committed to tasks which could not be changed, 1st/6th Rajputana Rifles reinforcing 7th Indian Brigade, the Cameron Highlanders and 2nd/7th Gurkha Rifles acting as indispensable porters or as divisional reserve. It followed therefore that 7th Indian Infantry Brigade had to take over the division's whole front, and that 5th Indian Infantry Brigade was withdrawn to Cairo village to prepare for the attack. There was one hitch in the programme. A company of 1st/9th Gurkha Rifles attempted, during the night 22nd/23rd February, to seize Pt. 445 by a silent attack in accordance with Freyberg's plan for Phase 1. The attempt failed because Pt. 445 was strongly held. The post was left in German hands although it was most desirable to capture it in order to block a German reinforcement route which led to the areas of Castle Hill and the Continental Hotel.

The preparations of the New Zealand Corps went ahead at top speed and by 24th February everything was ready for battle—if only the weather had not broken. The divisional plans were as follows. 6th New Zealand Brigade was to attack at noon on D-Day and advancing at the unhurried rate of 100 yards in ten minutes was to capture first Castle Hill and then the part of Cassino town which

lay north of Highway 6. The Sherman tanks of 19th New Zealand Armoured Regiment would accompany the infantry who would advance under one of the New Zealanders' favourite creeping barrages. It was hoped that this stage of the battle would be completed by 2 p.m. Thereupon the same troops would continue southwards to take the rest of the town, the railway-station, and the 'Hummocks'. In 4th Indian Division 7th Indian Infantry Brigade would support the New Zealand attack by fire, especially at Castle Hill. 5th Indian Infantry Brigade was to maintain close liaison with 6th New Zealand Brigade and was to take over and mop up Castle Hill as soon as possible after its capture. Thereafter the Indian brigade would match the New Zealand continued advance by attacking across the eastern slopes of Monastery Hill to capture 'Hangman's Hill'. The attacks of the infantry divisions were to be exploited by armour but the details need not detain us.

The programme of artillery support was very heavy. In round numbers about 900 guns, New Zealand, British, American, and French, of all types from field to heavy artillery, would take part. Something like 250,000 rounds of artillery ammunition were provided, a weight of between three and four thousand tons. The programme included counter-battery and counter-mortar shoots, barrages, and concentrations on all known defensive positions in and near to Cassino town, in the Abbey and on the spurs descending from it. All this was to supplement the devastating air attack which would continue from 8.30 a.m. to noon on D-Day.

Everything was prepared but, as we have mentioned, the weather broke on 23rd February. For the troops a period of misery and waiting followed. The New Zealanders like troglodytes lurked in ruined houses, holes, and lairs which were cramped, wet, and insanitary. Men lay close by day but could emerge at night for a breath of dank air, for inter-unit reliefs, and for necessary fatigues. There was a constant drain of casualties from harassing fire and sickness, although the sick-rate was low. 5th Indian Infantry Brigade near Cairo wallowed in mud.

7th Indian Infantry Brigade, on the ridges and hillsides, grimly endured worse trials in their wet, windswept, freezing sangars and shallow foxholes. At a later time an officer of the 2nd Gurkhas wrote:

'For weeks on end we have sat on a draughty mountain-top in heavy snow and rain, with one's clothing and blankets soaked through in the first five minutes. Behind the line one can always make a hole in the ground and rainproof it with a tent or bivouac. But in forward positions one's hole or sangar

can either be anti-German-counter-attack or rainproof—not both . . .’

Both sides constantly exchanged harassing fire and casualties in the brigade were forty or fifty men daily. Porters and mule trains nightly trod their weary and dangerous paths, engineers squelched off to various tasks, signallers laid new cables or repaired old ones, and the wounded were evacuated by hand-carries of up to four miles and by Jeeps. The Sappers and Miners of 4th Indian Division however did a most valuable work. This was to hack out a Jeep track from Cairo village to the top of a slope on the north side of the Majola hill. This track, known as Cavendish Road, was eight feet wide, rose eight hundred feet in a mile and a half, and ended with a gradient of one in four. The map had suggested to Freyberg the tactical possibilities of this track and he ordered it to be made fit to take tanks, and reinforced the Sappers and Miners by a section of 6th Field Company New Zealand Engineers. Between 1st and 11th March the engineers, with pick and shovel, bulldozers, compressors, and explosives widened Cavendish Road to twelve feet of solid cut and screened its most exposed parts with camouflage nets. Freyberg then constituted a force consisting of 7th Indian Infantry Brigade's Reconnaissance Squadron, 'C' Squadron (Shermans) 20th New Zealand Armoured Regiment, and 'D' Company (Stuarts) 760th U.S. Tank Battalion. This force, at a suitable moment in the battle, was to move along Cavendish Road, and then try to pick a way towards the Albaneta farm and Pt. 593, and thereafter south-eastwards down the ridge of Mt. Cassino.

As day of vile weather succeeded day of vile weather Freyberg postponed his Corps' attack, to meet Alexander's requirement of three preliminary fine days, sometimes by twenty-four hours and sometimes by forty-eight. These unavoidable postponements were a wretched affair. Unavoidably the spirits of the troops began to drop and a feeling of physical and mental staleness spread. Soldiers can key themselves up to begin a great battle at zero hour on a fixed date, and once engaged they can meet the various shocks of battle with astonishing resilience and resolution. But soldiers who can renew their resolves daily to order are supermen and scarce. During the time of waiting the New Zealand Division suffered as heavy a blow as 4th Indian Division had in losing General Taker. On 2nd March General Kippenberger, who had served in all the New Zealand Division's battles since Greece in 1941, stepped on an 'S' mine and had to undergo amputation of both feet. Brigadier G. B. Parkinson took over command of the division and Lieutenant-

Colonel I. L. Bonifant succeeded him in command of 6th New Zealand Brigade.

After three weeks of waiting, on 14th March, the New Zealand Corps was told that its attack would begin next day, 15th March.

(iii)

On the morning of 15th March air power, terrifying when used against material targets, struck the town of Cassino from which, most fortunately, the civilian inhabitants had been removed during the closing months of 1943. All the serviceable heavy day bombers of Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force and almost all the medium bombers of Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force were engaged, in all 164 Liberators, 114 Fortresses, 105 Marauders and 72 Mitchells, a total of 455 aircraft. The attacks began at 8.30 a.m. and ended at noon, and in these three and a half hours the aircraft dropped 2,223 one-thousand-pound bombs, or 992 tons of high explosive.¹ The bomb plot confirmed that 47% of the bombs fell within one mile of the centre of the town and 53% near the town and on Monastery Hill. Some other aircraft went astray and four Fortresses and thirty-nine Liberators bombed Venafro, Pozzilli, Montaquila, and other places, all situated, as was Cassino, on the western side of a river. The similarity may have misled the pilots. Ninety-six Allied soldiers and one hundred and forty civilians were killed in these mistaken attacks. So much for the cold figures. On this morning in roaring explosions and invisible blast, under clouds of black smoke and yellowish dust the town of Cassino was blown asunder and beaten into heaps of rubble studded with the tottering remains of houses. When the bombing ended, almost incredible to relate, those iron-souled men the soldiers of 2nd Battalion 3rd Parachute Regiment, commanded by Captain Foltin, struggled out of the ruins and resolutely stood to arms. On 15th March half their number perished.

Although the weather became dull and overcast during the afternoon of 15th March the Allied air forces were not yet finished with Cassino town and its neighbourhood. One hundred and twenty Liberators and Fortresses were unable to bomb because of poor visibility, but between 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. a formation of eight

¹

Command	Aircraft	Bombing Height	No. of Bombs	Tons
M.A.T.A.F.	72 Mitchells	8-10,000 feet	623	114
M.A.T.A.F.	105 Marauders	" "		164
M.A.S.A.F.	114 Fortresses	10-20,000 feet	1,600	305
M.A.S.A.F.	164 Liberators	" "		409

fighter-bombers became airborne every ten minutes and, flying below the overcast, attacked targets west, south-west, and south of Cassino. In these attacks 32 Mustangs, 16 Thunderbolts, and 140 Kittyhawks, all from U.S. XII Air Support Command, dropped 69 tons of bombs. Twenty-four Boston light bombers from this Command joined in with eight tons of bombs as did 48 Mitchells from M.A.T.A.F. with 75 tons. In addition 59 R.A.F. Kittyhawks of the Desert Air Force dropped 41 tons of bombs at Aquino in the Liri valley. Although the German Air Force had not been much in evidence of late and in fact did not appear on 15th March, its interference was guarded against during the bombing of Cassino by 200 Lightning fighters from M.A.S.A.F. and 12 Spitfires from U.S. XII A.S.C., while a further 100 Thunderbolts swept the sky between Viterbo and Cassino. The 15th March was a day of large, complex, and entirely successful air operations.

When the bombing of Cassino town ended at noon the Allied artillery programme began, and between noon and 8 p.m. 890 guns of all calibres and types from 3-inch gun to 240-mm howitzer fired 195,969 rounds upon their appointed targets.¹

The infantry attack was opened by 6th New Zealand Brigade supported by a creeping barrage of 130 minutes' duration fired by 88 field and medium guns, and by concentrations fired by more than 200 guns upon all the known German strongpoints in Cassino town and on its southern outskirts. Sixty guns brought down harassing fire on the eastern and southern faces of Monastery Hill. 25th New Zealand Battalion led the way into the northern part of Cassino with two companies followed by a squadron of 19th New Zealand Armoured Regiment's Shermans. They were greeted by streams of small-arms fire, much of it from Castle Hill, by mortar bombs, and by salvos from nebelwerfer. It was very clear that the Germans had neither been destroyed nor lastingly stunned by the air and artillery bombardments. The New Zealand infantry nevertheless fought their way forward, scrambling in and out of bomb craters, crawling over and round high piles of rubble, floundering through mud. Combats were fought at point-blank range with bullets and grenades. The

¹ Some, not all, of the guns and howitzers in action and the numbers of rounds fired were:

<i>Weapon</i>		<i>No. of Rounds</i>
25-pdr gun	312	118,475
105-mm how	156	22,921
4.5-inch gun	48	12,899
5.5-inch gun	56	9,114
155-mm gun	60	6,978
8-inch how	48	4,967

work was desperately slow and the rate of advance was one hundred yards in an hour rather than the planned hundred yards in ten minutes. The barrage stood on its finishing line for ninety minutes but had to cease at 3.30 p.m. By dusk the infantry in the town had advanced almost to Highway 6 which passes through from east to west, and on the right 'D' Company had captured Castle Hill in a brilliant escalade. Somewhat surprisingly in so hard an action 25th New Zealand Battalion lost no more than 41 men. The tanks, meanwhile, had been fighting a battle of their own, mainly against masses of rubble. Try as they would, guided by officers on foot, with crews at times dismounted to ply pick and shovel, with tanks in the last resort charging like bulls against obstacles, little progress was made. When darkness fell three troops of tanks were entangled in the ruins of the town, and the rest of the regiment was banked up along the two roads which entered the town from the north.

As the night fell the rain poured down in torrents turning every bomb-crater into a dangerous pond, and the fighting slowly died away in Cassino town. The New Zealand Corps' attack had fallen seriously behind the timetable because the New Zealand brigade had been timed to reach the centre of the town by 2 p.m., and to be established well south of it by dusk, at which time 5th Indian Infantry Brigade should have been holding 'Hangman's Hill'. The delay was disappointing rather than serious except in two respects. First, the infantry had been unable to overrun the defences in the wake of a tremendous air and artillery bombardment. The Germans had survived the surprise and shock of a frightful battering and now clearly intended to fight for every yard. Second, of the four field companies of New Zealand and American engineers who had been ready to clear ways through the town, only the New Zealand 7th Field Company had been able to come into action because of the congestion caused by the slow advance. This field company had achieved little chiefly because the unarmoured bulldozers could not work under small arms' fire at short ranges.

The Germans on the other hand were fairly confident although confused. The bombardments had wrecked signal communications, and all that was known at von Senger's headquarters was that two of the enemy's battalions had penetrated the northern and southern edges of Cassino town, but had been halted. Local counter-attacks were being prepared. There was no accurate information as yet about German losses.

5th Indian Infantry Brigade's plan fell into three stages, of which each was the task of a battalion. First, 1st/4th Essex Regiment was to take over Castle Hill from the New Zealanders, and was then to

capture Pt. 165 situated three hundred yards above Castle Hill and at one of the hairpin bends in the road which linked Cassino town with the Abbey. Second, 1st/6th Rajputana Rifles was to pass through the Essex and capture Pt. 236, another hairpin bend above Pt. 165 and three hundred yards from it. Third, 1st/9th Gurkha Rifles was to pass through the Rajputana Rifles and advance some six hundred yards to take Hangman's Hill.

The Essex Regiment began to move into action at 6.15 p.m. on 15th March, but pitch darkness, a formidably steep ascent, and constant clashes with small enemy parties and posts made the going slow and it was midnight on 15th/16th March before a company had taken over Castle Hill, and 3 a.m. on the 16th March before 'C' Company reported that it had taken Pt. 165. The Rajputana Rifles' two leading companies passed through the turmoil around and on Castle Hill at twenty minutes before midnight 15th/16th March, and one company attacked Pt. 236 at 4.30 a.m. on the 16th only to be held up by murderous cross-fire when half way to Pt. 236. This company then withdrew to Castle Hill where 'B' Company was waiting. The remaining rifle companies simply disappeared in the rain-swept darkness, no man knew where. 1st/9th Gurkha Rifles made a wearisome march of some five hours from Cairo village down a route crammed with men, mules, and machines as so regularly seems to happen when large night operations are on foot. Some time after midnight the battalion reached the outskirts of Cassino and since Colonel Nangle could obtain no information of the whereabouts of the other battalions he decided to lead his own battalion on towards 'Hangman's Hill'. The 9th Gurkhas then began to grope their way upward out of the northern outskirts of Cassino town but the pace was so slow owing to all the conditions which we have already mentioned with regard to other battalions that it seemed inevitable that this battalion would be overtaken by daylight in terribly exposed positions. Nangle therefore rallied his companies on the outskirts of the town—all, that is, except 'C' Company. This company, as was learned later, had performed an astonishing feat. Led by Captain M. R. Drinkall, the company had climbed in two main parties towards 'Hangman's Hill'. It met only one German post which was destroyed by a volley of grenades, and attracted no other notice. By dawn the company had reached 'Hangman's Hill' which then, in complete isolation, it settled down to hold.

To return momentarily to 6th New Zealand Brigade. Just before dusk on the 15th Brigadier Bonifant sent 26th New Zealand Battalion into the town from the east to pass through 25th New Zealand Battalion and continue the attack towards the railway-station and the 'Hummocks'. This attempt proved hopeless because in the pitch

darkness the tangled ruins of Cassino and the rain-filled craters formed an impenetrable maze. The 26th Battalion's leading company spent three hours in advancing six hundred and fifty yards and in the end the whole battalion collected along Highway 6 with the intention of making its attack at daybreak on the 16th.

Freyberg's and Parkinson's hopes for 16th March were that 6th New Zealand Brigade would attack southwards, clearing Cassino town and capturing objectives almost a mile south of it, including the Colosseum, Baron's Palace, the railway-station and the Hummocks. Concurrently 5th Indian Infantry Brigade would capture the hairpin bends on the road between the Abbey and the town known as Pts. 236 and 202, and then from this jumping-off line would assault the Abbey itself. The events of the 16th, however, caused these hopes to be deferred. In fact on the 16th control of the battle in Cassino town virtually passed into the hands of company and platoon commanders. The reason was that communications by radio telephone and line had almost broken down, and that runners reached their destinations very slowly if at all. Much the same conditions prevailed in 5th Indian Infantry Brigade.

In Cassino town therefore the 16th March began not with a set-piece brigade attack but with an advance by two companies concerted by 25th and 24th New Zealand Battalions. These companies advanced from east to west astride Highway 6 at 6.15 a.m. Their object was to clear the enemy from the part of the town which lay below Castle Hill (Pt. 193) and from the area of the Botanical Gardens which lay at the point in the town where Highway 6 turned sharply southwards. Slow and savage fighting resulted in the capture of a few houses and of the Convent which stood a little to the south of Highway 6. The New Zealand infantry was helped by a few tanks of 19th New Zealand Armoured Regiment which entered the town from the east. These tanks crossed the Rapido by a bridge which 48th U.S. Engineer Battalion had built during the night 15th/16th March. The tanks were helped across lesser obstacles by four 'bridging tanks', that is to say Valentine tanks each carrying a thirty-foot folding bridge. New Zealand patrols also discovered that however much the Germans might be engaged in the town they were strongly holding the railway-station and the Hummocks. In this fashion a day, disappointing to the New Zealanders, passed. A particular disappointment was that the engineers were unable to set about clearing tank-paths through the piles of rubble continually swept by fire at short ranges.

For 5th Indian Infantry Brigade the 16th March dawned on a confused situation. 1st/4th Essex were holding Castle Hill and

Pt. 175 northward of that feature and Pt. 165 south-west of it. Thus there existed a starting point for a fresh attack on Monastery Hill. On Castle Hill also were about half 1st/6th Rajputana Rifles including the company which had tried to take Pt. 236 during the night. North of Castle Hill were 1st/9th Gurkhas less 'C' Company whose whereabouts at that time was unknown. Brigadier Bateman's plan was that the Rajputana Rifles were to capture Pts. 236 and 202, 9th Gurkhas were to pass through and take Hangman's Hill (Pt. 435), and then the Essex were to assault the Abbey. Nothing turned out as planned. At 9.30 a.m. two companies of the Rajputana Rifles again attacked Pt. 236. They came under devastating fire from front and flanks, and an unlucky mortar bomb struck the battalion's headquarters, wounding Colonel West and four other officers. 'A' and 'B' Companies were recalled to Castle Hill. The other two companies had during the night strayed into the northern fringes of Cassino town. They were gradually extricated to re-organize. In these circumstances 9th Gurkha Rifles could not begin their attack. Then at about 2 p.m. an electrifying signal came out of the air. It was Drinkall reporting that he had seized Hangman's Hill and was holding it. This news decided Bateman's next plan which was that after dark on the 16th, since to try to advance in daylight was futile, the Rajputana Rifles would capture Pt. 236 and that 9th Gurkhas would at all costs reach and sustain their 'C' Company on Hangman's Hill.

Galloway (temporarily commanding 4th Indian Division) and Freyberg accepted Bateman's plan. Freyberg ordered 6th New Zealand Brigade to continue the attack which had come to a standstill on the 16th. He rejected suggestions to commit more infantry in Cassino town, thinking that sufficient were already engaged in a confined area.

The weather for flying was good on 16th March but the closeness of British and German troops on the Cassino battlefield prevented close direct air support. Nevertheless 109 Mitchells and Marauders, 24 Bostons, and 167 fighter-bombers of various types dropped 243 tons of bombs. Targets for the most part were gun positions: at Belmonte on the northern outskirts of the battlefield, at Aquino, Pontecorvo, and Pignataro in the Liri valley, and at some unidentifiable places south-west of Mt. Cassino. Atina, though distant, was attacked also.

On the German side very little information came from the Cassino position during 15th and 16th March, although the bald outline of

events was correctly stated. von Senger remarked of the air bombardment that the use of a mass of heavy bombers in the tactical role was something new. On the 16th von Vietinghoff and Westphal agreed that the parachute troops had endured their ordeal with exemplary courage. In fact prisoners later told Allied interrogators that the bombing had produced only slight effects on morale because the prepared positions had largely protected the occupants from concussion and had given them a feeling of security. On the 16th March Heidrich left his headquarters at Castrocielo at an early hour and had gone to the forefront of the battle, and so no comment or information came from him. The higher German commanders had by then come to think that the Allies had tried to bomb out the defenders before launching not very strong infantry attacks on a narrow front. von Vietinghoff believed that it was too early to judge whether Cassino town could be held, but von Senger believed that a further enormous air bombardment might make it indefensible because troops and weapons were useless if buried under a mountain of rubble. von Vietinghoff made a special allotment of anti-tank bazookas and grenade launchers to 1st Parachute Division, and von Senger placed 3rd Battalion 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (from 15th Panzer Grenadier Division) under its command.¹ The mood of the higher German commanders was a resolute 'wait and see'. However, they wished that the *Luftwaffe* would come to the help of the ground troops, or that—better still—heavy rain would continue.

At 7 p.m. on the 16th March the artillery supporting 5th Indian Infantry Brigade began to fire concentrations on known German positions on Monastery Hill, and at 9 p.m. 1st/6th Rajputana Rifles ('A' and 'B' Companies) attacked Pt. 236 for the third time. This time they stormed their objective, but were unable to hold it after dawn on the 17th. At that time a counter-attack forced the survivors, few in number and short of ammunition, back to Castle Hill.² At 9 p.m. also 9th Gurkhas set out for Hangman's Hill, and moving, sometimes in single file, by goat paths reached Hangman's Hill at 5 a.m. on 17th March just in time to beat off a counter-attack directed at 'C' Company. The battalion then settled into the exposed and dangerous positions which it would hold for nine days.

Freyberg's verbal orders to Parkinson early on the 17th included the words 'It is essential that we should push through to the Gurkhas

¹ 'Bazookas' translates the German term 'Ofenrohre', and 'grenade launchers' the term 'Faustpatronen'. 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was the recent redesignation of 129th Panzer Grenadier Regiment.

² 1st/6th Rajputana Rifles suffered 199 casualties in the third battle of Cassino.

tonight. Anywhere you can push in tanks, do so.' At 6.45 a.m. on the 17th 25th N.Z. Battalion and a company of 24th N.Z. Battalion led by a troop of Shermans began to push forward towards the Botanical Gardens and the Continental Hotel. Yard by yard they fought their way to within two hundred yards of the hotel. This advance made it possible for 26th N.Z. Battalion to attack southwards from the east-west part of Highway 6.

26th New Zealand Battalion's attack began in a way that would have thrown less seasoned troops into hopeless disorder. Shortly after 11 a.m. two troops of Shermans of 19th N.Z. Armoured Regiment left the Convent and headed for the railway-station, seven hundred yards away. However, owing to an almost complete breakdown of communications not all the infantry were aware that the advance had begun. Companies were summoned to a rendezvous and, as they arrived, were sent forward to a start-line which was under heavy fire from its western flank. From this start-line dribbles of men followed the trail of the tanks which were ploughing their way through heaps of rubble and scattered mines engaging any enemy posts which they could spot with their guns and machine guns. Two tanks reached the railway-station by noon and were soon joined by two more. The enemy hastily withdrew and the leading infantry passed through to take the Hummocks. 26th N.Z. Battalion had lost 91 casualties and was too disorganized and exhausted to continue the advance southward.

Following this success, Brigadier Bonifant ordered 24th N.Z. Battalion, which was in the northern outskirts of Cassino, to pass through the town and clear the north-south stretch of Highway 6 between the Continental Hotel and the Colosseum. The battalion soon found Cassino town to be a confusing and dangerous shambles in which 25th N.Z. Battalion was still fighting a dozen bloody actions to expel parachutists from their lairs or to repel others who were attempting to infiltrate again into lairs which they had lost. In the end, by nightfall, only two companies of the 24th had forced their way through to positions a little south of the Convent and off their true axis of advance.

At the close of 17th March the New Zealand Corps found itself far short of objectives which, before the battle, it had hoped to reach in a few hours. Cassino town was a mixture of battlefield and no-man's-land which the New Zealanders were far from dominating. Their casualties had amounted to about 130 officers and men and twelve tanks destroyed and damaged. These figures were surprisingly low and do not reflect the fierce and difficult fighting. 5th Indian Infantry Brigade had scored a notable success in capturing Hangman's Hill but whether 9th Gurkhas could hold that dangerously isolated position remained to be seen. On 17th March Freyberg

considered whether to commit more infantry in Cassino town, perhaps 5th N.Z. Brigade or a brigade from 78th Division. Freyberg was a strong and most experienced commander who had commanded a battalion and a brigade in World War I. He decided that 6th New Zealand Brigade had enough strength and drive to clear the town and that it would be premature to commit other brigades which would be needed to exploit success if the battle turned out well. The commanders most concerned, Parkinson and Bonifant, fully agreed with this robust decision, but Galloway, anxious for 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, became the more anxious because of it.

During the 17th March 48 Mitchells, 24 Bostons, and 185 fighter-bombers—Mustangs, Kittyhawks, and Thunderbolts—dropped 171 tons of bombs mostly on gun positions, although Castrocielo, where Heidrich had his headquarters, received 42 tons.

Early on the 17th March a liaison officer from 1st Parachute Division appeared at the headquarters of 14th Panzer Corps and gave quite an accurate account of the events of the previous day and night. His account somewhat disturbed von Senger who then went forward to find Heidrich. At 10 a.m. *AOK 10's* Chief of Staff Wentzell, in discussing by telephone the situation with Kesselring's Chief of Staff Westphal, remarked that it was 'not very pretty' but said that Heidrich was unperturbed. Westphal thereupon said that he would visit the 1st Parachute Division. At some time during the morning von Senger, Westphal, and Heidrich met. Heidrich now admitted that the situation in Cassino town was critical although he hoped to continue to hold the centre of the town. His casualties he said were high and he required reinforcements. von Senger promised these from 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. Heidrich now began to reveal himself as the embodiment of his division's qualities. He was a fine and very able fighting man, and also arrogant and parochial-minded. He began to insist that the battle of Cassino should be fought by parachute troops alone. His aim in asking for reinforcements was that they should occupy 'quiet' sectors, for example the S. Angelo hill and Mt. Castellone, and free parachute units to plunge into the dog-fight. It was Heidrich's attitude, shared by his men, which probably caused Wentzell to remark to Westphal on the evening of the 17th that the parachutists were 'mad keen not to be put in the shade by Grenadier Regiment 211' which, it may be remembered, had defended Cassino magnificently in February.

As the day wore on the situation seemed to grow worse in the view

of superior headquarters. It seemed that two brigades and at least sixty tanks were attacking Cassino town, and German losses were said to be so high that 3rd Parachute Regiment was deemed to be written off. However, the whole of 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiment had been placed under the command of 1st Parachute Division and Heidrich was planning counter-attacks by his own troops. Heidrich indeed was reported to be very put out because he had not yet driven off the Allied troops, and to be unreasonably hopeful for the future.

Although the progress made by 5th Indian Infantry Brigade and 6th New Zealand Brigade up to dusk on 17th March had disappointed hopes which had perhaps been set too high, the operations had brought encouraging prospects. The Indians had gained in Hangman's Hill a jumping-off place for an attack on the Abbey. The capture of the railway-station meant that only quite a small part of Cassino town, around the Continental Hotel and the Hotel des Roses, remained in German hands. It was absolutely necessary to capture this area because while the Germans held it, they could fire into the flank of any troops moving across Monastery Hill towards Hangman's Hill, or into the backs of any who struck up the hill towards the Abbey. However, before the Indian Brigade could develop an attack from Hangman's Hill it was necessary to send, and continue to send, ammunition and food to the Gurkhas who held it. In the New Zealanders' sector the most urgent task was to clear tank paths through the ruins in order that these weapons could play their indispensable part in attacks on the Continental Hotel and the Hotel des Roses.

To send supplies to Castle Hill was difficult enough because there was little natural cover on the last part of the route. To send supplies to Hangman's Hill was still more difficult because the porters had to cross a further thousand yards of bare no-man's-land, swept by fire and a fair ground for German fighting patrols. Needless almost to say that movement was possible only during the hours of darkness. During the afternoon of the 17th March 5th Indian Infantry Brigade organized a supply column of porters, Bengal Sappers and Miners for Castle Hill, a Pioneer Company for Hangman's Hill. Two companies of 4th/6th Rajputana Rifles formed the escort. The column set out after dark and suffered casualties but nevertheless reached Castle Hill at a little after 10 p.m. Here it became clear that the onward journey would be extremely dangerous and the Pioneers, to their shame, refused to face it. The Rajputana Rifles' companies then undertook the almost impossible task of acting simultaneously as fighting troops and beasts of burden. Reinforced by a party of

volunteers from 11th Field Regiment R.A. they set off and reached Hangman's Hill at 6.25 a.m. on the 18th March, having had only eight casualties. This episode showed that to supply Hangman's Hill by land was almost impossible because fighting troops could scarcely be spared to act as porters, although the 4/6th Rajputana Rifles and the Machine-Gun Battalion 6th Rajputana Rifles made further trips. Recourse therefore was had to supply-dropping from the air although the steep, rocky hill side was a particularly bad dropping-zone. Between 18th and 24th March Mustang fighter-bombers flew 191 supply-dropping sorties and enabled 9th Gurkhas to survive.¹ A New Zealander in Cassino town wrote:

'If we were not altogether happy about our own position, it was at least preferable, with its slit trenches and firm base of supply, to the undefined area among the barren rocks of the hillside where our Indian friends held on under a hail of mortars and shell . . . One wondered how men could live in such a place . . .'

The New Zealand Engineers did some useful work during the night 17th/18th March. They built an extra bridge over the Rapido where Highway 6 crossed it east of Cassino town; they cleared two hundred yards of Highway 6, and converted the railway embankment to a track fit for Jeeps and tanks as far as the railway-station.

Early on the 18th there was a new, small tactical move. At 5 a.m. a company of 24th New Zealand Battalion left Pt. 165 to capture Pt. 202, a knoll overlooking one of the western hairpins on the road between the town and the Abbey, with the intention of then turning in their tracks to attack the 'back door' of the Continental Hotel. The company reached Pt. 202 easily but the attack on the hotel failed, although the New Zealand company remained in positions near it and Pt. 202.

For the rest, 25th New Zealand Battalion spent the day in capturing one strong-point near the Continental Hotel. Colonel Nangle of the 9th Gurkhas, looking down from his eyrie, described a typical scene:

'We watched, in one interval in the smoke, the New Zealanders below clearing one of the streets of Cassino. From our detached viewpoint we could appreciate the subtleties of the technique of both sides. The careful approach of the tanks, the searching for them by the German medium [guns], the blasting of each house in turn, the withdrawal of the Germans from house to house always covered by fire from another or from the street, the quick dashes of the supporting New Zealand Infantry and the use of smoke by both sides . . .'

¹ On 'good' days two men shared one man's ration; on 'lean' days a man received one-third of a ration. There was one small well far below Hangman's Hill from which a meagre ration of water could be drawn at night.

At the railway-station 26th New Zealand Battalion repulsed a small counter-attack by 1st Parachute M.G. Battalion, but itself made no progress.

The 18th March was a disappointing day for the New Zealand Corps because the battle seemed to be becoming a savage stalemate. In the late afternoon Freyberg issued orders for an attempt to break this stalemate on the 19th. 28th (Maori) New Zealand Battalion from 5th New Zealand Brigade was placed under command of 6th Brigade which, thus reinforced, was to go all-out to capture the area of the Continental Hotel and the Hotel des Roses beginning at 3 a.m. 4th Indian Division was to make a parallel attempt to capture the Abbey. In 5th Indian Infantry Brigade the depleted 1st and 4th Battalions of 6th Rajputana Rifles were to form a composite battalion which would relieve 1st/4th Essex on Castle Hill and Pt. 165. The Essex, when relieved, would join 9th Gurkhas on Hangman's Hill, and these two battalions would then assault the Abbey. Simultaneously the armoured force under command of 7th Indian Infantry Brigade (see p. 784) was to move by Cavendish Road to capture the Albaneta farm and then strike south-eastwards along the ridge to the Abbey. This was a complicated plan for 4th Indian Division because time was short, the preparatory moves would have to be made in darkness and almost certainly under fire, while detailed reconnaissance was as impossible as it had been throughout the battles of Cassino, even if time for it were available.

On the other side German confidence increased during the 18th March. In spite of very good weather the Allied air attacks had lessened. (In fact it was the Desert Air Force which supported the Cassino front on the 18th, with 23 tons of bombs.) Most of the direct air support was switched to Anzio where 5th Division was preparing a local attack. Heidrich, fortified by a message of commendation from Hitler, announced that his division had won a notable defensive success. He believed that the enemy was tiring but was bringing up reserves which would have to be worn down before a decisive counter-attack could be launched. Nevertheless he intended on 19th March to cut off and destroy the troops who had infiltrated between Cassino town and the Abbey.

The 19th March was a day of fresh disappointments for the New Zealand Corps. Two companies only of the Maori Battalion entered the battle and these, with 25th New Zealand Battalion, made very

little impression in the area of the Continental Hotel and the Hotel des Roses. The New Zealand tanks found themselves still caught in a maze of rubble heaps and bomb-craters. For 4th Indian Division nothing went according to the complicated plan. Darkness and difficult country slowed down all movements and it was not until well after midnight 18th/19th March that sufficient of the composite battalion of the Rajputana Rifles reached Castle Hill to enable 'B' and 'D' Companies of the Essex to advance, at 5.30 a.m. on the 19th, via Pts. 236 and 202 to Hangman's Hill. This delay might not in itself have been fatal had not Heidrich chosen this very hour to send 1st Battalion 4th Parachute Regiment into an attack against Pt. 165 and Castle Hill. The Parachute battalion, well supported by mortar and machine-gun fire, came down hill like a rolling-stone, swept over Pt. 165, and on to close quarters on Castle Hill. Here a small mixed force of the Essex and the Rajputana Rifles, perhaps 150 men in all, held their ground. No defensive fire from the artillery could be called for because no one knew what points had been reached by 'B' and 'D' Companies of the Essex en route to Hangman's Hill. The fighting on Castle Hill lasted until after 9.30 a.m. when the German attacks faltered and ceased. Every officer of the Essex on Castle Hill had been killed or wounded, and the battalion's mortars had fired 1,500 bombs. Meanwhile 'B' and 'D' Companies of the Essex, much below strength, when they set out from Castle Hill, had been caught on the fringe of the battle and scourged by the fire which swept across the slopes. They reached Hangman's Hill only some seventy strong. The news of their arrival reached 4th Indian Division's headquarters at 10.15 p.m. with Bateman's opinion that now only a weak attack could be mounted against the Abbey. Moreover the problem of supplying 5th Indian Infantry Brigade was causing deep concern. On the other hand there was an encouraging report that part of 7th Indian Infantry Brigade's armoured force had reached the Albaneta farm. Freyberg and Galloway conferred and decided the following. If the armoured force could get close to the Abbey, then 5th Indian Infantry Brigade would launch its attack from Hangman's Hill. If this course proved unfeasible, 4th Indian Division would not attack the Abbey until maintenance had been greatly improved and Cassino town had been cleared of the enemy. Much therefore depended on the progress of the armoured force.

The armoured force under command of Lieut.-Colonel J. F. Adye, R.A. advanced in two parts, one consisting of sixteen Shermans of 20th New Zealand Armoured Regiment, the other of three Shermans and five Stuarts of 7th Indian Infantry Brigade's Reconnaissance Squadron, and 16 Stuarts of 760th U.S. Tank Battalion. The advance began at 6 a.m. and by 9 a.m. the Shermans had reached

Albaneta farm and subdued the fire of 3rd Battalion 4th Parachute Regiment's posts on Pts. 593 and 575. The tanks then began to pick a way in single file along a narrow track from Pt. 593 towards the Monastery. Attempts to deploy on a wider front were defeated by the boulder-strewn slopes and because the German infantrymen kept their nerve and poured out such a hail of small arms fire that the tanks had to move closed-down and therefore blind. The Germans moreover used bazookas and 'faustpatronen' to good effect. Tanks began to stall and to be knocked out. It became all too clear that, without infantry to attack infantry and engineers to widen the track, the tanks could advance no further. Nevertheless they continued to try to find a way through until recalled at 5.30 p.m. By this time three Shermans and three Stuarts had been destroyed, and nine Shermans and seven Stuarts damaged. Eleven of the damaged tanks were recovered later.

By midday on the 19th Freyberg realized that he had a failing battle on his hands and decided to put into practice during the night 19th/20th March some plans for reinforcement, which he had given as a possibility the day before. 78th Division's 11th Infantry Brigade was to take over 5th New Zealand Brigade's front south of Cassino railway-station and 5th N.Z. Brigade was to enter Cassino town. In fact this meant that 23rd N.Z. Battalion (5th N.Z. Brigade) took over 25th N.Z. Battalion's (6th N.Z. Brigade) positions in the north and central parts of the town; next, right to left as far as the railway-station, came 28th (Maori) N.Z. Battalion (5th N.Z. Brigade), and 24th and 26th N.Z. Battalions, both of 6th N.Z. Brigade. 6th Royal West Kents (of 78th Division's 36th Infantry Brigade) took over Castle Hill from the Essex. The plans for the 20th were as follows. The New Zealand Division was to continue its efforts to clear the town. 4th Indian Division was to hold Castle Hill, Hangman's Hill and Pt. 202; it was to recapture Pts. 165 and 236; it was to prevent enemy reinforcements sneaking into the town, as seemed to be happening, by the deep ravine which lay north of (i.e. below) Monastery Hill and Castle Hill.

On the German side the events of 19th March caused some misgivings and the failure of 7th Indian Infantry Brigade's armoured force was greeted with relief. 14th Panzer Corps' Chief of Staff, von Altenstadt, reported to *AOK 10* that reinforcements of tanks and assault guns rather than of men were required in Cassino town. It was arranged that a company (15 tanks) of 4th Panzer Regiment's Panthers should be transferred from Anzio, although it could not reach Cassino for two or three days. Heidrich was now very much less hopeful than he had been on the 18th. He was creating a reserve and

was replacing 3rd Battalion of 4th Parachute Regiment at Pt. 593 by the reconnaissance battalion of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division. He hoped then to have three parachute battalions in hand: 3rd Battalion 4th Parachute Regiment and 1st and 2nd Battalions of 1st Parachute Regiment. von Senger, after conferring with Heidrich, believed that Cassino town was the weakest point. This formed a narrow sector not strongly held, and the Allies had ample reserves to pour against it. He warned *AOK 10* that 1st Parachute Division might not be able to hold Cassino town for much longer.

The third Battle of Cassino reached its crisis, for the Allies, on 19th and 20th March. On 20th March Mr. Churchill sent a signal to Alexander to ask why the Cassino Position had been, and continued to be, so great a stumbling block to so many Allied divisions. Alexander in replying the same day spelt out all the points of terrain and tactics. Of 1st Parachute Division he wrote, 'I doubt if there are any other troops in the world who could have stood up to it [i.e. air and artillery bombardment] and then gone on fighting with the ferocity they have . . .' He ended his telegram with this paragraph:

'If we call it off we shall hold on to two bridges and adjust our positions so as to hold advantageous key points already gained. 8th Army's plan for entering Liri valley in force will be undertaken when regrouping is completed. The plan must envisage an attack on a wider front and with greater forces than Freyberg has been able to have for this operation. A little later when snow goes off mountains, the rivers drop, and ground hardens, movement will be possible over terrain which at present is impassable.'

Alexander thus referred to plans for future, greater, operations which he had been forming for a month and to which we shall refer later. For the moment he had seen Freyberg on the 19th and was meeting Clark, Leese, and Freyberg on the 21st. He put the main matter for discussion as follows:

'The slow progress made so far in attacking the town of Cassino with the consequent delay in launching the attack on the Monastery, combined with the necessity of preparing the maximum forces for a full-scale offensive in the second half of April, makes it essential to decide in the course of the next twenty-four or thirty-six hours whether (a) to continue with the Cassino operations in the hope of capturing the Monastery during the next three or four days or, (b) to call the operation off and to consolidate such gains of ground as are important for the renewal of the offensive later . . .'

Although Freyberg felt that the battle was failing his stout spirit would not yet admit defeat. Only a few hundred yards, after all,

lay between his Corps and success and more New Zealand and British troops were entering the battle. At the conference on the 21st he argued that the attack should be continued for a few days more, and this was agreed.

The deliberations of the higher commanders did not, of course, as yet affect the troops in battle. After dark on 20th March 6th Royal West Kents, under command of 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, attacked Pt. 165, and a single company of 2nd/7th Gurkha Rifles, all that 11th Indian Infantry Brigade could spare, attacked Pt. 445 on the northern edge of the ravine which lay below the Abbey and Castle Hill. Not altogether surprisingly both these attempts, weak in numbers as unavoidably they were, failed. The Germans for their part were simultaneously trying to encircle and capture Castle Hill. The extreme confusion of the night's fighting resolved itself at daylight on the 21st into a determined attack on this feature which was broken up by a company of 2nd/7th Gurkha Rifles and one of 4th/6th Rajputana Rifles and a heavy shoot by the artillery. After this 5th Indian Infantry Brigade set-to to turn Castle Hill and Pt. 175, hitherto regarded as jumping-off places for attacks, into defensive strong-points. For the moment 4th Indian Division had shot its bolt.

The New Zealand Division planned to commit 21st N.Z. Battalion (5th N.Z. Brigade) and two companies of 24th N.Z. Battalion to seizing and securing a line between Pt. 202 and the Continental Hotel. This would be a step towards linking with 9th Gurkhas on Hangman's Hill. This attack, which began at 11 p.m. on the night 20th/21st March, failed to make more than a small impression on the enemy and petered out during the 21st. During that day the 23rd (of 5th N.Z. Brigade) and 25th (of 6th N.Z. Brigade) New Zealand Battalions struggled fiercely and unavailingly in the cock-pit of ruins that lay east of a line between the base of Castle Hill and the Hotel des Roses. By now the New Zealanders in Cassino town were disarrayed. The New Zealand official historian gives the picture:

'New arrivals and muddy, stubble-chinned veterans of several days' standing, stretcher-bearers and signallers, "O" parties from the gunners, straying sappers and dismounted tank crews, section posts and company headquarters—all rubbed shoulders in the press of battle . . . no tidy picture is possible . . . Confusion was not complete, but communications were always chancy, so that forward troops were unable to report their positions even when they knew them, and the town was a place of unexpected encounters. One company, for example, was awakened to the presence of Germans in the next room by bazooka fire through the dividing wall . . .'

Nevertheless the New Zealand infantry and tanks continued their efforts during 22nd March in fighting which became more savage than before. But, alas, by the end of the day Parkinson could only report that the enemy still held the objectives which the New Zealanders had hoped to gain. On the 23rd Freyberg conferred with Galloway, Parkinson, and Keightley (commanding 78th Division). Every possibility was discussed but no other conclusion was possible except that the New Zealand Corps had exhausted its strength. Freyberg recommended to Clark that the battle should be broken off, and Clark concurred. Alexander came forward to see things for himself, and later that evening decided to break off the battle forthwith but that for the present the New Zealand Corps should stand its ground before handing over to the 13th Corps of 8th Army. This new formation was the forerunner in the great regrouping which Alexander planned for his armies.

(iv)

Consequent upon Alexander's decision to break off the third battle of Cassino but that the New Zealand Corps should hold its ground, Freyberg had forthwith to organize defensive positions. The first task was to recall the garrison of Hangman's Hill—9th Gurkhas and parties of the Essex and of the Rajputana Rifles—and of Pt. 202—Reynolds' 'C' Company of 24th New Zealand Battalion. The risk of interception was too great to allow the orders for withdrawal to be sent by wireless and so three officer volunteers, Mallinson of the Essex, Normand of the 9th Gurkhas, and Jennings of 4th/6th Rajputana Rifles, set out alone on the night 23rd/24th March to deliver the orders by word of mouth. With them went the trusty carrier pigeons St. George, St. Andrew, and St. David (for Mallinson was an Englishman, Normand a Scot, and Jennings a Welshman) to fly back with the acknowledgements. Mallinson and Normand reached their destination but Jennings was headed by German patrols and had to return to Castle Hill. Then during the night 24th/25th the garrisons withdrew without loss under cover of diversionary raids in Cassino and from Castle Hill. The Germans later issued reports that they had captured Hangman's Hill against determined opposition on 27th March.¹

On 24th March Freyberg issued orders that forward defended localities would be situated on the general line eastern slopes Pt. 593—Pt. 175—north-west part of Cassino town—Botanical Gardens—railway-station and Hummocks—junction of Rapido and Gari rivers. All posts were to be mined and wired and well dug-in where the ground permitted. Offensive action would be restricted to

¹ 259 officers and men returned from Hangman's Hill and 45 from Pt. 202.

vigorous patrolling, and local counter-attacks when necessary. In carrying out these orders divisions were regrouped. 78th Division moved to the sector Mt. Castellone—Pt. 593—Castle Hill; 4th Indian Division, after relief by 78th Division moved into reserve before transferring to 5th Corps on the Adriatic front; the New Zealand Division held the sector from the north-west part of Cassino town to the meeting of the Rapido and the Gari. On 26th March Headquarters New Zealand Corps was dissolved and Headquarters 13th Corps (Lieut.-General S. C. Kirkman) took over its functions.

From being very good on the 18th March flying conditions thereafter deteriorated and during the 21st–23rd and on the 25th and 26th they could hardly have been worse. Yet despite these spells of bad weather and the calls for direct and indirect air support of 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio, in the twelve days starting with the 15th March Allied bombers of all kinds had dropped 1,859 tons of bombs in support of the third battle of Cassino and a further 205 tons on targets in the approaches to the Cassino front.

We now turn once more briefly to the German side. The fighting on 20th and 21st March was described as bitter, but von Vietinghoff believed that the proved stamina of the parachute troops would be decisive. An advantage was that Highway 6 could be used freely at night to send ammunition and supplies into Cassino town. On the 22nd March Heidrich had quite thrown off his temporary depression and felt that the back of the Allies' attacks had been broken and that the battle was turning in his favour. Westphal and Wentzell agreed that the worst was now over provided that the enemy did not send fresh reserves into the battle. So far Heidrich had not provided a complete statement of his losses. However his redispositions resulted, by 24th March, in the remains of four parachute battalions being in Cassino town. The strength of each battalion varied between 40 and 120 all ranks. The 3rd Parachute Regiment had lost 434 casualties between 15th and 22nd March. The low numbers of infantry in the town were somewhat compensated by the arrival, by 24th March, of the company of Panther tanks from Anzio. On 24th March Heidrich was full of spirits and confidence. He was perhaps even a little vainglorious because he demanded special mass promotions in his division and a 'Cassino' badge of honour for every man in it. These demands were not granted, but he himself was awarded a decoration which he had thoroughly earned, the Swords and Laurel Wreath to the Knight's Cross which he had won when commanding 3rd Parachute Regiment in Crete in 1941.

AOK 10 marked 27th March as the end of the third battle of

Cassino, and very justly claimed a decisive defensive success. It was their custom to record casualties in ten-day cycles and we are unable to extract from the records the total of their casualties between 15th and 24th March. However between 11th and 31st March the casualties in the divisions which had been mainly concerned in the defence were: 1st Parachute Division 1,378, 15th Panzer Grenadier Division 443.¹ During the same period the total casualties in 14th Panzer Corps amounted to 3,218.

At the end of the battle the Germans, like the Allies, decided to consolidate the positions on which they stood. There was some talk of capturing such positions as Castle Hill and the railway-station, but these projects were allowed quietly to drop. The higher German commanders thought that the Allies would certainly begin a fresh offensive but they were unable to foresee when and where. On 31st March Kesselring gave his opinion that the blow would fall on von Senger's western flank. von Senger, whose prestige and confidence now stood very high, was not greatly concerned.

The three battles of Cassino resulted in a clear, though temporary, failure of the Allies' offensive in Italy, and in a brilliant defensive success for German arms. Defeat and victory are words which are too strong to apply to the outcome of these battles because when the series ended both sides stood their ground and neither side changed its general strategy. When this has been said, there are three main questions to ask. Why did the Allies fight these battles? Why did they fight them when they did? Why did they fight at Cassino?

The first two battles were the outcome of strategic policy; the third battle was probably unnecessary on strategic grounds. When Italy had been knocked out of the war, one object of the first phase of operations in Italy had been gained. There then remained two other objects of this phase. These were to secure possession of the area of Rome, and to subject the German forces in Italy to unremitting pressure. When the Germans in October 1943 made manifest their intention to offer a prolonged defence south of Rome, Eisenhower and Alexander made plans to overcome it, contained in their directives of 8th November. Unhappily it became evident by the third week in December that these plans were not working out in the way or at the speed that had been hoped for. The Allies' forces in Italy were far from securing the area of Rome and could claim only that they were keeping the German forces under pressure. At the

¹ 15th Panzer Grenadier's unit was 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. 71st Infantry Division's 211th Grenadier Regiment had held Cassino town for most of February; the division's casualties between 10th and 29th February were 288.

same time in December Mr. Churchill pronounced that the stagnation of the Italian campaign was becoming scandalous. The British Chiefs of Staff agreed that the campaign was stagnant and that operations must be speeded up. The United States Chiefs of Staff did not dissent. The result of much high-level discussion was that 5th Army was directed to launch the Anzio expedition and to press on with its operations, in progress, to cross the Garigliano and enter the Liri valley.¹ The operations at Anzio and on the Garigliano-Liri valley front were separate and self-contained but nevertheless related. Thus a success at Anzio would help the Garigliano-Liri valley operations, and a success in the Garigliano-Liri sector would help the operation at Anzio. Successes both at Anzio and in the Garigliano-Liri valley sector would open up a very good prospect of securing the area of Rome. It was the operations in the Garigliano-Liri valley sector, part of the revised strategic plan, that led to the battles of Cassino.

The timing of the battles of Cassino sprang from the relation between the operations at Anzio and in the Garigliano-Liri valley sector. After the landing at Anzio on 22nd January 6th U.S. Corps made disappointing progress and by the end of the month was in a vulnerable position. It was partly to help 6th U.S. Corps that 2nd U.S. Corps fought the first battle of Cassino between 1st and 12th February. The first battle of Cassino failed, and the situation of 6th U.S. Corps did not become less vulnerable. Even before the first battle of Cassino ended it became clear that Kesselring was planning a counter-offensive at Anzio to drive 6th U.S. Corps into the sea. And so the New Zealand Corps was hustled into the second battle of Cassino which anticipated by one day *AOK 14's* counter-offensive at Anzio. The second battle of Cassino began on 15th February and ended on the 18th. *AOK 14's* counter-offensive began on 16th February and ended in failure on the 19th. Even then the danger to 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio was not over, and partly for this reason the New Zealand Corps would have begun the third battle of Cassino on 24th February if the weather had not broken and compelled a postponement. The second German counter-offensive at Anzio began on 29th February and ended in failure on 3rd March, and 6th U.S. Corps was no longer in danger. Even so the New Zealand Corps began the third battle of Cassino at the first opportunity that the weather gave, 15th March. This fact makes it clear that the three battles of Cassino were not fought solely to help 6th U.S. Corps. They had their own purpose which was to open the road to Rome, Highway 6.

¹ Previous references to the matters outlined in this paragraph are: Chapter VI (v); Chapter XI, pp. 377-79, 382-84, 386-87; Chapter XIV, pp. 474-76; Chapter XVI, pp. 588-90, 593.

Cassino town and Mt. Cassino became an important battlefield owing to disappointments and failures at other points in the Garigliano-Liri valley sector. Clark, in his plans of 10th January, had intended to enter the Liri valley and to advance up it by means of two operations. 10th Corps was to capture a bridgehead across the Garigliano, and then to enter the Liri valley by a side-door at S. Giorgio, and 2nd U.S. Corps was to force a crossing over the Rapido at S. Angelo, more than three miles south of Cassino town, and then advance rapidly up the Liri valley. Clark rightly believed that if these operations succeeded, the German positions at Cassino town and on Mt. Cassino would be outflanked and that the Germans would be forced either to abandon them, or to remain in them, in isolation, awaiting a siege which could have no other outcome than surrender. Unfortunately 10th Corps exhausted itself in making a bridgehead over the Garigliano, and was entirely unable to advance to S. Giorgio. Equally unfortunately 46th British Division failed to cross the Garigliano at S. Ambrogio and the 36th U.S. Division failed to cross the Rapido at S. Angelo. These repulses were sufficiently severe to make Clark think that it was utterly useless to try again to cross at these places. He turned instead to the mountains north of Cassino where by 29th January the F.E.C. had captured Mt. Belvedere and Mt. Abate. By so turning he marked the site of the battlefield of Cassino.

We have tried to answer three main questions which are relevant to the three battles of Cassino, but there are more particular points which invite reflection.

First comes the superb fighting of the German troops which was the main cause of the successful defence. In particular one must name 211th Grenadier Regiment and 1st Parachute Division. The parachute troops displayed special characteristics. As at Ortona in December 1943 they made it a point of honour to defend their ground to the last, and in Cassino town and on Monastery Hill they were determined, as troops of the German Air Force, to out-do anything that troops of the German Army had done. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of individual and corporate morale, however come by, as an ingredient of success in battle.

'Of course I do not know the ground . . .' wrote Mr. Churchill to Alexander in a telegram dated 20th March. There is very little evidence to suggest that superior commanders, Wilson, Alexander, Clark, the two Corps commanders, and even some divisional commanders, had acquainted themselves with the ground except by studying maps and air photographs and looking through binoculars from distant viewpoints such as Mt. Trocchio and Cervaro. This study and distant reconnaissance was misleading rather than

informative. It is very doubtful if these commanders really grasped the fearsome physical features of the ground or understood to what they were committing their troops. The want of close acquaintance with the ground had another unfortunate effect. After the first battle, in which the Americans won almost all the ground that was won in the three battles, success as represented by lines on the map seemed to be a matter of advancing merely a few hundred yards. The higher commanders, to judge from their reports, believed that success was within their grasp if just one more effort was made.

The nature of the ground north and north-west of the Abbey had a particular effect on tactics. The rocky escarpments, knife-edged ridges, deep ravines, the cramped spaces filled with fantastic obstacles, permitted the deployment only of small numbers of infantry. These small units often split into still smaller bodies in their attempts to overcome the obstacles. In consequence attacks soon lost cohesion and momentum. So-called divisional and brigade attacks were generally delivered by a few companies.

The Allies had a huge superiority in aircraft and artillery and yet air and artillery bombardments were deeply disappointing. The air bombardment of the Abbey on 15th February, delivered in isolation from the action of the land forces, achieved no military object except a temporary stimulation of the soldiers' morale. The air and artillery bombardment of Cassino town and Monastery Hill on 15th March, amounting to some 2,192 tons of bombs and shells, produced results which were the opposite of those intended. The bombardment turned Cassino town into a chaotic and almost impassable maze of ruins, rubble, and craters.¹ It failed to kill or bury alive the parachute battalion in the town, or even to craze them with fear. The New Zealand infantry and tanks who fought in Cassino town had to try, without great success, to beat the chaotic maze as well as their opponents. The 558,000 shells fired into this area (including Monastery Hill) between 15th-25th March did not improve matters.

The New Zealanders did not display in Cassino town the extraordinary aptitude for street-fighting which the Canadians had shown at Ortona. Yet the comparison is perhaps unfair. The fighting in Cassino town was not so much street-fighting as a struggle in a lunatic giant's rubbish-heap. Ortona had not been bombed from the air, and was not shelled to any great extent. The 'built-up' area which the Canadians had to traverse was half as long as that which faced the New Zealanders. Yet the fact remains that the New Zealand attacks had none of the cohesion, control, and direction which were so marked in the Canadian attacks. Almost certainly the New

¹ There is an interesting parallel in the 10-day preparatory bombardment (65,000 tons) before the battle of 3rd Ypres (Passchendaele) July 1917. This bombardment destroyed the surface drainage of the land and created a crater-field and an irremediable slough.

Zealand Division used too few troops. This was owing to Freyberg who, though commanding the Corps, was not able to refrain from constant care of his own beloved division. At first he considered that the number of troops employed was adequate, and later he grudged an increase because he wished to reserve a brigade for an illusory exploitation, and because he had set, privately, a limit to the number of New Zealand casualties that he would accept.¹

4th Indian Division had a hard deal in the second and third battles. In the second battle it was hustled into action and was able to use little more than a brigade because of the frightful administrative difficulties which it was given no time to surmount. The troops then had to endure four weeks of exposure and privation, and daily casualties incurred for no reason that could be understood by the rank and file. In the third battle the division again had little more than a brigade to use because one brigade was committed to holding the necessary firm base and guarding the open right flank of the corps, while a second brigade was almost wholly employed in the murderous fatigue of portage. On several occasions Galloway pointed out to deaf ears that it was almost impossible to attack across the slopes of Monastery Hill to Hangman's Hill unless the New Zealanders could protect his left flank from fatal enfilade by clearing the enemy from Cassino town, or at least give some protection by matching 5th Indian Infantry Brigade's advance step for step. Nevertheless 5th Indian Infantry Brigade came close to the limits of what was possible, and its 9th Gurkhas, in capturing and holding Hangman's Hill, very probably entered the realm of the impossible.

As regards the plans devised for each battle, the terrain and the attendant circumstances gave no choice of a 'good' plan. Rather, commanders had to choose the least bad of the courses open to them. The American plan of an outflanking manœuvre of moderate depth through the hills north and north-west of Cassino town came nearest to success. In turn Juin, Keyes, and Taker saw the key which would probably unlock the mountain barrier: a wide outflanking manœuvre from north and north-west by a force of not less than a division which would debouch into the Liri valley at a suitable

¹ As G.O.C. 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force Freyberg had special responsibilities laid upon him by the Government of New Zealand as well as special powers conferred by it. The New Zealand official historian has written,

'When the New Zealand Corps was first formed, he [Freyberg] warned General Clark, under the authority he derived from the New Zealand Government, that when his casualties had reached a thousand he would abandon the attack unless it had achieved or was about to achieve success . . .'

The New Zealand Division, according to Freyberg's returns, had incurred 549 casualties in the second battle of Cassino, and by 14th March had passed the thousand mark. Although Freyberg had passed his own limit, he went on with the third battle, but was determined that it should not become a Passchendaele for the New Zealand Division.

point, say Piedimonte. This plan remained in dreamland because of an insuperable difficulty. There was not nearly enough animal transport or supply-dropping aircraft to support such a manoeuvre. General Tucker has written, with absolute truth, 'It is, in fact, quite useless to try to conduct an offensive to any depth in the mountains without proper transport for the game.'

In the light of hindsight it seems a pity that the battles of Cassino were fought when they were. It is necessary however to remember the circumstances of the time. The Prime Minister and the British Chiefs of Staff, supported to some extent by the American Chiefs of Staff, were clamouring for action. Wilson, who had seen only paper warfare since the campaigns in Greece and Syria in 1941, had not sufficient grasp of real warfare in Italy in 1944 to resist this pressure. Alexander was a very clever, far-sighted, and very experienced commander. But it was part of his experience to take full account of the enemy's troubles as well as of his own. In this he was like Wavell. Experience taught him also that perseverance and a little luck can transform a situation overnight. He persevered with 5th Army's offensive until he became convinced that there was to be no luck, and that he must adopt new plans. In framing these plans he made use of all the lessons of the First Battle for Rome. Yet at Cassino in May it cost two Polish divisions six days' fighting and more than three thousand casualties to plant the Polish standard on the ruins of the Abbey of Mt. Cassino.

CHAPTER XXI
AIR OPERATIONS IN MARCH
1944; THE WAR AT SEA,
JANUARY TO MARCH 1944;
PLANS FOR THE SPRING OF 1944

(i)

See Maps 16 and 22

THE Mediterranean Allied Air Forces flew, between dusk on 3rd March and dawn on 1st April, a total of 32,943 sorties (sorties against shipping and against ports are excluded).¹ This total is the equivalent of about 1,176 sorties during each twenty-four hours, an improvement of 184 sorties during each twenty-four hours on February's figure. During the period dusk 3rd March to dawn 1st April the Allies lost 239 aircraft, and the Germans 95 destroyed by Allied action, plus 32 which failed to return to base, a total of 127. The Allies lost 85 aircraft fewer than they had lost between 1st February–3rd March, the Germans 11.

By early March it was evident, as it had been before, that the Allies were masters of the air and that their land forces were almost immune from German air attack. The German Air Force, not only in Italy but also throughout the Mediterranean area, was in fact running down. A mark of decline, in terms of headquarters, was the departure in late January to northern France of *Fliegerkorps II*, and in early March from the Aegean to western and south-western France of *Fliegerkorps X*. This left no headquarters at *Fliegerkorps* level in the Mediterranean area. In early February a tactical air force headquarters (*Nahkampfführer Luftflotte 2*) was established on the Anzio front and its commander, General der Flieger Max Ritter von Pohl, was put in charge of all the tactical air operations on that front. *Fliegerführer Luftflotte 2*, responsible for air support in general to *AOK 10*, was subordinated to von Pohl. In terms of command there was thus little left at the highest level to justify the continued existence of a *Luftflotte* headquarters and so *Luftflotte 2's* days were numbered. The decline in terms of aircraft began in early March.

¹ See Tables I and II at end of Chapter.

The failure of the German counter-offensive at Anzio brought a swift reduction in G.A.F. strength in Italy, for some sixty long-range bombers were returned to Germany, and about forty single-engine fighters were transferred to the Balkans. In terms of German air operations the decline was plain enough. Bomber raids on the Anzio beachhead and its shipping were a vexing and hurtful nuisance to those who had to endure them, but neither threatened the security of the beachhead nor interrupted its supply-line. German air attacks on Allied sea-convoys, mainly in the western basin of the Mediterranean, sank a few ships but without affecting the flow of men and supplies. As regards operations in support of German land forces we hear nothing but complaints from commanders on the ground of the *Luftwaffe's* failure to appear. Allied air formations now and then met German fighters but the opposition that the Germans could offer was negligible. In these circumstances it is not surprising that the Allied air forces turned (apart from giving direct and indirect support to the land forces, as we have noted in earlier chapters) to the German Lines of Communication instead of to attacking German airfields in Italy. Between dusk 3rd March and dawn 1st April bombers of all types flew 9,563 sorties against the L. of C. and other targets as compared with 590 against airfields in Italy.

The main component of the German L. of C. in Italy was the railway system and in Chapter XIX we have described the main theories of attack upon it: the 'Marshalling-Yard Plan' (a misnomer which was used to describe Professor Zuckerman's theory) and 'Interdiction'. A good deal of study had been given to the Italian railway system since the opening of the campaign and some of the results are interesting and explain much of the policy which the Allied air forces adopted in February and March.

It was obvious in theory that in central Italy the railways were particularly vulnerable because the nature of the country had made necessary the building of large numbers of bridges, viaducts, tunnels, and embankments. In practice the vulnerability was less than it seemed to be because bridges and viaducts were difficult targets to hit, because tunnels were protected by their subterranean nature, and because damaged embankments, like railway tracks, could be repaired very quickly. In northern and central Italy the railway system was highly developed. In German-occupied Italy there were 48 large railway 'centres'—that is to say places which held marshalling-yards, repair and maintenance shops of various types, water, sheds and sidings for locomotives and rolling stock and so on—and 117 smaller ones. North of Rome there were five shops which could handle major repairs to steam locomotives, and eight shops which could do the same for electric locomotives. There existed very large numbers of locomotives of both kinds and of

rolling stock. In 1937 the Italian State Railways had handled 51½ million tons of freight, and in 1944 it was calculated that they had a capacity between eight and twelve times greater than the minimum basic requirements of the Germans.

The Italian railway system in truth was too large and too widely spread to be put out of action and kept out of action by any scale of attack that the Allied air forces, huge though they were, could mount and maintain. One important reason for this state of affairs was that the Germans were turning railway repair into a precise military operation. When damage occurred, reconnaissance parties of experts in railway work immediately and accurately assessed the damage in every particular. Railway Construction Battalions then worked out the materials, equipment, and man-power which were required for each job and the time required for each. From these data the staff prepared co-ordinated and methodical plans for repair. German engineer troops provided the skilled workmen, and local German units, the Todt Organization, and press-ganged Italians, provided the labour.

If permanent disruption of the Italian railways was beyond the powers of the Allied air forces, yet systematic disruption could achieve a great deal. It was calculated that the quantity of German military freight could be reduced by one-third. To make up for this loss the Germans would have to throw an extra burden on their over-worked road-transport because their coastal shipping could not be increased. On 23rd March the Germans were believed to hold general supplies for between ten and twelve days, ammunition for thirty days, and motor-fuel for ten days. It was therefore reasonable to suppose that persistent and prolonged air attack on the L. of C. would, in time, produce a crisis of supply for the Germans.

The Allied air commanders' directives for the attack of the enemy's railway L. of C. are four in number, namely: Commanding General, Mediterranean Allied Air Forces' Bombing Directive dated 18th February 1944 which affected all types of bombers; Commanding General, Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force's Bombing Directive No. 1 dated 25th February, for the medium day bombers; his No. 2 dated 19th March for the medium day bombers, and for the fighter-bombers of U.S. XII Air Support Command and of the Desert Air Force; and his third, without title, dated 26th March, for the Corsican-based fighter-bombers of U.S. XII A.S.C. Following close on the heels of one another with, for the medium day bombers, changing emphasis towards interdiction, and a radical change in areas of operation for each type, Marauder and Mitchell, these directives must have been a little bewildering for the recipients.

We have discussed Eaker's directive dated 18th February in Chapter XIX and need repeat only that it included the disruption of rail communications in Italy. In this respect it tried to combine the Zuckerman Marshalling-Yard theory and the Interdiction theory, and was therefore comprehensive in the types of target to be attacked. Though priorities were accorded to attacks on the differing types of target, considerable latitude was given to the recipients in the choice of targets particularly when bad weather upset the priorities. The same overall target pattern was reiterated in M.A.T.A.F.'s (Major-General John K. Cannon) Directive No. 1 for the medium day bombers, but though this directive also gave marshalling-yards as primary targets, and railway bridges and other railway targets as secondary ones, it laid more emphasis than did Eaker's of 18th February on interdiction by specifying separate areas of operations, one for the Marauders (U.S. 42nd M.B. Wing) and one for the Mitchells (U.S. 57th M.B. Wing), which together formed a broad belt across Central Italy. Whenever possible, and as directed by Eaker on 18th February, targets were to be attacked at points about 100 miles from the front with the object of interfering with current traffic and so imposing maximum strain on the enemy's already inadequate motor transport.

Cannon's Directive No. 2 of 19th March was issued in connection with the plan (operation 'Strangle') to destroy the German rail, road and sea communications south of the line Pisa-Rimini in the hope, as expressed in Eaker's directive of 18th February, of making it impossible for the enemy to maintain his divisions in Central Italy. Though a period was not stated in Cannon's Directive No. 2 the object was to be achieved between 19th March and 11th May. In this directive the Marauders and Mitchells were to operate together in the same area, namely south of but including the line Pisa-Florence-Pontassieve and west of but including the line Pontassieve-Arezzo-Orvieto-Orte, their tasks being to destroy active marshalling-yards, railway repair facilities and other railway targets. The directive also brought into the offensive against railways the fighter-bombers of the U.S. XII Air Support Command and Desert Air Force. Cannon's later directive of 26th March did likewise with the Corsican-based fighter-bombers of U.S. XII A.S.G. The fighter-bombers could fly low, an advantage when the weather grounded the medium day bombers which operated at much greater heights, and they were therefore given the task of interdicting railway lines in open country which, of course, also meant attacking moving trains. Thus they neatly completed the scheme of destruction. An important omission was the attack of targets at points about 100 miles from the front to interfere with current traffic and so impose maximum strain on the enemy's motor transport.

In essence Cannon's Directive No. 2 leaned towards the bombing of whole sections of the railway system in Central Italy rather than of a particular type or types of target, but the medium day bombers were responsible for creating major blocks by destroying active marshalling-yards and the fighter-bombers were responsible for interdicting the railway lines in between. In the event the commanders of the medium day bomber forces appear to have interpreted Cannon's Directive No. 2 much as they pleased and concentrated on bridges, no doubt influenced by the fact that calculations had shown that just under 200 tons of bombs were required to demolish a bridge whereas 400 tons of bombs were required to block a marshalling-yard completely.¹ Cannon allotted the fighter-bombers specific railway lines. U.S. XII A.S.C. was given:

Terni-Orte-Rome
Orvieto-Orte
Viterbo-Rome
Montalto di Castro-Rome

D.A.F. was given: Perugia-Terni
Fabriano-Foligno-Terni
Ancona-Pescara
Terni-Sulmona-Pescara

The Corsican-based fighter-bombers of U.S. XII A.S.C. (U.S. 57th Fighter Group) were allotted three zones:

- (i) Spezia southward to Montalto di Castro extending ten miles to seaward, and including the island of Elba, and the sea within a radius of five miles from the island. One-fifth of the Group's effort was to be expended in this coastal zone.
- (ii) South of, but including, the line Pisa-Florence-Pontassieve, and west of, but including, the line Arezzo-Chiusi. Four-fifths of the Group's effort was to be expended in this zone.
- (iii) A zone of exploitation for which no effort was formally defined, north of the line Pisa-Florence-Pontassieve.

Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force was allotted marshalling-yards, repair shops, and other railway targets in northern Italy. In the event marshalling-yards at Turin, Milan, Verona, Bolzano, Mestre, Vicenza, Padua, Rimini, Fano, Ancona and Senigallia were bombed, mostly by the heavy day bombers. A few widely scattered bridges were also bombed, mostly by the Wellingtons at night.

¹ Improved technique and practical experience caused the tons of bombs required to demolish a bridge to drop to 62 by the middle of May.

The story of Allied air operations against the enemy's rail L. of C. is repetitive and monotonous because the attacks are against the same types of target and vary only in place, in dates and in the tons of bombs dropped. We therefore shall give only some important instances of the damage and destruction inflicted upon the railways, which are confirmed by German records.

To take first the period before the intense operation 'Strangle' began, on 9th March 24 Marauders of M.A.T.A.F. badly damaged the central arch of the Fiora road and rail bridge at Montalto di Castro, and next day fighter-bombers did so much more damage that the Germans expected this route to be blocked for a fortnight. 11th March was a day of widespread damage. In the north 111 Fortresses dropped 279 tons of bombs on the marshalling-yards and two stations at Padua, cutting rail communications with Venice. At Florence 73 Marauders from M.A.T.A.F. damaged the marshalling-yards, two stations, repair shops, a train, and several locomotives and brought traffic to a standstill. 18 Marauders and 24 Baltimores from the Desert Air Force destroyed most of the track at Fabriano, wrecked the overhead power-cables, and set a goods train on fire. Fighter-bombers of the Desert Air Force blocked the line Perugia-Rieti and destroyed an ammunition train. On 12th March *AOK 10* reported that no trains could pass Montalto di Castro, Orvieto, Terni, Fabriano, and Ancona. On 13th March also attacks were widely spread. Damage to two bridges stopped traffic between Spezia and Parma, and Spezia and Pisa, and repairs were still incomplete at the end of March. At Viareggio 27 Marauders bombed a bridge, tracks, and the station. All these attacks halted traffic in the triangle Genoa-Parma-Viareggio for several days. 12 Marauders and 12 Baltimores of the Desert Air Force again bombed Fabriano, and 23 Mitchells of M.A.T.A.F. attacked Spoleto. As a result, part of the Orte-Ancona line was closed for more than a week. The 17th and 18th March brought further blows which caused the line Perugia-Terni to be closed for an unpredictable period, and added a fresh block to the west coast route between Montalto di Castro and Tarquinia. On the 18th March the only clear lines in central Italy were a not very useful collection: Viterbo-Rome; Orte-Civitavecchia; Sulmona-Avezzano-Roccasecca (Liri valley). No train on the east coast line could pass Ancona, and the lateral Falconara-Orte line was blocked at Foligno and Spoleto. On the west coast line trains bound for Grosseto had to make an inland detour via Empoli, Siena and Montepescali. In northern Italy there was a jam of 70 trains at Bologna. Altogether during this period bombers of all kinds had dropped 1,636 tons of bombs on marshalling-yards and 626 tons on bridges and other railway targets beyond the tactical areas. In operation 'Strangle', to destroy the German L. of C. south of the

line Pisa–Rimini, the first quarter which began on 19th March was completed by the end of the month. A first fruit was the destruction of a bridge near Orte by 24 Mitchells of the Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force which did damage sufficient to cause a month's repairs. On 22nd March 46 Marauders of M.A.T.A.F. demolished a bridge north of Poggibonsi on the Empoli–Siena line. In northern Italy 98 Fortresses dropped 263 tons of bombs on Verona, and 88 Liberators dropped 195 tons on Bologna. Liberators also attacked Padua. These three attacks were examples of the use of strategic bombers to attack places beyond the area prescribed for the medium bombers, and the attacks were of course co-ordinated with those by the shorter-ranged aircraft. On 24th March the east coast received special attention. 106 Liberators dropped 219 tons of bombs on Rimini, and the signal and telegraph system between Pesaro and Fano was destroyed. Senigallia station was wrecked and a bridge between that place and Falconara was partly destroyed, and, when under repair, was attacked again on 30th March and partly destroyed once more. Two bridges between Ancona and Pescara were destroyed, and in consequence this part of the line was closed for a long time.

On 26th March damage closed the line between Florence and Chiusi, and on the 27th Airacobras from Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force destroyed the Ponte Mussolini just south of Grosseto. Rail traffic which already could reach Grosseto only by a detour, now could not pass south of it. Marauders from M.A.T.A.F. closed the line between Empoli and Siena for an unpredictable period. On 28th March M.A.T.A.F.'s Mitchells damaged so severely the Ponte S. Giovanni at Perugia that it was out of action until 21st April, and a further stretch of the Florence–Chiusi line was put out of action for ten days. Also on 28th March 109 Fortresses and 97 Liberators from M.A.S.A.F. dropped 501 tons of bombs on Verona and closed the place to rail traffic, while 177 Liberators achieved the same result at Mestre with 427 tons of bombs. The 28th March indeed was a red-letter day for U.S. Fifteenth Air Force (the American component in M.A.S.A.F.) because in all its operations on that day it reached a total of 1,000 U.S. tons of bombs dropped in one day. On 29th March Kittyhawks of the Desert Air Force destroyed a bridge at Spoleto and closed the line between that place and Terni. On the 29th also 156 Liberators dropped 368 tons of bombs at Bolzano, closing the main line between Italy and Germany, while at Turin 103 Fortresses dropped 273 tons of bombs and brought traffic to a standstill. In this first quarter of operation 'Strangle' bombers of all kinds dropped 3,885 tons of bombs on marshalling-yards but only 1,136 tons of the total fell within the 'Strangle' area (central Italy). In contrast 1,692 tons of bombs were dropped on

bridges and other railway targets, excluding marshalling-yards, virtually all of which fell within the 'Strangle' area. Bombing of railway targets in the tactical areas has been ignored in these calculations as it was a normal day-to-day commitment.

This catalogue of destruction and damage is far from complete yet it may suggest to what extent the air offensive against the German rail and road L. of C. was succeeding. On 4th April Kesselring stated that in spite of the most ingenious diversions of railway traffic and the most intense use of road transport, the L. of C. was delivering to *AOK 10* and *AOK 14* only 1,357 tons daily out of the 2,261 tons daily which was the minimum requirement. This daily deficit of 904 tons was a most serious matter, yet the Allied air forces were quite unable to strangle the L. of C. There were several reasons for this. We have mentioned the large and widespread nature of the Italian railway system and the excellence of the German organization for repair. In addition the Germans showed a masterly talent for improvisation. If several tracks were blocked they would concentrate on single-line repair and working. Where cuts or blocks had been made they would bring trains to each side of the gap and man-handle goods between them or ferry goods across by motor or even by animal transport. Military trains were usually assembled well clear of marshalling-yards and so were seldom damaged by all ed air attacks on these installations. If electric power-lines were out the Germans turned to steam locomotives. In these and a dozen other ways they kept their traffic moving albeit with the greatest difficulty.

Attacks on airfields in Italy, between dusk 3rd March and dawn 1st April, accounted for 590 sorties and 833 tons of bombs. The airfields which were hardest hit were Viterbo on which 192 tons of bombs were dropped in two attacks, and Maniago, far away in north-east Italy, which received 184 tons of bombs also in two attacks. On 7th March Liberators and Mustang fighter-bombers spread a total of 284 tons of bombs between airfields at Orvieto, Viterbo, Fabbrica di Roma, and Littorio. The results of all the attacks mentioned above are not recorded in German documents. On the other hand results are given for an attack, on 18th March, on airfields at the head of the Adriatic—Udine, Gorizia, Villaorba, Lavariano, and Maniago. 354 Liberators and Fortresses dropped 424 tons of bombs of which 384 tons were small fragmentation bombs. In these attacks seven aircraft were destroyed on the ground, and in the air eleven fighters out of a hundred encountered were destroyed, as were three other aircraft of miscellaneous types. As a rather strange numerical comparison, raids by five Kittyhawks of the

Desert Air Force, carrying two tons of bombs, on Forli and Rimini, destroyed seven aircraft on the ground and in the air at Rimini. In spite of photographic reconnaissance, aircraft on the ground were elusive, here today, gone tomorrow, and chance played a large part in finding them. Besides the attacks in Italy small raids were made upon airfields in Yugoslavia, Albania, and Crete.

Besides the L. of C. and airfields in Italy, a number of other types of target absorbed a modest effort. In Italy 297 sorties were flown against factories for munitions and aircraft, against radar stations, and tank repair-shops. The tank repair-shops attracted nearly half of the 229 tons of bombs which were expended.

Outside Italy Fortresses and Liberators from M.A.S.A.F. with R.A.F. Wellingtons, and pathfinding Halifaxes, and Liberators from No. 205 Group R.A.F. flew 598 sorties and dropped 665 tons of bombs on L. of C. targets in Bulgaria. Losses of Allied aircraft were negligible except during the night 15th/16th March owing to a freak of the weather. On this occasion 48 R.A.F. Wellingtons, Halifaxes, and Liberators bombed Sofia. On the return journey the weather suddenly changed from good to thick cloud, heavy rain, snow, and icing as the aircraft approached Italy. As a result twelve aircraft were lost and twenty-four pilots and members of aircrew perished. R.A.F. Spitfire and Kittyhawk fighter-bombers flew 99 sorties against targets on the coast of Yugoslavia, and 37 Liberators struck at Knin with 76 tons of bombs. Targets in Austria, all part of the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany, claimed 530 sorties from M.A.S.A.F. during which 1,085 tons of bombs were dropped.

During January–March 1944, and particularly in March, there was a shift in the strength of the Royal Air Force in the Middle East to the Italian theatre, and a beginning of the movement of squadrons, American and British, to the U.K. The same period saw a marked decline in the strength of M.A.C.A.F.

Royal Air Force, Middle East lost at least twelve squadrons—two heavy night bomber with wing H.Q.; two fighter-bomber; one Tac. R; two light bomber; one rocket projectile carrying fighter; and four single-engine fighter with wing H.Q.

Overshadowing these welcome reinforcements for the Italian theatre was the warning received by M.A.A.F. H.Q. at the beginning of the year that it must expect to part with eight single-engine fighter squadrons, and the appropriate maintenance crews, to support operation Overlord. One night-fighter squadron had already been

withdrawn in January to the U.K. and a complete wing of U.S. troop carrier aircraft (16 squadrons plus two which had been lent by U.S. Eighth Air Force) followed in February. Further moves began early in April and will be described in Volume VI.¹

M.A.C.A.F., after reaching the peak of its strength in January 1944, began its decline. It lost the night-fighter squadron referred to above, and a general reconnaissance squadron was reduced to a 'number only' basis; three American squadrons (two flying-boat and one anti-submarine) were withdrawn; and a French G.R. squadron and four American Mitchell squadrons (equipped with 75-mm cannon) were all converted to a medium bomber role for duty with M.A.T.A.F. At the end of March M.A.C.A.F.'s strength had fallen to 45 squadrons and further reductions were soon to follow as will be described in Volume VI.

(ii)

See Maps 12 and 22

The war at sea during the first three months of 1944 followed much the same pattern as in the closing months of 1943. The Mediterranean Fleet 'States' for any day, in say January 1944, show more than 600 war vessels and auxiliaries, most of them British, but including Dutch, Polish, Greek, and Yugoslav units, and recent powerful additions of French and Italian warships. The considerable United States Fleet is listed separately. The first duty of this array of naval might was to ensure the safe and timely arrival of the numerous convoys of Allied shipping at their several destinations. It accomplished this duty at the cost of very few casualties. In the converse task of denying movement by sea to the Germans, the naval forces interfered a great deal with what the enemy hoped to do. Moreover since the entire Mediterranean, except for the northern Aegean, was now within range of Allied shore-based fighters, the Allied air forces were able to play even a greater part than before in maritime activities.² Wrapped up with the general responsibility for Allied movement by sea was the responsibility for direct co-operation in the campaign ashore. The first landings at Anzio completely surprised the Germans but very soon their resistance became much fiercer

¹ A further loss in February was the move of the U.S. 12th Medium Bombardment Group to south-east Asia. This Group, with its Mitchells, had served with the Desert Air Force at the Battle of El Alamein and during the advance on Tunisia; then with the Mediterranean Allied Tactical Bomber Force in the invasion of Sicily and the subsequent fighting in Italy. One of the first of the U.S.A.A.F. formations to fight alongside the R.A.F., it had played a gallant part in the Mediterranean and Middle East Campaign.

² Allied shore-based fighters could attack the enemy's shipping in the southern Aegean but had not sufficient range for the more sustained task of giving effective cover to Allied surface forces.

than at Salerno and was maintained much longer. At Anzio and at other places on the Fifth and Eighth Armies' sea flanks Allied warships were called upon to provide gun support and anti-aircraft fire and on occasion to cover the transport of assaulting troops.

The passage of H.M. Ships *Queen Elizabeth*, *Valiant*, *Renown*, *Illustrious*, and *Unicorn* through the Mediterranean during the second week of January on their way to join the Eastern Fleet created a considerable flurry in Germany.¹ The Germans did not guess the destination of these warships and thought that they might be sailing to Turkish waters to increase Allied pressure on Turkey to enter the war, in the first place perhaps by an attack on Crete or Rhodes. The arrival about the same time at Suez of the battleship *K. millies* and the three 'Bruiser' class L.S.T.(I), in fact westward bound, probably did little to relieve German anxiety. Hitler ordered that preparations for defence in the Aegean should again be tested and improved and that U-boats were to be sent to meet any attack in the Eastern Basin. Captain U-Boats, Mediterranean evidently considered his Führer's commands impractical as he commented in his monthly report that the Sicilian Straits were now just as difficult to penetrate as those at Gibraltar, and almost impossible for a return journey to the west by boats which might well have expended all their torpedoes and might have been hunted relentlessly over long periods.

Some changes were made at the end of January in the timing of the fast convoys between the United Kingdom and the Mediterranean when Naples, now one of the largest of the Mediterranean ports of discharge, replaced Algiers as the turn-round port for units and drafts bound to and from Italy. Local convoys within the Mediterranean also were altered to suit changing needs. The principal internal routes ran from the Middle East to the heel ports of Italy; from North Africa to Naples; from Augusta to Naples and the heel ports; from Algiers to Corsica and, after the Anzio landings, to that beachhead. But it was the ocean convoys, limited to 80 ships when eastbound and 100 westbound, on which German aircraft and U-boats concentrated their attacks, as these great convoys moved along the African coast some forty miles offshore. On 31st January the German anti-shipping forces based in southern France (in the Marseilles area but including a Geschwader at Bordeaux) comprised 14 (5 serviceable) convoy reconnaissance aircraft, 95 (70) bombers—Ju. 88 and He. 111 torpedo-bombers and He. 177 radio-controlled bomb carriers—and 16 (9) twin-engine escort fighters. A further 30 (16) bombers—Do. 217 and He. 177 R.C.B. carriers—were based temporarily in northern Italy. Air reconnaissance by aircraft from

¹ H.M.S. *Unicorn* was an Aircraft Repair Ship, but had a flight deck and was therefore classed as a Light Fleet Carrier.

south-western France, not part of but co-operating with the anti-shipping forces in the south, aimed at picking up inward bound convoys when they made a landfall off Cape St. Vincent in the Atlantic. Thus forewarned, reconnaissance aircraft and bombers in the Western Basin could be used to best advantage. These aircraft, taking their departure from Cape Creus on the Franco-Spanish frontier, flew south either near the Spanish coast or between Minorca and Sardinia. This meant an outward flight of some 500 miles to reach a convoy ending in a hot reception from Allied fighters and flak. Smoke screens added difficulty to torpedo-bomber attack. Although the Allied defence was short of Fighter Direction ships, German losses were heavy and the ordeal was more severe than anything that had been experienced when attacking Malta convoys from airfields in nearby Sardinia or Sicily in 1942. The Germans usually launched their attacks at dusk until Coastal Air Force fighters were stationed in Sardinia to intercept. Thereafter the Germans postponed their approach until after dark and used pathfinder aircraft to locate the convoys and to illuminate them with flares. Although these air attacks were a recurring hazard, they had small success. On 10th January, two ships were torpedoed, one of which, the 7,178-ton *Ocean Hunter*, sank. On 1st February, the 7,178-ton *Edward Bates* also was sunk by torpedo-bomber attack. In spite of three more attacks in March and one on the night of 31st March/1st April, these two sinkings were all that German aircraft achieved against ocean convoys in the first three months of 1944. So far as is recorded the Germans lost 21 and the Allies four aircraft in these attacks. Several Allied aircraft which reached land were, however, severely damaged.

German aircraft were more successful off the Anzio beachhead where during the same period they sank the cruiser *Spartan*, two British destroyers, a hospital ship and one merchant ship, and damaged one British and one U.S. destroyer.

On 1st January 1944 there were 13 U-boats in the Mediterranean, still based on Toulon. Nine reinforcements attempted to make the passage through the Straits of Gibraltar during the next three months. Of these one gave up and returned to France, two were sunk by the combined efforts of aircraft and surface vessels in the Gibraltar Straits and six got through. But by 31st March, six boats had been sunk as shown in the Table opposite and so the total in the Mediterranean stood again at 13.

The sinking of *U.223* followed a prolonged hunt to the north of Palermo during 29th and 30th March by British and U.S. destroyers and aircraft. Early on the 30th the U-boat surfaced, perhaps hoping

Date	U-boat	Place and Method
9th January	<i>U.81</i>	U.S. Army Air Force raid on Pola
10th March	<i>U.343</i>	Off Sardinia by A/S trawler <i>Mull</i>
10th March	<i>U.450</i>	Off Anzio by H.M.S. <i>Exmoor</i> , <i>Blankney</i> , <i>Blencathra</i> , <i>Brecon</i> and U.S.S. <i>Madison</i>
11th March	<i>U.380</i>	Air raid on Toulon by United States Army Air Force Liberators
11th March	<i>U.410</i>	
30th March	<i>U.223</i>	North of Sicily by British and U.S. destroyers under command of <i>Laforey</i>

to shake off her pursuers at high speed in the darkness. At the same time she fired torpedoes. She was quickly sunk by gun-fire, but one or more of her torpedoes hit and sank the Destroyer Leader *Laforey* with heavy loss of life, including that of her distinguished commander, Captain H. T. Armstrong. In mid-February *U.410* had been responsible for a still more important loss, the cruiser H.M.S. *Penelope*, renowned for earlier war service in the Mediterranean. Her commander, Captain G. D. Belben, did not survive. During this first quarter of 1944, U-boats also accounted for the loss of five fine merchant ships totalling some 45,000 tons, among them the 17,000-ton Dutch *Dempo*. All but one were sunk off the North African coast and all were in well-escorted convoys.

Mines, laid by E and R boats and also from aircraft, took an unusually heavy toll during these three months.¹ Off Anzio two U.S. destroyers and two U.S. minesweepers were sunk by this means and one U.S. destroyer and the anti-aircraft ship *Palomares* damaged; three merchant ships, totalling 20,500 tons, were also sunk, two off Naples, one off Salerno. The Italian cruiser *Eugenio di Savoia* was damaged by a mine off Calabria. There were no losses of British submarines between 1st January and 31st March, but the French *Protée* failed to return from patrol in January and the Italian submarine *Axum*, which had so disastrously damaged ships in the 'Pedestal' Malta convoy of August 1942, was lost on 1st January by grounding on the coast of Corinth when evacuating Allied agents from Greece. Another Italian submarine, the *Nautilo*, was lost at Pola in the bombing raid which destroyed *U.81* on 9th January.

The losses of Allied merchant ships in the Mediterranean during this period are summarized in the following table:

¹ *E boats* were light, fast craft somewhat like British motor torpedo-boats or motor gun-boats. They could lay mines.

R boats were motor minesweepers of between 60 and 170 tons. They could lay mines.

I boats were a type of landing-craft which could carry 40 men for a short journey or 25 for a longer one, or two small or one large vehicle.

*Number and tonnage of Allied merchant ships of 500 G.R.T. and
over sunk at sea or in port in the Mediterranean, January,
February and March 1944*

Month	By submarine	By aircraft	By mine	From other causes	Total
Jan.	—	2—14,359	1— 7,176	1— 4,051	4—25,586
Feb.	2—14,352	1— 7,176	2—13,330	—	5—34,858
March	3—30,365	—	1— 7,200	—	4—37,565
	5—44,717	3—21,535	4—27,706	1— 4,051	13—98,009

German Losses

4—14,743 25—78,409 2—5,388 5—10,651 37—112,214*

* Includes one ship of 3,023 tons sunk by surface ship.

Everything needed by the Allies in the entire Mediterranean theatre, including the requirements of Allied Military Government Occupied Territories, came by sea and had to do so. And, with the exception of what was moved locally by landing-ships and craft and in the all too few small coasters, everything came in big ships. German movements by sea were a complete contrast, in scale, in distance and in the ships employed. As has been mentioned in previous chapters the Germans had accepted that their sea activities must needs be limited to the operations of small ships, mostly along the coasts and among the islands—indeed they had no choice. However, they showed their familiar aptitude for improvisation in their operations. And, of course, so far as supply was concerned, the amounts sent by sea were very small in comparison with the totals required. All German supplies whether for the Mediterranean theatre or elsewhere came from the Reich and from German-occupied Europe with some important additions from Sweden and Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, and the occasional blockade runner. The traffic was controlled centrally in Germany, and supplies reached Italy over the Austrian and French frontiers almost entirely by rail. Small quantities, prescribed in type and amount, passed through Switzerland. When commodities arrived in Northern Italy they were marshalled for onward movement to the fronts. The bulk went forward by rail, but road and sea were also used, partly for convenience and partly as insurance should other means suffer seriously from Allied interference. When Africa was lost and Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica were evacuated, sea transport lost its standing

as the vital link in the chain of supply and became unimportant. Early in 1944, however, it began once more to gain importance because of increasingly effective Allied attack on rail and road. During the first four months of 1944 between 8,000 and 12,000 tons each month were transported by sea to *AOK 14* and between 4,000 and 6,000 tons to *AOK 10*. This represented between 12% and 18% of all the supplies despatched by rail, road and sea. Clearly the loading and unloading involved must have been found worthwhile. We will look at this German transport by sea, taking each of five areas or routes in turn from west to east, namely the Riviera coast; from Genoa southwards; from Venice southwards; from Trieste down the Dalmatian coast; and the Aegean.

Along the Riviera coast the Allies operated in an area where German airfields were much nearer than their own. Submarines and aircraft were consequently more suitable than surface ships as the weapons with which to attack German shipping. The 10th Submarine Flotilla based on Maddalena, and British and American aircraft from airfields in Foggia and later in Corsica and Sardinia made the most of such targets as were offered at sea and in port, particularly in the port of Toulon. During January, *Untiring* in two patrols sank a 'F' lighter and two small coasters and bombarded seaplane stations near Cannes and near St. Raphael. In February, in the face of increasing anti-submarine activity, *Upstart* sank the 1,795-ton *Nieder Sachsen*, which was laying mines south of Toulon and *Uproar* sank the 3,152-ton *Artisien* in the same area. In the same month *Universal* torpedoed the 6,664-ton *Cesteriano* off Cannes but this German tanker reached Toulon in tow, only to be sunk during a heavy air raid on that port on 11th March. The submarines had a further success on 26th March when *Ultimatum*, choosing a quiet Sunday afternoon, surfaced some 20 miles east of the French-Italian frontier, and opening gun-fire on a large tanker berthed in a harbour, scored 16 hits out of 28 rounds fired and sank the 5,011-ton *Matara*. In the nearby Porto Maurizio Mitchells had sunk the 1,026-ton *Pace* on 18th January. But for aircraft the most tempting target in the area was Toulon, which had been heavily bombed at the end of the previous November. No single raid, however, was likely to affect such a port for long and the Admiralty urged that sustained attacks should be made on what was the only operational base for U-boats in the Western Mediterranean. On 4th February 135 Fortresses from M.A.S.A.F. set out, in bad weather, to attack the port but only 72 succeeded in doing so. Considerable damage was, however, done to a large dry dock and to harbour installations. The French S.S. *Strabon* (4,572 G.R.T.) was hit and became a total loss. A submarine pen and three submarines were damaged and a floating crane sunk. On 7th March 48 Fortresses of a much larger force succeeded in attacking

the port and two French cruisers and one destroyer were sunk and four battleships, one cruiser, four destroyers and a tanker were damaged. Greater success came four days later when 122 Fortresses dropped 258 tons of bombs on the town, arsenal and dockyard, all of which were heavily damaged. Four merchantmen totalling 31,000 tons, among them the 13,682 *André Lebon* and the 9,591-ton *Belle Isle*, were sunk as were several small vessels and a 750-ton war freighter. *U.380* was sunk and *U.410* was hit and became a total loss—three other U-boats were damaged. There were several more successes in this area before the end of March; on the 12th the 3,723-ton *Kilissi* was sunk off Cape Tortosa by R.A.F. Beaufighters of No. 39 Squadron using rocket projectiles—Beaufighters of No. 272 Squadron subdued the flak. On the 16th these two squadrons accounted for the 1,457-ton *Maure* and the 1,881-ton *Kabyle* near Marseilles.

German traffic and Allied interference on the west coast of Italy presented quite a different picture. Supplies for *AOK 14* were loaded chiefly in Genoa and moved southward only by night. After Nettuno had been captured by the Allies in the Anzio landings, S. Stefano became the most important of the unloading ports because plans for enlarging Civitavecchia had been ruined by premature demolitions. To avoid providing too tempting a target in one harbour, Portoferraio (Elba) and Piombino were used as staging posts and, to spread the target by day even more widely, many lesser harbours, some capable of receiving only three or four barges, were used. On 13th February, for instance, 26 naval ferries, 17 peniches¹ and two small steamships containing in all 4,500 tons lay at a number of these staging ports ready to continue their voyage to S. Stefano as soon as darkness came. Their escorts included E boats, armed trawlers and an occasional former Italian torpedo-boat. The route, as close inshore as navigational hazards permitted, was covered to seaward by extensive mining. British and American Coastal Forces from Bastia, fifty miles away, found this traffic difficult to intercept. Their shallow draught reduced the mine hazard but they found themselves out-gunned by the Germans who continually strengthened their escorts and mounted guns in the cargo-carrying craft as well. The shallow draught of the targets resulted in many torpedoes running under. Winter weather curtailed patrols to an average of one night in three. From 16 torpedoes fired during January and February only one possible hit was claimed. In March the Senior Officer of the British Coastal Forces at Bastia, Commander Allan, procured three L.C.G. mounting 4.7-inch guns. These he regarded as his battleships for, although they limited the speed of his fleet to 6½ knots, they made up for its lack of gun power. On 27th March this fleet, comprising 3

¹ Peniche—a light open boat or shallop.

L.C.G., 4 M.T.B.s and 4 P.T. boats, encountered a German convoy of six F lighters escorted by two torpedo-boats near Vada Rocks, ten miles south of Leghorn. Manœuvring his fleet by the aid of a radar screen with which the American P.T. boats were equipped, Allan stalked the enemy and, while two of the P.T. boats held off the torpedo-boats, illuminated the F lighters with starshell and sank them by gun-fire. Allan was to repeat this success four weeks later.

Meanwhile Allied aircraft bombed repeatedly the unloading port of S. Stefano in considerable strength. The small staging ports in which convoys were split up by day also received attention. Further north, on 20th February, U.S. Mitchells destroyed twenty small craft of between 350 and 30 tons at Viareggio and sank two small merchant vessels in Leghorn on 16th March, the 1,148-ton *Minerva* and the 533-ton *Jason*.

On the Adriatic coast of Italy the Germans continued to use Ancona and the small harbours at S. Benedetto and Giulianova for discharging their small craft loaded for the most part in Venice. Here again the Allied attack came from aircraft and coastal forces but also from destroyers, more readily available than on the west coast where the Anzio beachhead and anti-U-boat activities occupied much of their time. On the Adriatic coast both rail and road run close to the shore from Ravenna right down to Termoli and offered numerous small ports, railway-stations, bridges and tunnels to the destroyers' guns and also to demolition parties¹. On 21st January a S.O.E. contingent landed and derailed a train near S. Benedetto and 15 P.O.W. and 7 S.A.S. men were recovered from Civitanova. On the 30th the destroyers *Troubridge* and *Tenacious* landed 17 S.A.S. men near Fano and blew up an important bridge. On 28th February R.A.F. Kittyhawks sank the 1,459-ton *Bice* in Ancona. Otherwise repeated sweeps by destroyers and coastal forces as far north as Rimini and by aircraft to Venice resulted in a recorded bag during January, February and March of some 15 store-carrying craft, most of them under 100 tons. There was little opposition and occasional fire from shore batteries was ineffective. Aircraft were responsible for about two-thirds of the damage. If we set aside the claimed, we still know that the practical results, moral and material, caused great distress to the enemy. A German naval report at the end of March covering both the Dalmatian and the Italian Adriatic coasts stated that sea transport was at a standstill. During the week ending 31st March from a total of 35 operational Siebel ferries, I and R boats and A/S vessels 14 had been lost and also a small tanker, two coasters and four coastal auxiliaries. Many other craft had been damaged. In this one week 50 per cent of all small warships were lost, for the most part by air attack.

¹ See Map 23, inset: 'The North Adriatic'.

On the Dalmatian coast railways run down from a mountainous hinterland to the ports of Sibenik and Split but only near Dubrovnik do they offer opportunity for attacks from the sea comparable with those on the Italian coast opposite. Much the same applies to the roads. But what gun-fire and landing parties could not do from the sea was made up in good measure by the Partisans. It was partly on this account and partly because land communications were poorer in Yugoslavia than in Italy that the coastal traffic here was of such importance to the German operations. An important object of the German 'Sixth Offensive' was to win and maintain a hold on the coast, and so tight was the hold at this time between Split and Dubrovnik that Allied supplies to Tito had to be sent by a round-about northern route through the port of Senj. This led to much fighting for the possession of islands such as Hvar and Korcula in which, as related presently in this chapter, British forces came to the help of the Partisans. Split, Sibenik, and Durazzo received much attention during January from British warships and aircraft. In Sibenik three good-sized merchant ships totalling 10,000 tons were sunk by Kittyhawk fighter-bombers of No. 239 Wing R.A.F. and in Pola *U.81* and the Italian submarine *Nautilo* were destroyed and a number of merchant ships damaged in a heavy air raid by 107 Fortresses on 9th January. Pola was attacked again in February, and Fiume, bombed once the previous month and twice in February, suffered heavily from the Wellingtons by night and the Fortresses by day. During the night of 29th/30th January the 40-knot French destroyers *Le Malin* and *Le Terrible*, whose speed enabled them to pass in and out of the upper Adriatic in darkness, celebrated their arrival in this command by sinking the 3,000-ton *Kapitän Diedrichsen* in an escorted convoy north-west of Zara. That same night *MGB 662* and *MTB 97* sank a small German tanker and a large schooner off Ploce Point. Other coastal craft glided silently into small harbours in the dark and sank ships lying alongside jetties. On 8th February R.A.F. Kittyhawks sank the 734-ton German *Gigliola* near Zara and the 2,198-ton *Pomona* near Split. On the 14th they sank the 1,080-ton *Guido Brunner* near Trau, and on the 28th the 998-ton *Promontore* at Split. The British destroyers *Troubridge* and *Termagant* bombarded two areas on Korcula island on the night of 12th/13th February.

For March the catalogue of the sinking or destruction of shipping on and off the Dalmatian coast is large. Two of the biggest merchantmen, the 3,666-ton *Sangigi* and the 1,246-ton *Daksa*, were sunk at and near Dubrovnik by aircraft of the Co-belligerent Italian Air Force. No. 239 Wing R.A.F. continued to distinguish itself, sinking many small ships and craft including several Siebel ferries. American Thunderbolts, also from the Desert Air Force, sank the 633-ton *Elettra* at Sibenik. In the far north, on the night of 19th/20th March,

29 Wellingtons, two Halifaxes and seven R.A.F. Liberators caused severe and widespread destruction and damage at Monfalcone.

In March island warfare reached a peak. The destroyers *Tyrian* and *Teazer* bombarded Hvar on the night of 9th/10th and, as presently related, Solta and Hvar were raided between 18th and 23rd March by Commandos and American O.S.S. forces from Vis. During the month the destroyers *Bicester* and *Ledbury* accompanied by M.T.B.s sank several schooners. In Zara and Dubrovnik Wellingtons sank two medium sized merchant ships and the war transport *K.T.42*.

The last of the five areas we are considering is the Aegean. Here the Germans had no alternatives to sea transport, except for a few air transports, either for the maintenance of their own forces in various islands or for the evacuation of Italian P.O.W. from the islands to the mainland. The German Navy in the Aegean was divided into commands based on Salonika, Lemnos, Attica, and Crete. Each controlled a number of small coasters, converted fishing vessels and auxiliary sailing vessels. The warships included ferry barges, R boats, patrol and escort and A/S vessels and there was one ex-Italian torpedo-boat. The German aircraft operating from airfields on the mainland of Greece comprised on average some 320 (240) fighters and reconnaissance aircraft.

After the loss of Cos and Leros and withdrawal from Samos the British no longer had a foothold in the Aegean. Aircraft, submarines, coastal craft and the Levant Schooner Squadron were employed to interfere with German movement and detachments from the Special Boat Squadron and Long Range Desert Group and the Greek Sacred Squadron maintained a guerrilla warfare among various islands and depended for much of their transport on the schooners. These trusted to their likeness to the local craft in these waters to escape the attentions of the Germans from land, sea or air. But the Coastal Forces, consisting of M.T.B.s and motor launches, led an even more precarious life and depended for refuelling and for rest on lying up periodically in Turkish territorial waters, a habit to which the Turks continued as a rule to turn an eye which if not blind was at least as short-sighted as that which they directed to the cargoes of German shipping passing from the Black Sea to the Aegean.

The Allied submarines operating in the Aegean came from the 1st Submarine Flotilla which moved its base from Beirut to Malta between 10th and 13th February. Patrols were maintained to cover the enemy traffic from the mouth of the Dardanelles to Salonika and Piraeus, and between Piraeus and Crete and Rhodes. The Doro Channel, the busiest link between the north and south Aegean, was another favourite patrol neighbourhood. During January *Unruly* sank six good sized caiques in this area. *Unsparring* entered Port Plati in

Lemnos and destroyed or damaged seven caiques. *Sibyl*, *Torbay* and the Polish *Sokol* and *Dzik* sank more caiques and a number of schooners off Lemnos and Mytilene. During February both German Air Force and Navy stepped up the evacuation of Italian P.O.W. from the islands and this provided bigger game in ships, but caused the deaths of many unfortunate Italians. On the 8th, *Sportsman*, on patrol off Suda Bay in Crete, sank the *Petrella* of 4,785 tons transporting P.O.W. Of the 3,338 men on board, 165 of whom were Germans, caiques picked up 691. Four days later the *Oria*, 1,920 tons, while avoiding a submarine, ran on the rocks approaching Piraeus and became a total loss. On the 19th, *Unsparing* torpedoed the German *Peter*, 3,754 tons, which beached herself in Volos to avoid sinking, and four caiques in the same area during the next few days. On the 28th *Sportsman* entered the anchorage at Monemvasia by night and sank the motor vessel *Vienna* in shallow water. Three days later she sank the *Graueort*. On 19th March the French destroyers *Le Fantasque* and *Le Terrible* patrolling off the Peloponnesus sank four ships out of a convoy of five. As German losses increased, targets became not only fewer but smaller and hence gun-fire and demolition charges were used more frequently.

Meanwhile aircraft had been equally busy. During January Liberators, Wellingtons and Halifaxes mined Rhodes, Calchi, Syros, Lavrion, and Salamis. Piraeus was bombed first by Fortresses and Wellingtons from M.A.S.A.F., and later by Halifaxes and R.A.F. Liberators from the Middle East. A number of caiques and small merchant vessels were sunk and damaged. Air operations during February and March continued to much the same pattern. On the night 2nd/3rd February, Wellingtons of No. 38 Squadron from Middle East sank the 4,575-ton German *Leda* bound for Crete from the Dodecanese and on the 22nd, R.A.F. Beaufighters also from Middle East sank the 5,343-ton German *Lisa* north of Heraklion.

The Coastal Forces had been continuously active in destroying caiques, schooners and other small craft employed by the enemy. On 9th January M.L.s 351 and 359 sank two caiques and took prisoners off Simi. Two nights later Coastal Forces entered Levadia Bay in Piskopi island and badly damaged a merchant ship and a tanker. The Levant Schooner Squadron joined with the Coastal Forces in transporting detachments of the Special Boat Squadron and the Long Range Desert Group for raids on a number of islands in which communications were interrupted, petrol dumps and gun posts destroyed and numerous casualties inflicted at the cost of one H.D.M.L. lost in bad weather and one Army officer slightly wounded. In March units of the Greek Sacred Squadron joined in these raids covering a variety of islands from Mytilene in the north to Simi in the south.

The following Table shows only the losses suffered by the Germans of ships of 500 G.R.T. and over during January, February and March 1944.

Number and tonnage of German ships of 500 G.R.T. and over sunk at sea or in port in the Mediterranean, January, February and March 1944

Month	By surface ships	By submarine	By aircraft	By mine	From other causes	Total
Jan.	—	—	4—10,909	1—3,176	1—4,308	6— 18,393
Feb.	1—3,023	3— 9,732	8—20,958	1—2,212	4—6,343	17— 42,268
March	—	1— 5,011	13—46,542	—	—	14— 51,553
	1—3,023	4—14,743	25—78,409	2—5,388	5—10,651	37—112,214

If this table is compared with that of Allied losses on page 822 it will be noted that the total losses in tons was nearly the same but, as would be expected, the German figures include a much larger number of small ships. Allied aircraft were responsible for two-thirds of the tonnage lost by the Germans, although if smaller craft were included numbers might be more evenly spread between aircraft, surface craft, and submarines. Many more large and valuable Allied ships were exposed at sea as targets, and the small number lost is a measure of the effectiveness of their escorts both surface and air. The total effect upon the German campaign in Italy, in Yugoslavia and in the Aegean of this attack on their communications by Allied air and naval forces cannot be measured but was certainly large both in practical and moral effects. This attrition on the fringes can be likened to the effects of moth or mould attacking the borders of a fabric. Later, in operation 'Strangle', the effects spread to the whole piece of material.

(iii)

Some of the reasons for German interest in the control of Yugoslavia will bear repetition. From Yugoslavia the main German routes to Greece and Bulgaria and hence to the eastern and northern shores of the Aegean could be controlled. From the Dalmatian coast much of Allied traffic along the opposite Italian coast could at least be challenged. Yugoslavia's rail and river communications were a vital link in the transport of oil from Rumania and other raw materials from the eastern Balkans, a traffic of which the safety increasingly concerned the Germans once the Russians had opened their Spring offensive. In addition to all this there remained the need to keep

Tito at bay and the possibility that the British and Americans might increase their interventions in Balkan affairs.

Earlier chapters have outlined the beginnings of Yugoslavia's resistance to German occupation first by the Cetniks under Mihailovic, subsequently and with greater success by the Partisans under Tito. At the risk of over-simplification it may be mentioned that the Cetniks were looked upon as representing the Serbian element within Yugoslavia's varied population and tended to be linked with the absent King Peter and his government leaders. Because they included or represented persons of substance they were more exposed to selective revenge by the Germans than were the Partisans. The Partisans had a wider popular appeal to the masses who looked to a post-war broadening of their country's political representation. And although the Germans were ruthless in revenge on both Cetniks and Partisans it was simpler for the Partisans to merge with the crowd or fade into the countryside than it was for the Cetniks. These are some of the reasons why the Cetnik movement dwindled and the Partisans grew more effective.

Although this history refers briefly to some of Yugoslavia's political problems, it is more concerned to tell something of the varying fortunes of the guerrilla war and its growing links with the British, first through military missions, then through supplies, and finally in military co-operation. We have seen how after the exploitation of the Italian collapse, particularly by Partisans, the Germans determined on what became known as their Sixth Offensive. By the end of this offensive, in January 1944, they had regained control of all the islands off the Dalmatian coast with the exception of Vis and Lagosta. They were also in possession of the coastline itself and of the main towns and lines of communication. But the Germans failed to wipe out the Partisans who retired into the mountains, particularly of Bosnia and Croatia, and there constituted a serious threat to German troop movements and to the transport of material and equipment. Moreover, the Partisans retained the will to attack for in spite of recent defeat they were now better organized and supplied. More Allied aircraft had been allotted to help them, although in the first quarter of 1944 these aircraft were not yet well administered and brought in only some 300 tons in comparison with some 6,400 tons supplied by sea. There were to be marked changes during the second quarter when supply by air increased tenfold.

With the coming of Spring both sides prepared to renew full-scale operations. Vis, already a base for British Coastal forces, was reinforced between 20th and 25th January by the British 2nd Commando and 120 Americans of the O.S.S. After several small raids to gain experience, a big raid was made on Solta island (which lies twenty miles to shoreward of Vis and is itself ten miles off shore from the

mainland, opposite Split) on the night of 18th/19th March and on the 19th three squadrons of No. 239 Wing from the Desert Air Force made bombing raids. 98 Germans were captured. Four nights later British and Partisan forces raided the island of Hvar (a large island twelve miles inshore from Vis) and No. 239 Wing supported the operation during daylight. Over 100 German prisoners were taken and an unknown number killed. The Germans became increasingly concerned about Vis which they looked upon as an important supply base and training centre for the Partisans. The German Navy pressed for Vis to be captured but neither troops nor air cover could be made available.

While these operations against German-held islands were taking place the Partisans on the mainland had staged an offensive in Serbia from where numbers of Cetniks came over and changed their allegiance. The next volume of this history will relate how the Germans were spurred to renewed activity which once again tilted the balance in their favour and resulted for a time in Tito and his headquarters being evacuated to Vis.

Politically the early months of 1944 saw considerable changes. The withdrawals of the British missions to Mihailovic had been decided upon at the end of 1943 although in the event these were not complete until half way through 1944. Meanwhile Mr. Churchill had begun to exchange letters with Marshal Tito. He began the correspondence with a letter taken in by Brigadier Maclean who, after visiting the Prime Minister at Marrakesh, had returned to Yugoslavia early in January, accompanied by Mr. Randolph Churchill. Tito, not unnaturally, was delighted and a correspondence ensued which was largely concerned with the position of King Peter. Its results will be mentioned in the next volume. In April Maclean came out of Yugoslavia to report and to discuss with General Wilson air and sea supplies and further Combined and Partisan operations on the Dalmatian coast. About the same time Tito sent a message to Mr. Churchill expressing appreciation of the supplies received in recent months but urging the need for even greater quantities. This led Wilson, Maclean and a representative of Tito to fly to London on 30th April in order to give the Prime Minister a clear picture of current conditions in Yugoslavia.

Allied and German strategy and tactics so dominate the story of happenings in, as well as outside, Italy that it is easy to forget 50 million Italians. In the German-occupied zone Mussolini continued to exercise what powers were allowed him from the village of Salò on Lake Garda. He determined, though by no means readily, to bring to trial those members of the Fascist regime who had voted

against him in the Grand Council in July 1943 and who could be caught. The trials took place in Verona in January 1944. The accused, including Mussolini's son-in-law, Count Ciano and the seventy-eight-year-old Marshal de Bono, were all found guilty and, with one exception, shot. The Germans cold-bloodedly pursued their policy of stripping Italy of her resources, and the life of the people was miserable. Among them, however, a strong Resistance was forming.

In the Allied-occupied zone mounting pressure for a broader administration and for the abdication of the King resulted in a compromise in April 1944 whereby the King handed over his powers to his son, Crown Prince Umberto, who was to take the title of Lieutenant Governor of the Realm, to take effect when the Allies entered Rome. Meanwhile Badoglio reconstructed his government to include leading political figures in the south.

(iv)

See Map 26

Chapters XVII to XX of this volume have been concerned almost entirely with operations in the field from the landing of 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio until the calling-off of the third battle of Cassino on 23rd March. But for much of this period both Alexander and Wilson were thinking about the operations which should follow the offensive at Cassino and the British and American Chiefs of Staff were discussing, indeed disputing, the purpose and conduct of future operations in Italy and southern France in connection with the paramount Allied operation in 1944, Overlord. Some account must now be given of these matters although a full account is reserved until Volume VI, to which properly they belong. It seems best to take first Wilson's and Alexander's deliberations upon the next steps in Italy, and second the deliberations of the two sets of Chiefs of Staff, which, of course drew in Wilson and Alexander.

On 22nd February, when the second battle of Cassino had ended and it was hoped that the third battle would begin in two days' time, Alexander submitted to Wilson a very remarkable appreciation of the situation in Italy and a plan for the future conduct of the campaign.¹ He asked for Wilson's approval in principle, if possible by 26th February.

Alexander stated his object to be 'To force the enemy to commit the maximum number of divisions to operations in Italy at the time Overlord is launched'. On 22nd February Alexander did not know

¹The document was written by Alexander's Chief of Staff, Lieut.-General A. F. Harding.

when Overlord might be launched, but wrote on the assumptions that he had little time in hand, and that operations in Italy must begin at least a fortnight or three weeks before Overlord began. He believed that he would face one of three probable situations in Italy:

- '*Case A.* Enemy driven north of Rome as a result of the present offensive. Our own advance stopped by a combination of enemy rear-guards, demolitions, exhaustion of our troops and administrative limitations, somewhere south of the Rimini-Pisa line.
- Case B.* Junction between our main forces and the Anzio bridgehead effected, but the main front stabilized by the enemy south of Rome.
- Case C.* The front stabilized by the enemy with the force in the Anzio bridgehead still separated from our main forces.'

The course of recent operations suggested that Case C was the most likely to occur.

Alexander believed that two factors were common to all three cases. First, he had only one division (78th) which was entirely fresh and which could be committed to an offensive. All his other formations absolutely required a period out of the line to reorganize and to absorb reinforcements. One fresh American division was equipping in Italy but had no experience in battle. He concluded therefore that when the New Zealand Corps had 'shot its bolt', he would have to close down large offensive operations for a while. The second factor was that the Germans must be very exhausted, that they had lost heavily in men and material, and their reserves of ammunition and fuel must be much reduced. The Germans therefore were unlikely to be able to undertake large offensive operations. Alexander made further deductions, first that it was essential to continue to attack the German rail communications by air action and sabotage as heavily as possible. The second deduction is most important because it makes it unmistakable that Alexander wanted German blood rather than German-held ground:

'It is obvious that the most effective way of making the enemy draw on other theatres for troops for employment in Italy is not merely to push back the enemy's line, but to destroy enemy formations in Italy to such an extent that they must be replaced from elsewhere to avoid a rout. Tactical plans should therefore be designed to bring about situations in which enemy formations can be destroyed or so reduced in strength as to be non-effective, rather than for the primary purpose of gaining ground.'

Alexander then went on to declare that, for a reasonable chance of penetrating organized defences in Italian terrain, a local superiority of at least three to one in infantry was required, and the main

effort must be made where a large mass of artillery could be deployed, 'that is in the widest valleys that lead to the enemy's vitals'. His ideal force was twelve divisions in four corps: two corps, each of three infantry divisions and one armoured brigade, to penetrate, and two corps, each of two infantry and one armoured division, to exploit. He believed that for purposes of organization and administration it was wise to compose corps wholly of American or British formations, and in adding to them, to send American-equipped formations to American corps; British-equipped formations to British corps. Thus 5th Army would contain American and French formations, and 8th Army would contain British, Commonwealth, and Polish formations. He required, by 15th April, reinforcements amounting to three American divisions, and three 'British' (in the inclusive sense) divisions, one infantry brigade, and two armoured brigades.¹

The appreciation passed on to other considerations from which we abstract the following. There were landing-craft enough to lift only one division and therefore amphibious operations must be confined to the 'purely tactical field very closely connected with the main battle on the land front'. Administrative problems would make ports, namely Civitavecchia and Leghorn, objectives of paramount importance if the enemy was driven or withdrew north of Rome. Alexander wrote of the air—

'Our air superiority is a battle winning factor. Land operations must be framed to take full advantage of it and tactical objectives must include the airfield areas required to give the air forces the greatest scope. The maintenance of air superiority is the first essential to success in the land battle.

The shape of the country and the alignment of its communications, combined with the dependence of the enemy on supplies from Germany, should enable air action against the enemy's communications, combined with the consumption of material against our land forces, to be decisive, provided it is prolonged and continuous.

In addition, once the major offensive begins, the application of total air effort combined with arty to enemy tactical areas which are suitable air targets will enable land forces to reach their objectives with minimum losses . . .'

Alexander's ideas about the use of air power are particularly interesting when compared with Wilson's which will be given below.

Still taking Case C as the most likely, Alexander isolated its main features. The Anzio bridgehead directly threatened *AOK 10's* western L. of C., and, if the Germans went on attacking, it would take a steady toll of his land forces. Certainly the bridgehead was

¹ Alexander proposed a scheme to bring the Allied armies in Italy up to a total of twenty-eight and a half divisions, four of them armoured, by the middle of April.

a defensive liability for the Allies. But if it could be made secure and if supplies could be built up in it for an offensive by three or four divisions towards Valmontone, combined with deep penetration and a rapid advance in the Liri valley, 'there would be a reasonable chance of cutting off and destroying a large proportion of the enemy forces now opposing Fifth Army'. But before an advance up the Liri valley could be undertaken 'the Cassino spur' must be cleared, and a bridgehead established across the Rapido large enough to allow deployment of an overwhelmingly superior force.

Alexander's plan, in short, was for the New Zealand Corps to continue operations until it had cleared 'the Cassino area' and had created a large bridgehead over the Rapido west of Cassino town. 6th U.S. Corps was to drive the enemy from Cisterna and Carroceto in order to create at Cisterna a base for an advance on Velletri and Valmontone, and to turn Carroceto into a defensive pivot for this advance. If these two operations at Cassino and Anzio did not result in the collapse of the enemy's front (and we have described how stalemate occurred at Anzio and failure at Cassino), there would be a pause to collect large forces and to regroup them as follows:

- (i) A corps of three divisions, under command of 15th Army Group, would take over 8th Army's front, mainly as a defensive sector.
- (ii) 8th Army ('British, Dominion, Indian, and Polish troops') would penetrate at Cassino and advance along Highway 6.
- (iii) 5th Army ('all U.S. and French troops plus British troops in the Anzio bridgehead') would carry out an offensive from Cisterna on Valmontone, smaller attacks on the axis Ausonia-Esperia-Pico, and along the coastal road combined with an amphibious operation in the Gaeta area.

There seem to be three main points of interest in Alexander's appreciation and plan. First, he did not change his belief that the western side of Italy offered the best line of advance; second, he recognized the paramount importance of infantry; third that he took as his method the destruction of German lives and material rather than the winning of ground—in other words naked attrition. He did not know that on 4th February the American Chiefs of Staff had expressed informally to Sir John Dill their 'fear that present situation may be developing into an attrition battle with its steadily mounting losses without decisive gains'.

We turn now to Wilson, who, in the first months of 1944, was not impressive. Appointed in January to vast responsibilities, he appears to have been unable quickly to think out the purpose of operations

in Italy or the method of conducting them. He seemed to have lost touch with the realities of war during his successive tenures of command in Persia and Iraq and in the Middle East.¹ In early February 1944 the British Chiefs of Staff, urged to some extent by their American colleagues, asked Wilson to give them an appreciation and an account of his intentions. On 22nd February (the date of Alexander's appreciation) Wilson replied

' . . . The object of the present offensive which opened on the night 17/18 January was to compel the enemy to withdraw to the north of Rome with a view to establishing satisfactory military situation in Italy before our forces on that front adopted a strategic defensive in favour of other areas. More particularly the aims of the offensive were (a) to give greater depth to the position in front of the Foggia airfields and the port of Naples (b) to secure further airfields for operations in connection with [the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany] (c) to occupy Rome for political reasons . . .'

He then reviewed the course of operations and pointed out that when the 5th Army joined hands with 6th U.S. Corps at Anzio he would be satisfied with the tactical situation. Until the junction occurred he could not risk withdrawing forces from the battle-front in Italy for use elsewhere, in southern France (Anvil) for example. He ended thus:

'I recommend that Anvil be cancelled and that I be given a fresh directive to conduct operations with the object of containing the maximum number of German troops in Southern Europe with forces now earmarked to be placed at my disposal including an assault lift for 1 division plus.'

The Chiefs of Staff formally took note of Wilson's paper and that was all.

Wilson next addressed himself to Alexander, on 25th February, before he had mastered Alexander's appreciation. Part of his telegram must be quoted:

'1. Operations in Italy form only part of the whole Mediterranean plan for keeping forces [sic. "German" must be understood] away from Overlord. The whole plan cannot be made until our final directive is received and our final sea, land, and air resources are known.

2. Operations in Italy must be conditioned mainly by the air factor. My general plan for Italy is to use the air to deprive the enemy of the ability either to maintain his present positions or to withdraw his divisions out of Italy in time for Overlord . . . subject always to [the Combined Bomber Offensive against

¹ General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson was C.-in-C. Persia and Iraq Command from August 1942 until February 1943 and then C.-in-C. M.E.F.

Germany] the primary task of the air forces in Italy must be to make it impossible for the enemy to maintain a powerful army on the Rome line. With luck and good weather it is not unreasonable to expect the M.A.A.F. bombing plan [Eaker's Bombing Directive dated 18th February] . . . will make itself felt by the end of April. That effect should be to compel the enemy to withdraw to the Pisa-Rimini line . . .

4. The complement to this air plan is that the land forces should continue operations against the enemy to the maximum possible extent and with no pause appreciable to the enemy . . . when the withdrawal starts we shall follow him up as actively as our resources and his demolitions permit.

5. You should therefore base your plans on regrouping to continue limited offensives designed first to enlarge the bridgehead and free Anzio port from shellfire, and second to kill Germans . . .

9. . . . Your present task is to link up the bridgehead and to take Rome. I should like you, in conjunction with C.G. Tactical Air Force, to make your plans in the light of the considerations in this telegram.'

Alexander held his peace and awaited the results of his own appreciation. The British and American Chiefs of Staff, to whom Wilson had repeated his telegram, were a little mystified. This was because the British Chiefs of Staff had sent the following instructions to Wilson on 26th February:

'1. Combined Chiefs of Staff have agreed, and President and Prime Minister have approved, that Mediterranean operations should be governed by following policy:

(i) The campaign in Italy must, until further orders have overriding priority over all existing and future operations in the Mediterranean and will have first call on all resources land, sea and air in that theatre.

(ii) Subject to (i) above, the Allied C.-in-C. Mediterranean Theatre, should prepare alternative plans and make such preparations as can be taken without prejudice to operations in the Mediterranean with the object of contributing to Overlord by containing and engaging the maximum number of enemy forces. The first of these alternatives should be Anvil on approximately the scale and date originally contemplated, i.e. a two division assault building up to about 10 divisions to be launched shortly after Overlord. Full consideration will be given to the maximum use of French forces . . .'

The instructions ended by making Wilson an allotment of assault shipping and craft, and by promising a review of arrangements on 20th March in the light of events in Italy.

Some time between 25th and 26th February (the exact time is not ascertainable) Alexander's appreciation and plan and the Chiefs of Staffs' directive cleared Wilson's mind. He silently dropped his

directive of 25th February and adopted Alexander's paper. As a result Alexander was able to call Clark and Leese to Caserta on 28th February, to explain his plans to them, and to begin to regroup his armies. However, Anvil remained as the fly in the ointment for Wilson, and we must shortly review this proposed operation.

(v)

A decision which had been taken at the first Quebec Conference in August 1943 was that offensive operations against southern France (to include the use of French forces) should be undertaken to make a lodgement in the Toulon-Marseilles area and to exploit northward in order to create a diversion in connection with Overlord. The code name for these operations was 'Anvil' until shortly before they began on 15th August 1944 when the name was changed to 'Dragoon'.

On 24th August 1943 General Eisenhower, as C.-in-C. of the Allied Expeditionary Force, was instructed to submit an appreciation and outline plan for Anvil by 1st November. This plan was to be based on resources allotted to the Mediterranean theatre at the conference, and in preparing it Eisenhower was to consult whoever should be appointed to command the cross-Channel operations, or his already appointed Chief of Staff, Lieut.-General F. E. Morgan, so that the plan might be co-ordinated with the requirements of Overlord. During October, the planning staff for Overlord visited Algiers to discuss the implications of Anvil.

Eisenhower's view, at this time, of the importance of maintaining the offensive in Italy is illustrated in a telegram to the Prime Minister on 25th October, which we have quoted in Chapter XIV but which bears repetition:

'My principal commanders and I are in complete agreement that it is essential for us to retain the initiative [in Italy] until the time approaches for mounting "Overlord", otherwise the enemy will himself seize the initiative and may force us on the defensive prematurely, thus enabling him to withdraw divisions from our front in time to oppose "Overlord". If we can keep him on his heels until early Spring, then the more divisions he uses in counter-offensive against us the better it will be for "Overlord" and it then makes little difference what happens to us if "Overlord" is a success . . . The governing factor is of course landing-craft.'

Three days later he forwarded his appreciation and outline plan for Anvil, which he had studied with Morgan. The paper was cautious, even lukewarm. He considered that it was strategically unsound to decide now that Anvil was the best diversionary contribution which the Mediterranean could contribute to Overlord. The

South of France, Italy, and the Balkans formed a belt, containing some 60 German divisions, and the Germans could transfer forces from one part to another. In the Spring of 1944, 15th Army Group might find itself confronting strong German forces on the general line Pisa-Rimini.¹ To defeat German forces on this line an amphibious turning movement and a frontal assault might be necessary. This assault in Italy might prove more useful as a help to Overlord than would a necessarily isolated and small operation against Southern France. Alternatively, should the Allies have reached the line of the Alps by the Spring of 1944² greater help to Overlord could be given by a main thrust, including amphibious attack, delivered eastwards rather than westwards *well in advance of Overlord*, which might draw German forces to south Germany or the Balkan theatre. A threat to Southern France might, in certain circumstances, bring additional German strength into France rather than draw German strength away from opposing Overlord.

In short, an amphibious assault against the south of France should be regarded as one of various alternatives. If, however, an amphibious assault was not to be mounted against southern France it would still be practicable to hold such re-equipped French formations as were available ready to enter southern France as soon as conditions permitted them to do so without an amphibious assault.

Eisenhower considered that more Germans were likely to be contained in southern France by a threat than by an actual landing, which after the first forty-eight hours would have displayed its weakness.

Morgan did not entirely agree with Eisenhower's paper. He thought it confused two separate tasks: that of containing German divisions outside France, and that of containing in the south of France part of German reserves already in France on the day Overlord was launched. The second task could be accomplished only by operations carried out against the south of France.

On 12th November the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed to accept Eisenhower's paper as a ground-work for further planning.

The next important move came at the end of November 1943 at the Teheran Conference when Mr. Roosevelt, Mr. Churchill and Marshal Stalin agreed that Overlord should be launched in May 1944 in conjunction with an operation against the south of France. The second operation (Anvil) would be undertaken in as great a strength as the available landing-craft permitted. In Italy the Allied armies were to advance to the Pisa-Rimini line.

A few days later in Cairo the summing up of the Sextant Conference included the statement that nothing must be undertaken in

¹ In the event, in August 1944.

² In the event, they did not do so until more than a year later.

any other part of the world which would hazard the success of Overlord and Anvil.¹ It went on to remark that Overlord, as at present planned, was on a narrow margin, and that everything practicable would be done to increase its strength. The examination of Anvil on the footing of not less than a two-divisional assault should be pressed forward as fast as possible. If the examination showed that Anvil required strengthening, consideration would have to be given to providing additional resources. The Allied C.-in-C. Mediterranean, in consultation with Morgan, was to submit urgently an outline plan for Anvil which would take place at about the same time as Overlord.² Assault shipping and craft for a lift of at least two divisions would be provided.

Eisenhower's October outline plan and the discussions in Teheran and Cairo had covered many of the points which were to be raised again before final agreement on Anvil was reached, but the factor which, in the event, caused almost all the difficulty in reaching this agreement seems to have been looked upon as too improbable to deserve consideration. It had been assumed that by May 1944 the German armies in Italy would have been driven northward at least as far as the Pisa-Rimini line and that Alexander, having reached this neighbourhood, would be able to dispense with his landing-craft, which would then become available for launching and maintaining Anvil.³ In fact, although the main objective of containing German divisions in southern Italy continued to be achieved, Alexander's forces failed to make the territorial progress which had been assumed and thus the advance to the Pisa-Rimini line and Anvil, instead of following each other as a sequence of events, became conflicting interests.

Eisenhower had ready an outline of his new plan for Anvil by the middle of December. He now knew that he was to be the Supreme Allied Commander for Overlord and in consulting with Morgan and with his own successor in the Mediterranean, Wilson, he may

¹ Although not yet stated, Anvil had therefore been officially recognized as having precedence of the Italian campaign, probably because no clash of interest between the two had yet been foreseen.

² Eisenhower was allowed to keep Seventh Army Headquarters (Cover name H.Q. Force 163) for detailed planning and operational control.

³ At Cairo on 5th December at a C.O.S. Meeting it was pointed out:

'If we succeeded in reaching the Pisa-Rimini line and could hold it effectively with about fifteen divisions, there probably would be some ten divisions left over in the Mediterranean which could be used for Anvil. In the absence of an approved plan for Anvil, however, so much depended on the situation at the time and on the extent to which the Supreme Commander could release formations from Italy. The amphibious lift proposed would be a bare minimum for two divisions.'

The same day at a plenary meeting Admiral King said that the two-divisional lift for Anvil was already in sight and it might even be possible to improve on this. He explained, however, that this lift entailed keeping back from the Pacific one month's production of landing-craft. Nothing at all was going to the Pacific now.

well have come to agree with Morgan's dictum: 'even the keenest of intelligences is apt at times to be influenced by physical location'.

Eisenhower's plan envisaged a force of ten divisions of which two should be armoured. He saw the need to establish strong forces ashore before the Germans could react in strength. Shortage of ships and craft suitable for the distances of a trans-Mediterranean sea voyage meant a rather slow build-up to the required strength of ten divisions and for their maintenance. These factors led him to conclude that the first assault should consist of three divisions. The demand for landing-craft would be large. Should the troops and craft be provided at Overlord's expense?

Wilson's study of Anvil supported Eisenhower's conclusions but Morgan now followed up his earlier criticisms. He judged Anvil as at present conceived to be unsound because it involved diverting forces from the main Overlord assault to a subsidiary assault area. He recognized that the French would be disappointed if the assault were abandoned but he recommended that Anvil should revert to a threat on the footing of one division. Landing-craft and other resources which might be allotted to the three-division conception should be allotted to Overlord and a reduction in the air forces in the Mediterranean in favour of those in the United Kingdom should be urgently considered.

By 23rd January 1944, after discussing Overlord with his new Cs.-in-C., Eisenhower had come down firmly on the side of Morgan who had gained immediate and forthright support from Montgomery. Both of them favoured increasing the Overlord assault to five divisions. Eisenhower would have liked three divisions for the Anvil assault, and certainly not less than two, but if only one could be provided then he would regretfully accept that Anvil must be reduced to a threat until German weakness justified its execution.

The British Chiefs of Staff agreed generally with Eisenhower's conception and suggested that the Combined Chiefs of Staff should approve:

- a. That the Overlord assault should be increased to five divisions, whatever the cost to Anvil or other projected operations.
- b. That every effort should be made to undertake Anvil with two divisions plus in the assault.
- c. That failing the provision of resources for Anvil on the scale of two divisions plus, landing-craft in the Mediterranean should be reduced, if necessary, to a lift for one division.

If it were quite impossible to provide two divisions for Anvil they suggested that it might be better to maintain a threat and to concentrate on maintaining and increasing the offensive in Italy.

The American Chiefs of Staff, while agreeing that it would be practicable to mount a five-divisional assault in Overlord, considered that a two-divisional assault lift was necessary for Anvil, and that a mere threat was inadequate. They suggested various ways of providing this lift while still allowing a five-division assault to Overlord and offered to contribute ships and craft from American resources. During later exchanges it became accepted that Overlord should be postponed until 31st May or the first week in June which, *inter alia*, would make available another month's production of assault landing-craft and would coincide with a more suitable tide in the English Channel.

The British Chiefs of Staff could not agree with their colleagues' calculation of resources,¹ but, even if ways could be found for making possible a two-divisional lift, they were not convinced that the most profitable use of these forces would be in the South of France. They emphasized the prime importance of prosecuting the Italian campaign with the utmost vigour, and pointed out that when the Anvil proposal was accepted at Teheran it was thought that the Germans would withdraw to a line north of Rome. German resistance had now altered the strategic situation in the Mediterranean. If such resistance were continued, what better way of keeping German forces away from Normandy could be devised?

The British decided to invite General Marshall and his colleagues to visit the United Kingdom in order to reach definite decisions, in particular on a directive for Wilson. Among other reasons for their invitation was a message from the American Chiefs of Staff expressing concern over the progress of operations in Italy and which seemed to the British to show that the Americans had little conception of the situation in Italy, nor of how developments there must affect the whole of Allied strategy for the summer of 1944.

The Americans refused the invitation, because they were much occupied with discussions on the Pacific, but on 9th February General Marshall suggested sending two principal American planners (General Hull and Admiral Cooke) to put the American point of view. Eisenhower was to represent the American Chiefs of Staff at these discussions. The result was that useful details concerning assault shipping were worked out but, after much juggling with figures, the impression made on the British Chiefs of Staff by Eisenhower's proposals was that both Overlord and Anvil were being skimped. Meanwhile the campaign in Italy was not going well and the British Chiefs of Staff informed their American colleagues on 19th February that the shadow of Anvil was already cramping General Wilson, who required all the resources on which he could

¹ This turned largely on the percentage of serviceability to be used when calculating the assault craft available.

lay hands in order to nourish the battle and replace tired troops. They advocated ending the uncertainty by cancelling Anvil forthwith. Two days later the American Chiefs of Staff replied that they agreed that the present state of uncertainty regarding Anvil should be ended and that as in their view a two-divisional lift could be made available for Anvil it should be carried through; but that if the campaign in Italy had not developed favourably by 1st April the situation could be reviewed again. They made proposals for adjustments to assault shipping for Overlord and Anvil. On 22nd February Wilson submitted the appreciation which we have given on page 836. On the same day Eisenhower's report to the American Chiefs of Staff on his discussions made it clear that he was beginning to believe that, much as he regretted it, Anvil would have to be given up. Planning should continue and perhaps Anvil might be possible a little later than Overlord but he did not think that any division should be withheld from the battle in Italy.

What had started as a discussion whether Anvil could be supplied with resources adequate to an assault without diminishing the strength of the main operation Overlord, for which it was merely an adjunct, had now turned into a discussion of the effects of preparing for Anvil on the Italian campaign which was itself an adjunct to Overlord and, in British eyes, a more powerful one than Anvil was ever likely to be. The campaign in Italy was already containing large German forces. But would it continue to do so? The Allies were calling the tune in Italy. Could the Germans presently turn a deaf ear?

Wilson had made his proposals which favoured cancelling Anvil, and Sir Alan Brooke had pointed out that Anvil's two divisions, which were causing so much discussion, were only the assault force. Ten divisions in all would be needed out of a total of thirty in the Mediterranean and if ten were withdrawn from Alexander he certainly could not keep the initiative in Italy. It is perhaps desirable at this point to emphasize again that when Anvil had been decided upon at Teheran it had been assumed that before even preparations for it became necessary, the Allied Armies in Italy would already have reached the Pisa-Rimini line or even further north.

The American Chiefs of Staff, affected not only by the British Chiefs of Staff and Wilson, but by Eisenhower's changed views, gave ground and on 26th February the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed, and the President and the Prime Minister approved, that the campaign in Italy must until further orders have overriding priority over all existing and future operations in the Mediterranean and first call on all resources land, sea and air in that theatre.

Wilson's directive to Alexander of 25th February (see page 836 above) produced immediate results in Washington and London. The American Chiefs of Staff suggested that Wilson should use the

immense weight of his air power in the battle area rather than on attacking communications and should combine it with a vigorous ground offensive in order to join the main 5th Army and the Anzio beachhead. The British Chiefs of Staff agreed and, on 8th March, the Combined Chiefs of Staff asked Wilson to reconsider his plan of the 25th so that the full weight of 3,000 bombers and fighters might be applied against enemy concentrations at the Anzio beachhead or against German forces in the Cassino neighbourhood to coincide with a vigorous offensive on land. The British Chiefs of Staff had, moreover, been perturbed by the extent to which planning at A.F.H.Q. seemed to be based on operation Anvil. Sir Alan Brooke sent a personal telegram to Wilson on 8th March in which he made clear that the British Chiefs of Staff believed that a large Anvil was not practical politics. On 14th March Wilson reported that the results of the third battle of Cassino, as far as they could be foreseen, would be that Alexander should succeed in securing Cassino and a bridgehead over the Rapido.¹ The ground won should provide jumping-off points for a further offensive, but the Gustav Line was still unbroken. Regrouping and preparations for a fresh offensive to complete the breaking of this line and its rear position would take considerable time. Alexander estimated that preparations could not be complete before 15th April. Wilson went on, 'I regard it as absolutely essential that we should concentrate our efforts on the battle in Italy until the bridgehead and main front are joined. It would in fact be militarily impracticable to pursue any other course.' Wilson thought that the new offensive, due to start on 15th April, would be a formidable task but he was confident that by then the effect of the air offensive against German communications would be beginning to tell and this, combined with the might of Allied attacks on the main front and from the bridgehead, would force the enemy to give way. But no rapid advance could be expected in difficult country and against prepared demolitions and an enemy who would almost certainly fight every yard of the way. It would be unsound to count upon a junction with the Anzio bridgehead before 15th May at earliest and Anvil could not be launched for at least two months after this junction. Wilson thought Rome could be captured within a month later.

After Rome Wilson foresaw the following alternatives—

- (a) Anvil.
- (b) A big offensive in Italy combined with an amphibious flanking assault wherever the German line might be.

¹ Wilson asked that he might delay a fuller report, due on 20th March, until the results of the Cassino battle were plain but the British Chief of Staff were anxious for a definite decision on Anvil and would not accept delay. Wilson's report arrived on 21st March.

- (c) Landings in the Gulf of Genoa or in the Po valley.
- (d) A landing in Istria.

But Wilson did not think that Anvil would draw German forces unless he could later threaten Lyons, and to do this he must first secure the ports of Toulon and Marseilles. He concluded by asking for a directive instructing him to press on in Italy after capturing Rome and its airfields. Anvil, he thought, should be cancelled and preparations for a landing in the South of France on the hypothesis of a German collapse should be substituted.

At this point we must interrupt the story of the discussions on Anvil. We shall resume it in Volume VI (the last of this history of the campaigns in the Mediterranean and Middle East) which begins with the story of the preparations for, and the launching of, the Allies' fresh offensive in Italy in May 1944. In the event the discussions on Anvil did not end until shortly before Allied forces landed in southern France in August 1944. Some points should now, however, be made.

During the period from the end of 1943 until August 1944 the British and American Chiefs of Staff faced problems concerning the Mediterranean theatre which were as intractable of solution to the satisfaction of both as any others during these colleagues' collaboration. In the end agreement was reached in terms which favoured the American point of view. At first the Anvil discussions were mainly about the distribution of resources between Overlord and Anvil, but they became a discussion of the rival interests of Anvil and of the campaign in Italy. There were several reasons for the sharpness of the discussions. On both sides of the Atlantic nerves were stretched taut by the unknown dangers which had to be faced and overcome in the landings in Normandy, and by the immense consequences, for good or evil, of success or failure in that decisive act of war. Then there was the rate of progress of the campaign in Italy, disappointing because it was only too easy to overlook how well that campaign was succeeding in its main strategic purpose of containing large German forces. Lastly there was a difference in British and American strategic views. The British were accustomed to make war on a shoe-string, and therefore to strategic improvisation, following where Fortune led, stubborn only in determination to reach their goal by one route or another and in keeping their choices open until the last possible moment. The Americans on the other hand, confident in their almost unlimited resources, believed in marching to their strategic goal by a series of predetermined, ponderous, and inexorable steps. Their strategic goal in the European theatre was to reach the heart

of Germany in the shortest possible time in overwhelming strength. Moreover, it was plain to the American and British leaders at the end of 1943 that Britain had reached the summit of her war effort and would be hard put to maintain that height. In contrast, already vast, and ever increasing American Forces, backed by ever increasing industrial production, were pouring into every field. So far the American leaders had been disposed to follow the British lead because the British had won immense prestige from their unbroken and fierce resistance to Germany's power, and because they had learned through hard experience, trial, and error, an impressive technique for waging war. Now, however, things were changing. Since December 1941 the Americans had been studying war in a hard school. By the end of 1943, if not earlier, they felt that they had graduated as masters in the art of war, and had every reason to follow their own way, subject only to the duty of showing themselves to be, in their own way, true and faithful allies. Who can say that they were mistaken?

EPILOGUE

(vi)

THE operations in Sicily and Italy which are the subject of this book suggest, even when seen from only the Allied view-point, many interesting matters which students of war may like to think about and investigate. Some of these matters are the following.

The first is that none of the three Services fought its own private war. The three Services fought one war, each in its own element, but always in a co-operation which grew closer as the war went on. Co-operation, with the kindred practices of Compromise and Improvisation became principles of the conduct of war in the Mediterranean theatre. They solved many problems that seemed insoluble. They suggest that flexibility of mind and of organization are invaluable companions of inflexible purpose.

We have described three large landings, in Sicily, at Salerno, and at Anzio. These were truly amphibious operations and it is surprising that the History of the Combined Operations Organization 1940-1945 says almost nothing about them.¹ These operations exhibited matters of great interest. The first was the need for assault-shipping and craft of the proper types in adequate numbers. No substitute for these could be improvised. As regards the Landing Ship Tank, for example, Mr. Churchill wrote on 16th April 1944 'How it is that the plans of two great empires like Britain and the United States should be so much hamstrung and limited by a hundred or two of these particular vessels will never be understood by history?' This history has tried to show that the hamstringing and limitation occurred because the fairly small number of these vessels which would have given freedom was not in existence when wanted. The mistake in planning and production was crucial and irremediable. Second, if a landing was to have any chance of success it was essential to control the waters off the landing place and for great areas besides, and to control great spaces of the air. It was essential that the areas of the landing were within land-based fighter cover. Third, a rapid build-up of troops and material was all-important, and it was a fruitful discovery that troops could be maintained in material over beaches for far, far longer periods, and more efficiently, than theoretical studies had shown. Fourth, it was shown that it was impossible for troops who had landed to push too far inland, or to act too boldly during the first twenty-four hours.

¹ This history was published in confidential print by Amphibious Warfare Headquarters, London 1956.

Between the wars the exercise of ships against shore targets had been rare compared with normal gunnery practices at sea, yet bombardment had none the less become a regular feature in the annual programme in home waters and, where suitable ranges could be found, on some foreign stations. There were some handicaps to the engagement by warships of targets on shore which were irremediable. Other difficulties could be, and were, overcome progressively as technique improved and confidence increased as a result of experience and practice. Communications between bombarding ships and observation parties on shore or spotter aircraft; lack of knowledge of army officers concerning naval procedure and of naval officers concerning the army's methods are examples of initial handicaps overcome by special training. By the time of the landings in Sicily and Italy artillery officers were embarked in many bombarding warships and a senior Bombardment Liaison Officer was appointed to the commander of the naval force. Conversely, a naval bombardment liaison officer was placed at the headquarters of corps and divisions as might be necessary.

During the campaigns in Sicily and Italy described in this volume there were two main roles in which warships' guns were used in support of the land forces: first, direct support in landings, and second, subsequent engagement of targets on shore. Much of the effectiveness of direct support during landings was ruled out because the army insisted on landing in darkness or at first light, in the hope of gaining surprise or at least some protection from the fire of automatic weapons. On the other hand, after landings, engagement of targets on shore was very often asked for, particularly during the battle of Salerno. There is much evidence from enemy documents to show that these bombardments were damaging, especially to morale. It is interesting that when daylight landings were used in Normandy and southern France, the direct support of warships' guns was most effective.

The campaigns in Sicily and Italy saw the Allies' first attempts to use fairly large airborne forces. The story makes sad reading on the whole. The British 1st Airlanding Brigade met with disaster on 9th and 10th July. The operation by the United States 505th Parachute Regimental Combat Team, also on 9th and 10th July, was a fiasco. On the 11th July the United States 504th Parachute Regimental Combat Team was massacred in the air by American and British anti-aircraft guns. The attempt by 1st Parachute Brigade to seize the Primosole bridge on the 13th and 14th resulted in less than three hundred men landing at the right place, who held out just long enough to be rescued by 4th Armoured Brigade. On the night 14th/

15th September during the Salerno battle 2nd/509th Parachute Battalion dropped near Avellino to harass German communications, was dispersed by inaccurate dropping, and accomplished nothing. The sole success in airborne operations was when the 504th and 505th Parachute Infantry dropped into the Salerno beachhead to reinforce 6th U.S. Corps at a dangerous moment during the battle.¹

The reasons for these results as regards British airborne forces, with which alone we can deal, are plain enough. The British General and Air Staffs had not been blind to the possibilities of a novel approach to battle by troops using parachutes and gliders. Both the Russians and the Germans had demonstrated something of these possibilities before the outbreak of war in 1939, and the Germans had used 7th Flieger Division in the invasion of Holland in 1940. But the British, before the war, had neither money nor material to spend on novelties, and they were unable to begin to study seriously the technical problems of airborne forces before the summer of 1940. This was just at the war's worst moment from a British point of view, and dark, lean and desperate days continued until 1942. In June 1940 Mr. Churchill told the War Office that he wished to have a corps of at least five thousand parachutists, and the General and Air Staffs began a co-ordinated examination of this definite problem. Here a difference between German and British principles must be mentioned. Although many German parachute units fought as infantry under Army command they were troops of the German Air Force which was responsible for their formation, organization, training and equipment. In Britain the Royal Air Force, the Army, and the Ministry of Aircraft Production acted as three foster-parents, who seldom saw eye to eye, of the airborne troops. Nevertheless by August 1940 the General and Air Staffs decided that the airborne forces must consist of parachute troops and glider-borne troops.

The difficulties of making this decision were small as compared with the difficulties of working it out in practice. The British started from scratch, or perhaps from a mark behind scratch, and everything from a conception of how airborne forces should be organized and used down to the design of a container in which to drop equipment had to be thought out, and in the case of materials, things had to be designed, made, tested, and, if proved satisfactory, as seldom happened, had to be put into production. These conditions applied to aircraft, gliders, towing gear, parachutes, weapons from field-guns

¹ 1st Airlanding Brigade at Ponte Grande, Chapter III, pp. 79-81.
505th Parachute Regimental Combat Team at Ponte Olive, Chapter III, pp. 83-84.
Massacre of 504th Parachute Regimental Combat Team, Chapter III, pp. 86-87.
1st Parachute Brigade at Primosole Bridge, Chapter III, pp. 95-96.
2nd/509th Parachute Infantry Battalion, Chapter IX, p. 322.
504th Parachute Infantry at Salerno, Chapter IX, pp. 306, 312.
505th Parachute Infantry at Salerno, Chapter IX, pp. 306, 316.

down to machine pistols, vehicles, rations, clothing and very many more items. The problems were stupendous and they had to be solved at a time when the paramount needs were such as to re-equip the Army, naked after the disasters of May and June 1940, and to expand it; to expand the Royal Air Force; and to sustain the forces in the Mediterranean and Middle East through the see-saw fortunes of the campaigns between December 1940 and August 1942. In spite of all the difficulties 1st Airborne Division began to form in the autumn of 1941 as did its air partner No. 38 Wing R.A.F. in January 1942. It was not until May 1942 that the formation of a parachute brigade began in the Middle East.

For some reason which is not readily apparent the Prime Minister and British Chiefs of Staff mistook these embryos for well-grown youngsters capable of bearing arms. British and American parachute troops were given a role in the invasion of French North Africa which resulted for the British in three drops by parachute battalions in training conditions. Nevertheless the Combined Chiefs of Staff, at Casablanca in January 1943, recommended that five parachute brigades, three of them British, should be used in the invasion of Sicily. Eisenhower and Alexander strongly supported the use of airborne troops because they believed that this might be the only way of gaining footholds on strongly defended beaches. These events may have saved the airborne troops from abolition because during 1942 the Chief of Air Staff had made a powerful case for abolishing them mainly on the grounds that it was folly to deprive the Royal Air Force, which was daily proving its offensive value, of much needed aircraft, pilots, and ground staff to equip an airborne force whose organization, equipment and use were as yet matters of theory and imagination.

The result of the decisions in high quarters was that Headquarters of 1st Airborne Division, some divisional units, one Air Landing Brigade, and two Parachute Brigades, assembled near Oran between the end of April 1943 and the beginning of June. During June detachments of No. 38 Wing R.A.F. flew out with the very few aircraft and gliders that they possessed. It can be said, to be brief and at the risk of exaggeration, that the airborne force and the skeleton of its air component had everything to learn beyond the stage of individual training, and that nearly all the resources for training were wanting in North Africa. The majority of the troops whether glider-borne or parachute had to be transported by the American 51st Troop Carrier Wing, which had a little experience in dropping parachutists, virtually none in towing gliders, and whose main occupation until May 1943 had been freighting. The consequences of this state of affairs became plain when airborne operations were undertaken. If a moral is required, it takes the form of a platitude:

to commit partly trained and inadequately equipped troops (land and air) to battle is utterly wasteful so far as the battle is concerned. On the other hand experience is so valuable that it is perhaps worth buying at any price. The Germans, after their successful airborne invasion of Crete in 1941, concluded that the price was too high, and they never again launched a large airborne operation. In contrast, the development of British airborne troops has been continuous from 1940 until the present day and still continues.

The effect of the mountainous terrain of Sicily and of southern and central Italy upon the campaigns has been discussed in Chapter XI and in many other chapters, and here only a few generalizations will be attempted. It is a curious fact that the Allied General Staffs did not grasp the idea that mountain-trained divisions might be essential for campaigns in mountainous countries. If anyone did in fact put forward this idea (and the fact may have escaped us), it is probable that it was dismissed as being not practical politics because there was not enough time in the eight weeks which lay between the end in Africa and the invasion of Sicily to give any training in mountain warfare beyond the smattering which a few units received. It was impossible, also, to equip them with transport suitable for mountain warfare. And so the highly mechanized, road-bound, British and American divisions went to war in the mountains and found this warfare to be a toilsome, slow business. The exceptions were the three Indian Infantry Divisions and the French Expeditionary Corps. If 15th Army Group had possessed a majority of mountain-trained divisions like these the campaign in Italy might have ended by the autumn of 1944.

Mountain-trained divisions must, however, be equipped with transport suitable for use in mountains if they are not to be hamstrung, and by 1943 it was clear to a few commanders that the transport required in modern mountain warfare consisted of supply-dropping aircraft like the Dakota, Jeeps, and mules. It is just possible that the aircraft and the Jeeps could have been found but the necessary mules did not exist owing to mechanization. It is true that in the middle of 1941 India Command held over 27,000 mules but it required these animals for its own purposes. The forces in Italy had to rely upon mules, often of unsatisfactory type, scraped up in Sicily, south Italy, Cyprus, Iraq, and North Africa. Shortage of sea-transports made it impossible to tap countries which had been India's chief source of supply, and there was no remedy in organizing production. Even if diligent jackasses and mares had abounded the gestation of a mule occupies some months and the animal does not grow to working strength until an age of about four years. Thus it

was that the numbers of mules were always much less than the numbers which were required. The actual numbers with field units were 7,475 during 1944 and 11,754 during May 1945.¹ So much for special troops and special transport.

Mountain warfare brought forward once more a truth that had been lost sight of: that infantry is the decisive arm on the battlefield and that there is no substitute for it. The campaigns in Sicily and Italy, moreover, were marked by the vast number of obstacles which had to be overcome, natural like rivers and ravines or artificial in the shape of demolitions contrived by the Germans. Engineers therefore shared with the artillery a position of first consequence as a supporting arm. The tank sank silently to the position of a self-propelled gun. Yet the prestige and mystique which hung about armour was so great that British commanders persisted in thinking of it as a decisive attacking arm instead of seeing it for what it was in Italy, a crawling monster which produced little except congestion, confusion, and delay.

After two of the landings in Italy crises arose because the forces in the beachheads were not in all ways strong enough to withstand heavy counter-attacks. At Salerno, on 14th September 1943 all the available tactical bomber aircraft were thrown into the battle as a matter of course, but so too was the Strategic Air Force, and the combined might of the Allied bomber forces together with naval gun-fire played a large part in defeating the German counter-attacks. After this success Eisenhower, on 21st September, sent a signal to the American and British Chiefs of Staff in which he proposed a principle: that after a landing the full power of land, sea, and air forces must be concentrated, regardless of other commitments, to support the force on shore until this develops sufficiently, for example in heavy weapons, to take care of itself. At Anzio in February and March 1944 this principle was firmly applied and M.A.S.A.F. operated on several occasions by day and night in direct support of the forces in the beachhead, particularly on 19th February and 2nd March when the strategic bombers came out in the greatest possible strength.

In another kind of situation at Cassino, against the abbey on 15th February and against the town on 15th March, the strategic day bombers were used in a tactical rôle for a different purpose—to help to break deadlock on the ground. These aircraft belonged to U.S. Fifteenth Air Force which had been established in Italy in November 1943, and was equipped with long-range heavy bombers and long-

¹ If mules with American and French troops are included the total for May becomes about 20,100.

range fighters to escort them, for the prime purpose of taking part in the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany. There had been no argument about diverting this specialized and valuable air force from its primary rôle to a tactical rôle during the crisis of the battle at Salerno. Argument, however, arose about whether it was justifiable to use a strategic air force simply to help to break deadlock on the ground at the expense of its primary rôle. On 12th April Eaker summarized the lessons learned from the Cassino air operations and ended with these words:

'Heavy bombers should, as a matter of principle, never be employed in close support operations where there is an adequate Tactical Air Force present for the task . . . This does not mean that heavy bombers will not and should not join in a defensive situation with all other arms and weapons to save heavy casualties or the loss of a battle, such as in the case of the landing at Salerno. Commanders must, however, have a clear conception of the difference between emergency defensive measures and normal offensive operations. The general principle, which is believed to be sound, is that all arms and weapons should be kept to their normal roles, for which they are trained and equipped and diverted to other tasks only in rare instances of real emergency.'

The use of strategic bombers to help to break deadlock on the ground became a hotly debated subject during Overlord, and Eaker's dictum was disregarded on several occasions. It was possible to make a strong case against using a valuable strategic air force in the tactical rôle, based on the view that to use it in this fashion was, by definition, to misuse it, on the difficulty of defining a real emergency, and on technical imperfections in bombing which made it likely that the results would not justify the effort which had been expended. A cold, theoretical analysis on these lines would almost certainly tip the scale against the tactical use of strategic bombers. But such an analysis completely overlooks the immense raising of morale which occurs when troops see masses of their own aircraft raising a hurricane of explosions in the enemy's positions. Only the very large bombload of strategic aircraft flying at short ranges could produce this effect. The result in terms of morale was valuable enough to justify almost by itself the well chosen and occasional tactical use of strategic bombers.

The air forces' never-ending search for more effective means of direct support for land forces resulted in experiments being made during the battle of the Sangro in November 1943 in the use of a technique which was later known as the 'Cab-rank'. In practice this meant maintaining in the air a succession of fighter-bomber formations, each of six aircraft, and keeping each formation for a short

time over or near the front line, ready to be called down on a fleeting target by an air controller at an army wireless tentacle. Results were encouraging and enhanced the confidence between soldier and airman. The technique was later improved and became an accepted practice in direct air support. However, had the enemy in Italy been able to put up effective fighter opposition, many of the Allied fighter-bombers would have been required to operate as fighters, and the number of escorts for the remainder, if used for 'Cab-rank', would have been prohibitively high. It was not at first universally recognized that the power to use 'Cab-rank' was one of the dividends paid by the adequate air superiority which the Allied air forces in Italy had won.

In the war at sea in the Mediterranean changed conditions led to the torpedo being abandoned as the principal weapon of the maritime air forces. Their hunting grounds had shrunk so much that, generally speaking, only in the gulf of Genoa, in the Adriatic, and in the Aegean were surface targets to be found. To all intents, the large ships, which in the past had provided targets on the main shipping routes, had either been sunk or were bottled up in port. Small ships and craft, plying in coastal waters and serving enemy-held islands in the Aegean, had taken their place. It was believed that the rocket projectile was a more suitable weapon to use against these small ships and craft than the torpedo. The rocket projectile, after improvements and with training in its use, became deadly against all types of ships at sea or in port. Later still the use of the rocket projectile became almost universal and was extended to warfare on land.

Finally there is Administration. The story of British administration in Sicily and Italy is one of unbroken success in spite of a full muster against it of difficulties, risks, and problems. The administrative organization did all, and even more, than was required of it. In particular it performed three great feats. First was the switch of 8th Army's base ports from Sicily and the Toe of Italy to ports in the Heel. Second was the transformation of the entire administrative concept so as to ensure fully equipped base port areas on both east and west coasts of Italy which provided an extraordinary flexibility. Third was the smooth and effective switch of 8th Army from the Adriatic coast to the west side of Italy in April and May 1944, in a remarkably brief period, resulting from this flexibility. Thousands of officers and men played their part in the administrative success and deserve their credit, but one figure overtops all others, that administrator of genius, Sir Brian Robertson.

The military historian who tries to write the general history of campaigns must try to solve a problem that is probably insoluble. He must choose which of the multitude of personages at war he will bring to the forefront of his narrative, and which of the many faces of war he will describe. It is obvious that in World War II the Prime Minister and the Chiefs of Staff were persons different from the officers and men of a warship, of a battalion, of an air squadron. War presented one face to them, and an utterly different face to the men who directly engaged the enemy. Between these two extremes stood very many other personages to each of whom war showed a different face. The answer to the historian's problem may lie in asking the questions: who was completely indispensable and what was his war? The answers surely are: the officers and men of the fighting units and of the ancillary services which sustained them. 'There,' said the first, great, Duke of Wellington, in the spring of 1815 as he pointed to a British soldier strolling in a Brussels park, 'It all depends upon that article whether we do the business or not. Give me enough of it, and I am sure.' Therefore the historian turns his eye and his imagination, constantly to the fighting men and their war, and perhaps most constantly to those who were killed and never knew what part they had played in making their country's arms victorious. We can perhaps, without sentimentality or false emotion, put into their mouths words which not one would have used of himself had he been articulate enough to think of them. John Bunyan wrote these words of one of his pilgrims whose progress had reached the final river:

' . . . tho with great Difficulty I am got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the Trouble I have been at to arrive where I am. My Sword, I give to him that shall succeed me in my Pilgrimage, and my Courage and Skill, to him that can get it. My Marks and Scars I carry with me . . . So he passed over, and the Trum-pets sounded for him on the other side.'

TABLE I
Sorties flown by Mediterranean Allied Air Forces dusk 3rd March-dawn 1st April 1944
(excluding anti-shipping operations and attacks on ports)

Command	Land Rece	Fighters (Shipping protection shown in brackets)	Bomber and Fighter-Bomber										Bomber Totals		
			France	Italy	Bulgaria	Austria	Yugoslavia	Albania	Greece	Crete	Day	Night			
			L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields & other L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	L. of C. & other Targets	L. of C. Targets	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields & other L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields & other L.G.s	L. of C. & other Targets	Airfields & other L.G.s	Day	Night
M.A.A.F.*† (excl. M.E.)	1,428‡	18,110‡ (1,434)	—	512	373	530	—	30	30	—	—	—	—	3,182	
			H.B.	18	33	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	51	
			M.B.	2,189	47	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,236	
				276	192	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	468	
			L.B.	899	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	899	
				186	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	186	
			F.B.	4,241	31	—	—	102	10	51	18	22	—	4,475	
				65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	66	
			F.B.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
H.Q. R.A.F., M.E.†	153‡	1,688‡ (1,302)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Totals	1,581	19,798 (2,736)	—	9,018	590	373	530	141	49	51	18	22	—	10,792	
				545	—	225	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	772	

Total Sorties Flown = 32,943 or 1,176 every 24 hours.

* The sorties flown by M.A.A.F. include A.H.Q. Malta but not R.A.F. M.E.

† The sorties flown by M.A.A.F. and R.A.F. M.E. have been taken from a single consolidated record amended by other documents as necessary and are considered reasonably accurate for our purpose.

‡ Estimated.

TABLE II

Sorties flown by M.A.A.F. in searching for and attacking enemy ships (including submarines) at sea and against enemy ports during January, February and March 1944

Month	Target	M.A.A.F. (including Malta and not R.A.F., M.E.)				H.Q. R.A.F., M.E.		Totals on Target each month
		R.A.F. (incl. I.A.F. & F.F.A.F.)		U.S.A.A.F.		R.A.F.	U.S.A.A.F.	
		Ships at sea { Ports	1,738 152	434 525	607	18*		
January	{ Ports	1,738 152	434 525	607	18*	2,797		
February	{ Ports	1,312 154	178 697	598 86	28*	2,116		
March	{ Ports	1,770 354	68 1,941	792 36	— —	2,630 1,431		
Totals: January-March 1944								
	Ships at sea Ports	4,820 660	680 2,263	1,997 197	46*	7,543 3,120		
	Grand Totals	5,480	2,943	2,194	46*	10,663		

* These sorties were flown by Mitchells of the U.S.A.A.F. still on loan to H.Q. R.A.F., M.E. They were equipped with 75-mm guns and occasionally carried bombs, too.

Notes

The sorties flown by M.A.A.F. have been arrived at by deduction from a variety of sources, some contradictory, but they are considered reasonably accurate for our purpose.

I.A.F. stands for the Co-Belligerent Italian Air Force and F.F.A.F. for the Fighting French Air Force.

APPENDIX I

PRINCIPAL COMMANDERS AND
STAFF OFFICERS IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN AND MIDDLE
EAST

(The ranks given are in some cases 'acting' ranks.
Some brief temporary appointments are omitted.)

ROYAL NAVY

Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean: Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham; Admiral Sir John Cunningham (from 15th October 1943)

Chief of Staff: Commodore R. M. Dick; Rear-Admiral J. G. L. Dundas (from March 1944)

Commander-in-Chief Levant: Admiral Sir John Cunningham; Vice-Admiral Sir Algernon Willis (from October 1943 to December 1943)

Chief of Staff: Rear-Admiral J. G. L. Dundas; Commodore L. N. Brownfield (from December 1943)

Additional Chief of Staff, R.N. at Middle East H.Q. Cairo: Commodore E. B. K. Stevens

Vice-Admiral in Charge, Malta: Vice-Admiral A. J. Power (to September 1943)

[At the end of 1943 the Mediterranean naval commands were reorganized. The Levant Command was abolished and the whole station placed under Sir John Cunningham, the C.-in-C. Mediterranean. Four sub-commands, at Gibraltar, Algiers, Malta and Alexandria were established.]

Flag Officer Commanding Gibraltar and Mediterranean Approaches: Vice-Admiral Sir Harold Burrough (from September 1943)

Flag Officer Commanding Western Mediterranean: Rear-Admiral C. E. Morgan (held in abeyance while C.-in-C. was at Algiers and cancelled in January 1944)

Flag Officer Commanding Malta and Central Mediterranean: Vice-Admiral L. H. K. Hamilton (from September 1943)

Flag Officer Commanding Levant and Eastern Mediterranean: Vice-Admiral H. B. Rawlings

Flag Officer Force H: Vice-Admiral A. U. Willis (to October 1943)

R.A. Aircraft Carriers: Rear-Admiral Clement Moody

R.A. Force H: Rear-Admiral A. W. La T. Bissett

R.A. 15th Cruiser Squadron: Rear-Admiral C. H. J. Harcourt; Rear-Admiral J. M. Mansfield (from 1st January 1944)
Commodore 12th Cruiser Squadron: Commodore W. G. Agnew
Commodore Destroyers, Eastern Mediterranean: Commodore P. Todd (to October 1943)
Flag Officer Western Italy: Rear-Admiral J. A. V. Morse
Flag Officer Tunisia: Admiral Sir Gerald Dickens (Retd.)
R.A. Alexandria: Rear-Admiral A. Poland
F.O.C. Red Sea and Canal Area: Vice-Admiral R. H. C. Hallifax; Rear-Admiral J. W. A. Waller (from end of 1943)
S.N.O. Persian Gulf: Commodore C. F. Hammill
Directorate of Combined Operations Middle East: Rear-Admiral L. E. H. Maund; Rear-Admiral J. W. A. Waller (from 30th September 1943)

Special Appointments for landing operations:

Sicily

Commander Eastern Naval Task Force: Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay
Chief of Staff: Commodore C. E. Douglas-Pennant
Commanding Force A: Rear-Admiral R. R. McGrigor¹
Commanding Force B: Rear-Admiral T. H. Troubridge
Commanding Force V: Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian

Salerno

Commanding Northern Assault Force: Commodore G. N. Oliver
Commanding Aircraft Carriers: Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian

Anzio

Commanding Northern Assault Force: Rear-Admiral T. H. Troubridge

UNITED STATES

*Commander U.S. Naval Forces Northwest African Waters;
of Western Naval Task Force for the invasion of Sicily;
of Allied Naval Forces at Salerno and Anzio:*
Vice-Admiral H. Kent Hewitt

Sicily

Commanding 'Dime' Assault: Rear-Admiral John L. Hall
Commanding 'Cent' Assault: Rear-Admiral Alan G. Kirk
Commanding 'Joss' Assault: Rear-Admiral Richard L. Conolly
Commanding Fire Support Groups: Rear-Admiral Lyal A. Davidson

Salerno

Commanding Southern Assault Force: Rear-Admiral John L. Hall
Commanding Fire Support Group: Rear-Admiral Lyal A. Davidson
Senior Officer for 'Uncle' Landings: Rear-Admiral Richard L. Conolly

Anzio

Commanding Allied Naval Assault: Rear-Admiral Frank J. Lowry

¹ (Later Flag Officer Sicily and Flag Officer Taranto and Adriatic, succeeded by Rear-Admiral C. E. Morgan.)

THE ARMY

(The reader is referred also to: Lieutenant-Colonel H. F. Joslen, *Orders of Battle*, Vols I and II, H.M.S.O. 1960.)

Allied Force Headquarters

Allied Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces in North Africa: General Dwight D. Eisenhower; General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson (from 8th January 1944)

(*This title was changed on 10th December 1943 to Allied Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean Theatre. It changed again on 9th March 1944 becoming Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theatre.*)

Deputy Allied Commander-in-Chief: General the Hon. Sir Harold Alexander; Lieutenant-General Jacob L. Devers (from 8th January 1944)

(*On March 9th 1944 this title became Deputy Supreme Allied Commander*)

Principal Staff Officers:

Chief of Staff: Lieutenant-General Walter Bedell Smith; Lieutenant-General Sir James Gammel (from 8th January 1944)

*Chief Administrative Officers**United States*

Commanding General, Communications Zone: Major-General Everett S. Hughes

Commanding General, Services of Supply: Major-General Thomas B. Larkin

(*The above two appointments were amalgamated on 22nd February 1944 when Major-General Larkin became Commanding General, Services of Supply (Communications Zone) N.A.T.O.U.S.A.*)

British

Chief Administrative Officer: Lieutenant-General Sir Humfrey Gale

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer: Major-General Sir Brian Robertson

(*This appointment was created on 24th October 1943 when A.F.H.Q. Advance Administrative Echelon (FLAMBO) was established in Italy. Its title was subsequently changed, on 9th March 1944, to Chief Administrative Officer Allied Armies in Italy.*)

15th Army Group

(*The title of this Headquarters underwent several changes, viz. on 11th January 1944 it became Allied Forces in Italy (A.F.I.), on 18th January 1944 this became Allied Central Mediterranean Force (A.C.M.F.), on 9th March 1944 it became Allied Armies in Italy (A.A.I.)*)

General Officer Commanding-in-Chief: General the Hon. Sir Harold Alexander

(On the 9th March 1944 the title of this Commander became Commander-in-Chief Allied Armies in Italy)

Principal Staff Officers:

Chief of the General Staff: Major-General A. A. Richardson; Lieutenant-General A. F. Harding (from 1st January 1944)

Major-General Administration: Major-General C. H. Miller (up to 24th October 1943)

(As from 24th October 1943, on the creation of FLAMBO, Major-General Sir Brian Robertson became Administrative Adviser to General Alexander. On 9th March 1944 General Robertson became Chief Administrative Officer Allied Armies in Italy, on General Alexander's Staff).

8th Army

General Sir Bernard Montgomery

Lieutenant-General Sir Oliver Leese (from 1st January 1944)

Principal Staff Officers

Chief of Staff: Major-General F. de Guingand; Major-General G. P. Walsh (from January 1944)

Administration: Major-General Sir Brian Robertson, up to 24th October 1943; Brigadier E. M. Bastyan

5th U.S. Army

Commanding General: Lieutenant-General Mark W. Clark

7th U.S. Army (Sicily)

Commanding General: Lieutenant-General George S. Patton

French Forces in Italy

General Alphonse Juin (Commander French Expeditionary Corps)

Polish Forces in Italy

General W. Anders (Commander 2nd Polish Corps)

Note. The names of subordinate formations' commanders have been mentioned in the text and are not included here.

ROYAL AIR FORCE AND UNITED STATES ARMY AIR FORCE

MEDITERRANEAN AIR COMMAND

(Became Mediterranean Allied Air Forces on 10th December 1943)

Command Headquarters

Air Commander-in-Chief: Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder

Deputy Air Commander-in-Chief: Air Vice-Marshal H. E. P. Wigglesworth

Chief of Staff: Brigadier-General Howard A. Craig, U.S.A.A.F.

Director of Operations: Brigadier-General Patrick W. Timberlake, U.S.A.A.F.

Director of Maintenance and Supply: Air Vice-Marshal G. G. Dawson

MEDITERRANEAN ALLIED AIR FORCES

Command Headquarters

Air Commander-in-Chief: Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder; Lieutenant-General Ira C. Eaker U.S.A.A.F. (From 1st January 1944. *Also Commanding General Army Air Forces, Mediterranean Theatre of Operations, formed 1st January 1944.*)

Deputy Air Commander-in-Chief: Lieutenant-General Carl Spaatz, U.S.A.A.F.; Air Marshal Sir John Slessor from 14th January 1944. *Also Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Royal Air Force, Mediterranean and Middle East, and, additionally, responsible for Royal Air Force operations in the Middle East beyond the Mediterranean area.*

Deputy Commanding General Army Air Forces, Mediterranean Theatre of Operations: Major-General Idwal H. Edwards, U.S.A.A.F.

Deputy Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Royal Air Force, Mediterranean and Middle East: Air Marshal Sir John Linnel (from 1st February 1944)

Chiefs of Staff: U.S. Major-General Charles C. Chauncey, U.S.A.A.F.; R.A.F. Air Marshal Sir John Linnell, R.A.F.

Director of Operations and Intelligence: Brigadier-General Lauris Norstad, U.S.A.A.F.

MIDDLE EAST AIR COMMAND

(Reverted to Headquarters, Royal Air Force, Middle East on 10th December 1943)

Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief: Air Chief Marshal Sir William Sholto Douglas; Air Marshal Sir Keith Park (from 14th January 1944)

Senior Air Staff Officer: Air Vice-Marshal W. A. Coryton; Air Vice-Marshal S. E. Toomer (from 2nd September 1943)

Air Officer-in-Charge Administration: Air Vice-Marshal E. B. C. Betts

No. 201 (Naval Co-operation) Group, R.A.F. (Amalgamated with Air Defences, Eastern Mediterranean on 1st February 1944 to form Air Headquarters, Eastern Mediterranean): Air Vice-Marshal T. A. Langford-Sainsbury

No. 203 Group, R.A.F.: Air Commodore M. L. Taylor

No. 206 (Maintenance) Group, R.A.F.: Air Commodore G. F. Smylie; Air Commodore P. Slocombe (from 23rd March 1944)

No. 216 Group, R.A.F.: Air Commodore Whitney W. Straight

Air Headquarters, Air Defences, Eastern Mediterranean. (Amalgamated with No. 201 Group on 1st February 1944 to form Air Headquarters, Eastern Mediterranean.)

Air Officer Commanding: Air Vice-Marshal R. E. Saul

No. 209 Group, R.A.F. (Levant): Group Captain E. W. Whitley; Group Captain R. C. F. Lister (from 10th October 1943)

No. 210 Group, R.A.F. (Tripolitania): Group Captain J. Grandy; Wing

- Commander R. C. F. Lister (from 15th September 1943); Group Captain E. W. Whitley (from 10th October 1943)
- No. 212 Group, R.A.F. (Cyrenaica)*: Air Commodore A. H. Wann; Group Captain J. W. A. Hunnard (from 6th February 1944); Air Commodore N. S. Allinson (from 1st March 1944)
- No. 219 Group, R.A.F. (Egypt)*: Group Captain G. A. G. Johnson; Group Captain the Hon. Maxwell Aitken (from 2nd August 1943)

Air Headquarters, Eastern Mediterranean

Air Officer Commanding: Air Vice-Marshal T. A. Langford-Sainsbury

Air Headquarters, Levant

- Air Officer Commanding*: Group Captain J. E. G. H. Thomas; Air Commodore B. McEntegart (from 24th June 1943); Air Commodore J. P. Coleman (from 21st February 1944)
- No. 213 Group, R.A.F. (Reduced to 'number only' basis on 15th November 1943)*: Group Captain T. Humble

Air Headquarters, Iraq and Persia

- Air Officer Commanding*: Air Vice-Marshal H. V. Champion de Crespigny; Air Vice-Marshal R. P. Willock (from 13th September 1943); Air Vice-Marshal A. P. Davidson (from 24th February 1944)
- No. 215 Group, R.A.F. (Reduced to 'number only' basis in November 1943)*: Air Commodore G. L. Carter

Headquarters, British Forces, Aden

(Later Air Headquarters, British Forces, Aden)

Air Officer Commanding: Air Vice-Marshal F. H. Macnamara

Air Headquarters, East Africa

Air Officer Commanding: Air Vice-Marshal H. S. Kerby

UNITED STATES NINTH AIR FORCE

(Under the operational control of Middle East Air Command)

(Reconstituted in the United Kingdom in October, 1943)

- Commanding General*: Major-General Lewis H. Brereton, U.S.A.A.F.
- United States IX Bomber Command*: Brigadier-General Uzal G. Ent, U.S.A.A.F.
- United States IX Fighter Command*: Brigadier-General Aubrey C. Strickland, U.S.A.A.F.
- United States IX Air Service Command*: Colonel John D. Corkille, U.S.A.A.F.

MALTA AIR COMMAND

(Reverted to Air Headquarters, Malta on 10th December 1943)

- Air Officer Commanding*: Air Vice-Marshal Sir Keith Park; Air Commodore J. R. Scarlett-Streatfeild (from 6th January 1944); Air Vice-Marshal A. H. Wann (from 6th February 1944); Group Captain J. R. Rhys-Jones (from 29th February 1944); Air Vice-Marshal R. M. Foster (from 26th March 1944)

NORTHWEST AFRICAN AIR FORCES

(Headquarters absorbed during December 1943 by Headquarters, Mediterranean Allied Air Forces)

Commanding General: Major-General Carl Spaatz, U.S.A.A.F.

Deputy: Air Vice-Marshal J. M. Robb

Chief of Staff: Colonel E. P. Curtis, U.S.A.A.F.

Air Officer-in-Charge of Administration: Air Commodore A. MacGregor

Northwest African Strategic Air Force

(Became Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force on 1st January 1944)

Commanding General: Major-General James H. Doolittle, U.S.A.A.F.;

Major-General Nathan F. Twining, U.S.A.A.F. (from 3rd January 1944)

United States Fifteenth Air Force (Formed on 1st November 1943 and operated under Northwest African Strategic Air Force and Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force)

Commanding General: Major-General James H. Doolittle, U.S.A.A.F.;

Major-General Nathan F. Twining, U.S.A.A.F. (from 3rd January 1944)

No. 205 Group, R.A.F. (Placed under the operational control of Northwest African Strategic Air Force on 22nd May 1943): Air Commodore O. R. Gayford; Air Commodore J. H. I. Simpson (from 10th July 1943)

Northwest African Coastal Air Force

(Became Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force on 1st January 1944)

Air Officer Commanding: Air Vice-Marshal Sir Hugh Lloyd

Air Headquarters, Malta (Became part of Northwest African Coastal Air Force on 15th October 1943): See under MALTA AIR COMMAND

United States XII Fighter Command: Brigadier-General Elwood R. Quesada, U.S.A.A.F.; Brigadier-General Gordon P. Saville, U.S.A.A.F. (from 2nd October 1943); Brigadier-General Edward M. Morris, U.S.A.A.F. (from 3rd January 1944)

No. 242 Group, R.A.F. (Transferred to Northwest African Coastal Air Force on 26th May 1943): Air Commodore K. B. B. Cross; Air Commodore G. Harcourt-Smith (from 24th February 1944)

Northwest African Tactical Air Force

(Became Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force on 1st January 1944)

Air Officer Commanding: Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham; Major-General John K. Cannon, U.S.A.A.F. (from January 1944)

Northwest African Tactical Bomber Force (Became Mediterranean Allied Tactical Bomber Force on 1st January, 1944) (Disbanded on 1st March 1944)

Air Officer Commanding: Air Commodore L. F. Sinclair

Western Desert Air Force (Became Desert Air Force on 21st July 1943)

Air Officer Commanding: Air Vice-Marshal Harry Broadhurst

No. 211 Group, R.A.F. (Reduced to 'number only' basis on 1st October 1943): Group Captain R. L. R. Atcherley

United States Twelfth Air Force

Commanding General: Major-General Carl Spaatz, U.S.A.A.F.; Major-General John K. Cannon, U.S.A.A.F. (from 21st December 1943)

United States XII Air Support Command: Brigadier-General Paul L. Williams, U.S.A.A.F.; Brigadier-General John K. Cannon, U.S.A.A.F. (from 12th May 1943); Colonel Lawrence P. Hickey, U.S.A.A.F. (from 24th May 1943); Major-General Edwin J. House, U.S.A.A.F. (from 13th June 1943); Brigadier-General Gordon P. Saville, U.S.A.A.F. (from 2nd February 1944)

Northwest African Troop Carrier Command

(Disbanded on the formation of Mediterranean Allied Air Forces)

Commanding General: Brigadier-General Ray A. Dunn, U.S.A.A.F.; Brigadier-General Paul L. Williams, U.S.A.A.F.

United States XII Troop Carrier Command: Brigadier-General Ray A. Dunn, U.S.A.A.F.; Brigadier-General Paul L. Williams, U.S.A.A.F.

Northwest African Photographic Reconnaissance Wing

(Became Mediterranean Allied Photographic Reconnaissance Wing on 1st January 1944)

Commanding General: Colonel Elliott Roosevelt, U.S.A.A.F.; Colonel Karl L. Polifka, U.S.A.A.F. (from 25th January 1944)

Northwest African Air Service Command

(Disbanded on the formation of Army Air Forces Service Command, Mediterranean Theatre of Operations, 1st January 1944)

Commanding General: Major-General Delmar H. Dunton, U.S.A.A.F.

United States XII Air Force Service Command (Became Army Air Forces Service Command, Mediterranean Theatre of Operations on 1st January 1944 and a new U.S. XII A.F.S.C. was created in its place)

Commanding General: Major-General Harold A. Bartron, U.S.A.A.F.

United States XII Air Force Engineer Command (Formed on 22nd October 1943 and became Army Air Forces Engineer Command, Mediterranean Theatre of Operations on 1st January 1944)

Commanding General: Brigadier-General Donald A. Davidson, U.S.A.A.F.; Colonel John O. Colonna, U.S.A.A.F.

No. 214 (Maintenance) Group, R.A.F. (In Tripolitania under Middle East Air Command and then in Italy under Northwest African Air Service Command):

Air Commodore J. P. Coleman; Air Commodore G. F. Smylie (from 6th February 1944)

No. 218 (Maintenance) Group, R.A.F. (Formed from the Royal Air Force element of Northwest African Air Service Command on the latter's disbandment on 1st January 1944, and served North West Africa): Air Commodore E. L. Ridley

APPENDIX 2

APPOINTMENTS HELD BY SOME
GERMAN AND ITALIAN
COMMANDERS AND STAFF
OFFICERS DURING THE PERIOD
OF THIS VOLUME

GERMAN

- Buelowius*, Lieutenant-General Alfred: commander Fliegerkorps II
- Dönitz*, Grand Admiral Karl: Commander-in-Chief German Navy since January 1943
- Feuerstein*, General Valentin: commander 51st Mountain Corps
- Fiebig*, General Martin: commander Southeastern Air Command
- Göring*, Marshal of the Reich Hermann: Commander-in-Chief German Air Force
- Hauck*, Lieutenant-General Friedrich-Wilhelm: commander Korpsgruppe Hauck
- Hauser*, Colonel Wolf: C.O.S. *AOK 14*
- Herr*, General Traugott: commander 76th Panzer Corps
- Hube*, General Hans-Valentin: commander 14th Panzer Corps until October 1943
- Jodl*, General Alfred: Chief of Operations Staff *OKW*
- Keitel*, Field Marshal Wilhelm: Chief of *OKW*
- Kesselring*, Field Marshal Albert: Commander-in-Chief South until November 1943, thereafter C.-in-C. Southwest and Army Group 'C'
- Lemelsen*, General Joachim: acting commander *AOK 10* from 6th November until 28th December 1943
- Löhr*, Colonel-General Alexander: Commander-in-Chief Southeast January–August 1943; then commander Army Group 'E'
- Mackensen*, Colonel-General Eberhard von: commander *AOK 14*
- Mahncke*, Lieutenant-General Alfred: Fliegerführer Sicily
- Pohl*, General Erich Ritter von: German Air Force General at *Italuft* and Air Attaché Rome until July 1943; then commander A.A. Artillery in southern Italy
- Richthofen*, Field Marshal Wolfram Freiherr von: commander Luftflotte 2 from June 1943

- Rintelen*, General Enno von: Military Attaché and German General at H.Q. Italian Armed Forces, Rome, until September 1943
- Rommel*, Field Marshal Erwin: commander Army Group 'B' in northern Italy until November 1943
- Schlemm*, General Alfred: commander 1st Parachute Corps
- Senger und Etterlin*, Lieutenant-General Fridolin von: L.O. with Italian 6th Army; then commander German troops in Corsica; then commander 14th Panzer Corps
- Vietinghoff*, Colonel-General Heinrich-Gottfried von: commander *AOK 10*
- Weichs*, Field Marshal Maximilian Freiherr von: Commander-in-Chief Southeast and Army Group 'F' from August 1943
- Wentzell*, Major-General Fritz: C.O.S. *AOK 10*
- Westphal*, Lieutenant-General Siegfried: C.O.S. to C.-in-C. Southwest and Army Group 'C'
- Wolff*, General of the Waffen SS Karl: senior SS and Police commander in Italy
- Zangen*, General Gustav-Adolf von: commander 87th Corps, and from January 1944 commander of *Armeegruppe von Zangen* in northern Italy

ITALIAN

- Ambrosio*, General Vittorio: Chief of Staff Italian Armed Forces from February 1943; Inspector-General of the Army in the Badoglio administration
- Badoglio*, Marshal Pietro: Head of the Italian Government 25th July 1943; surrendered to the Allies 8th September 1943
- Bergamini*, Admiral Carlo: Commander-in-Chief Afloat from June 1943 (lost when the *Roma* was sunk by German aircraft 9th September 1943)
- Courten*, Admiral Raffaele de: Minister and C.O.S. Italian Navy from July 1943 in the Badoglio administration
- Fougier*, General Rinso Corso: Chief of Air Staff Italian Air Force
- Graziani*, Marshal Rodolfo: Minister of Defence and Chief of the General Staff in the neo-Fascist Government established by Mussolini in September 1943
- Guzzoni*, General Alfredo: commander Italian 6th Army
- Roatta*, General Mario: Chief of General Staff Italian Army until the end of 1943
- Rossi*, General Carlo: commander 16th Corps in Sicily
- Sandalli*, General Renato: Chief of Air Staff and Minister for Air in Badoglio Government July 1943
- Zingales*, General Francesco: commander 12th Corps in Sicily, replacing General Mario Arisio 12th July 1943

APPENDIX 3

SOME TYPES OF LANDING SHIPS AND CRAFT IN USE IN 1943-44

(a) Ships

Type	Short Title	In Service. Remarks
Landing ship infantry (large)	L.S.I.(L)	Large liners (e.g. <i>Glen</i> class) converted to carry L.C.A. and L.C.P. (see next table)
Landing ship infantry (medium)	L.S.I.(M)	<i>Queen Emma</i> . Dutch (Harwich to Hook service)
Landing ship infantry (small)	L.S.I.(S)	<i>Prince Charles</i> . Belgian (Dover to Ostend service)
Landing ship tank	L.S.T.	Displacement (Beaching) 2,150 tons; Draught 3 ft forward, 9 ft 6 inches aft; Speed loaded 10 knots full power, 8½ knots economical
Headquarters ships	L.S.H.	H.M.S. <i>Bulolo</i> and <i>Hilary</i> . Specially fitted for the purpose, e.g. with elaborate signals equipment. A few ships were fitted as Brigade H.Q. ships

(b) Craft

Type and Short Title	Length & Beam (to nearest foot)	Displacement (tons)	Speed (knots) max. and cruising	Load
Landing-craft assault L.C.A.	41 10	13½	8½	35 equipped men. (Not more than 24 when lowering)
Landing-craft personnel (large) L.C.P.(L)	37 11	9	10½ 9½	25 equipped men
Landing-craft mechanized (3) L.C.M.(3)	50 14	52	8 7	30 tons
Landing-craft tank (3) L.C.T.(3)	192 31	300	10½ 9	260 tons
Landing-craft tank (4) L.C.T.(4)	187 39	350	10 8½	300 tons
Landing-craft tank (3) Rocket L.C.T.(3)(R)	192 31	500	10½ 9	1044 rockets
Landing-craft infantry (large) L.C.I.(L)	158 24	250	14 12½	Bunks for 200 fully equipped troops below decks and 50 seats on upper deck
Landing-craft Flak (3) L.C.F.(3)	194 31	515	10½ 9	4-2 pdrs and 8-Oerlikons
Landing-craft Gun (large) L.C.G.(L)	192 31	500	10½ 9	Two 4.7 inch guns and two or four oerlikons

APPENDIX 4

ORDERS OF BATTLE
ROYAL AIR FORCE and UNITED
STATES ARMY AIR FORCES

- (a) Mediterranean Air Command—3rd September 1943
- (b) Mediterranean Allied Air Forces—21st January 1944

NOTES

1. Only operational chains of command and control, and operational formations and units, have been included in these Orders of Battle with the exception of air transport and troop carrier aircraft because they were particularly closely connected with the fighting. Among the non-operational units omitted are squadrons working up to operational standard or re-equipping, and those units less closely connected with the fighting such as: meteorological, operational conversion, operational training, air communications (in the rear areas), radio and radar calibration, and others.

2. Neither do these Orders of Battle include the balloon squadrons, nor the many administrative and ground units of all kinds which supported the flying squadrons, such as: maintenance, and repair and salvage units; supply and transport columns; wireless observer units; Army Air Support Control air elements; the increasing number of radar stations for both air raid warning and fighter control, and their repair and servicing echelons; the large number and variety of signals units; and others. There were, too, the increasing number and variety of units of the R.A.F. Regiment. The need for the R.A.F. to be self-sufficient in repair and other technical requirements has been stressed in previous volumes. In North West Africa some French aeronautical and other engineering facilities ultimately became available, as did some French skilled and unskilled labour, but the use of technical units of the R.A.F. in the area continued to be necessary. In Italy some similar facilities also became available but the R.A.F. had still to create 'an aircraft industry' far from home, as indeed did the U.S.A.A.F. The magnitude of the Allied aircraft maintenance task can be gauged from the fact that in mid-January 1944 there were over 10,000 aircraft, operational and non-operational types, in the Mediterranean and Middle East theatre of which a large number were under repair of one sort or another and the remainder requiring normal day to day maintenance. In the field of communications the growth of the Allied air forces with the consequent and inevitable increase in the number of air headquarters, coupled with the entry into Europe via Sicily and Italy, made the already complex and vastly widespread signal-system

that much more complicated and extended, all of which added to the burden borne by the R.A.F. signals branch.

3. Besides all the units already mentioned there were many others, which space forbids us to mention, and which employed large numbers of men.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.F.—Airborne Forces (Glider tug, supply-dropping, etc.); A.O.P.—Air Observation Post; A.S.—Anti-submarine; A.T.—Air Transport; C.—Coastal duties; Com.—Air Communications; D.B.—Dive-bomber; Det.—Detached or Detachment; F.—Fighter; F.B.—Fighter-bomber; F.R.—Fighter-reconnaissance; G.R.—General Reconnaissance; H.B.—Heavy Bomber; Int.—Intruder; L.B.—Light Bomber; M.B.—Medium Bomber; M.S.—Magnetic Minesweeper; N.F.—Night-fighter; P.R.—Photographic Reconnaissance; R.C.M.—Radar and Radio Counter-measures; R.P.—Rocket Projectile Carrier; S.D.—Special Duties; S.E.—Single-engine; S.O.E.—(Special Operations Executive)—Special Duty Operations; Strat. R.—Strategical Reconnaissance; Sur. R.—Survey Reconnaissance; Tac. R.—Tactical Reconnaissance; T.B.—Torpedo-bomber; T.C.—Troop Carrier; T.E.—Twin-engine; T.F.—Torpedo-fighter.

N.A.C.A.F.—Northwest African Coastal Air Force

M.A.C.A.F.—Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force

N.A.P.R.W.—Northwest African Photographic Reconnaissance Wing

M.A.P.R.W.—Mediterranean Allied Photographic Reconnaissance Wing

N.A.S.A.F.—Northwest African Strategic Air Force

M.A.S.A.F.—Mediterranean Allied Strategic Air Force

N.A.T.A.F.—Northwest African Tactical Air Force

M.A.T.A.F.—Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force

N.A.T.B.F.—Northwest African Tactical Bomber Force

M.A.T.B.F.—Mediterranean Allied Tactical Bomber Force

N.A.T.C.C.—Northwest African Troop Carrier Command

30 SEPTEMBER, 1943.

(A)

MEDITERRANEAN AIR COMMAND

NORTHWEST AFRICAN AIR FORCES

NOTE—OPERATIONAL COMMAND AND CONTROL ONLY
 TOTAL AIRCRAFT ESTABLISHMENT: 3,146
 Middle East Air Command — 3186
 Middle East Air Command — 860
 GRAND TOTAL: — 4,006

N.A.S.A.F.

Sqdn.	Rel.	Aircraft	Est. Type
No. 803 GROUP, R.A.F.			
No. 77	M.B.	20	Wellington X
No. 79	M.B.	20	Wellington III, X
No. 46	M.B.	20	Wellington III, X
No. 64	M.B.	20	Wellington X
No. 146, 159	M.B.	Total 40	Wellington III, X
No. 489, 494, 495 (all R.C.A.F.)	M.B.	Total 60	Wellington X
	M.B.	Total 60	(On loan from the U.S.)

U.S. 4th HEAVY BOMBARDMENT WING

Sqdn.	Rel.	Aircraft	Est. Type
340th, 341st, 342nd, 414th	H.B.	Total 48	Fortress II
352nd, 353rd, 354th, 419th	H.B.	Total 48	Fortress II
346th, 347th, 348th, 416th	H.B.	Total 48	Fortress II
304th, 404th, 404th, 494th	H.B.	Total 48	Fortress II

U.S. 4th MEDIUM BOMBARDMENT WING

Sqdn.	Rel.	Aircraft	Est. Type
370th, 380th, 391st, 448th	M.B.	Total 35	Mitchell II
440th, 446th, 447th, 448th	M.B.	Total 35	Mitchell II
95th, 404th, 97th	T.L.F.	Total 75	Lightning II

U.S. 42nd MEDIUM BOMBARDMENT WING

Sqdn.	Rel.	Aircraft	Est. Type
340th, 375th, 385th, 432nd	M.B.	Total 38	Marauder IA
437th, 438th, 439th, 440th	M.B.	Total 38	Marauder IA
441st, 442nd, 443rd, 444th	M.B.	Total 38	Marauder IA
376th, 404th, 404th	T.L.F.	Total 75	Lightning II
376th, 376th, 404th	T.L.F.	Total 75	Lightning II
376th, 376th, 404th	T.L.F.	Total 75	Lightning II

N.A.S.A.F.

Sqdn.	Rel.	Aircraft	Est. Type
1/11, 11/25, 1/25 (all F.E.A.F.)	Medium Bombers (F.E.A.F.)	Total 40	LeO 15
No. 12, 24 (both S.A.A.F.)	L.B.	Total 48	Boston III
No. 21 (S.A.A.F.)	L.B.	Total 24	Baltimore III IIIA, IV
No. 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, 61, 63, 65, 67, 69, 71, 73, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 111, 113, 115, 117, 119, 121, 123, 125, 127, 129, 131, 133, 135, 137, 139, 141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 151, 153, 155, 157, 159, 161, 163, 165, 167, 169, 171, 173, 175, 177, 179, 181, 183, 185, 187, 189, 191, 193, 195, 197, 199, 201, 203, 205, 207, 209, 211, 213, 215, 217, 219, 221, 223, 225, 227, 229, 231, 233, 235, 237, 239, 241, 243, 245, 247, 249, 251, 253, 255, 257, 259, 261, 263, 265, 267, 269, 271, 273, 275, 277, 279, 281, 283, 285, 287, 289, 291, 293, 295, 297, 299, 301, 303, 305, 307, 309, 311, 313, 315, 317, 319, 321, 323, 325, 327, 329, 331, 333, 335, 337, 339, 341, 343, 345, 347, 349, 351, 353, 355, 357, 359, 361, 363, 365, 367, 369, 371, 373, 375, 377, 379, 381, 383, 385, 387, 389, 391, 393, 395, 397, 399, 401, 403, 405, 407, 409, 411, 413, 415, 417, 419, 421, 423, 425, 427, 429, 431, 433, 435, 437, 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839, 841, 843, 845, 847, 849, 851, 853, 855, 857, 859, 861, 863, 865, 867, 869, 871, 873, 875, 877, 879, 881, 883, 885, 887, 889, 891, 893, 895, 897, 899, 901, 903, 905, 907, 909, 911, 913, 915, 917, 919, 921, 923, 925, 927, 929, 931, 933, 935, 937, 939, 941, 943, 945, 947, 949, 951, 953, 955, 957, 959, 961, 963, 965, 967, 969, 971, 973, 975, 977, 979, 981, 983, 985, 987, 989, 991, 993, 995, 997, 999, 1001, 1003, 1005, 1007, 1009, 1011, 1013, 1015, 1017, 1019, 1021, 1023, 1025, 1027, 1029, 1031, 1033, 1035, 1037, 1039, 1041, 1043, 1045, 1047, 1049, 1051, 1053, 1055, 1057, 1059, 1061, 1063, 1065, 1067, 1069, 1071, 1073, 1075, 1077, 1079, 1081, 1083, 1085, 1087, 1089, 1091, 1093, 1095, 1097, 1099, 1101, 1103, 1105, 1107, 1109, 1111, 1113, 1115, 1117, 1119, 1121, 1123, 1125, 1127, 1129, 1131, 1133, 1135, 1137, 1139, 1141, 1143, 1145, 1147, 1149, 1151, 1153, 1155, 1157, 1159, 1161, 1163, 1165, 1167, 1169, 1171, 1173, 1175, 1177, 1179, 1181, 1183, 1185, 1187, 1189, 1191, 1193, 1195, 1197, 1199, 1201, 1203, 1205, 1207, 1209, 1211, 1213, 1215, 1217, 1219, 1221, 1223, 1225, 1227, 1229, 1231, 1233, 1235, 1237, 1239, 1241, 1243, 1245, 1247, 1249, 1251, 1253, 1255, 1257, 1259, 1261, 1263, 1265, 1267, 1269, 1271, 1273, 1275, 1277, 1279, 1281, 1283, 1285, 1287, 1289, 1291, 1293, 1295, 1297, 1299, 1301, 1303, 1305, 1307, 1309, 1311, 1313, 1315, 1317, 1319, 1321, 1323, 1325, 1327, 1329, 1331, 1333, 1335, 1337, 1339, 1341, 1343, 1345, 1347, 1349, 1351, 1353, 1355, 1357, 1359, 1361, 1363, 1365, 1367, 1369, 1371, 1373, 1375, 1377, 1379, 1381, 1383, 1385, 1387, 1389, 1391, 1393, 1395, 1397, 1399, 1401, 1403, 1405, 1407, 1409, 1411, 1413, 1415, 1417, 1419, 1421, 1423, 1425, 1427, 1429, 1431, 1433, 1435, 1437, 1439, 1441, 1443, 1445, 1447, 1449, 1451, 1453, 1455, 1457, 1459, 1461, 1463, 1465, 1467, 1469, 1471, 1473, 1475, 1477, 1479, 1481, 1483, 1485, 1487, 1489, 1491, 1493, 1495, 1497, 1499, 1501, 1503, 1505, 1507, 1509, 1511, 1513, 1515, 1517, 1519, 1521, 1523, 1525, 1527, 1529, 1531, 1533, 1535, 1537, 1539, 1541, 1543, 1545, 1547, 1549, 1551, 1553, 1555, 1557, 1559, 1561, 1563, 1565, 1567, 1569, 1571, 1573, 1575, 1577, 1579, 1581, 1583, 1585, 1587, 1589, 1591, 1593, 1595, 1597, 1599, 1601, 1603, 1605, 1607, 1609, 1611, 1613, 1615, 1617, 1619, 1621, 1623, 1625, 1627, 1629, 1631, 1633, 1635, 1637, 1639, 1641, 1643, 1645, 1647, 1649, 1651, 1653, 1655, 1657, 1659, 1661, 1663, 1665, 1667, 1669, 1671, 1673, 1675, 1677, 1679, 1681, 1683, 1685, 1687, 1689, 1691, 1693, 1695, 1697, 1699, 1701, 1703, 1705, 1707, 1709, 1711, 1713, 1715, 1717, 1719, 1721, 1723, 1725, 1727, 1729, 1731, 1733, 1735, 1737, 1739, 1741, 1743, 1745, 1747, 1749, 1751, 1753, 1755, 1757, 1759, 1761, 1763, 1765, 1767, 1769, 1771, 1773, 1775, 1777, 1779, 1781, 1783, 1785, 1787, 1789, 1791, 1793, 1795, 1797, 1799, 1801, 1803, 1805, 1807, 1809, 1811, 1813, 1815, 1817, 1819, 1821, 1823, 1825, 1827, 1829, 1831, 1833, 1835, 1837, 1839, 1841, 1843, 1845, 1847, 1849, 1851, 1853, 1855, 1857, 1859, 1861, 1863, 1865, 1867, 1869, 1871, 1873, 1875, 1877, 1879, 1881, 1883, 1885, 1887, 1889, 1891, 1893, 1895, 1897, 1899, 1901, 1903, 1905, 1907, 1909, 1911, 1913, 1915, 1917, 1919, 1921, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1929, 1931, 1933, 1935, 1937, 1939, 1941, 1943, 1945, 1947, 1949, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957, 1959, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2025, 2027, 2029, 2031, 2033, 2035, 2037, 2039, 2041, 2043, 2045, 2047, 2049, 2051, 2053, 2055, 2057, 2059, 2061, 2063, 2065, 2067, 2069, 2071, 2073, 2075, 2077, 2079, 2081, 2083, 2085, 2087, 2089, 2091, 2093, 2095, 2097, 2099, 2101, 2103, 2105, 2107, 2109, 2111, 2113, 2115, 2117, 2119, 2121, 2123, 2125, 2127, 2129, 2131, 2133, 2135, 2137, 2139, 2141, 2143, 2145, 2147, 2149, 2151, 2153, 2155, 2157, 2159, 2161, 2163, 2165, 2167, 2169, 2171, 2173, 2175, 2177, 2179, 2181, 2183, 2185, 2187, 2189, 2191, 2193, 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3191, 3193, 3195, 3197, 3199, 3201, 3203, 3205, 3207, 3209, 3211, 3213, 3215, 3217, 3219, 3221, 3223, 3225, 3227, 3229, 3231, 3233, 3235, 3237, 3239, 3241, 3243, 3245, 3247, 3249, 3251, 3253, 3255, 3257, 3259, 3261, 3263, 3265, 3267, 3269, 3271, 3273, 3275, 3277, 3279, 3281, 3283, 3285, 3287, 3289, 3291, 3293, 3295, 3297, 3299, 3301, 3303, 3305, 3307, 3309, 3311, 3313, 3315, 3317, 3319, 3321, 3323, 3325, 3327, 3329, 3331, 3333, 3335, 3337, 3339, 3341, 3343, 3345, 3347, 3349, 3351, 3353, 3355, 3357, 3359, 3361, 3363, 3365, 3367, 3369, 3371, 3373, 3375, 3377, 3379, 3381, 3383, 3385, 3387, 3389, 3391, 3393, 3395, 3397, 3399, 3401, 3403, 3405, 3407, 3409, 3411, 3413, 3415, 3417, 3419, 3421, 3423, 3425, 3427, 3429, 3431, 3433, 3435, 3437, 3439, 3441, 3443, 3445, 3447, 3449, 3451, 3453, 3455, 3457, 3459, 3461, 3463, 3465, 3467, 3469, 3471, 3473, 3475, 3477, 3479, 3481, 3483, 3485, 3487, 3489, 3491, 3493, 3495, 3497, 3499, 3501, 3503, 3505, 3507, 3509, 3511, 3513, 3515, 3517, 3519, 3521, 3523, 3525, 3527, 3529, 3531, 3533, 3535, 3537, 3539, 3541, 3543, 3545, 3547, 3549, 3551, 3553, 3555, 3557, 3559, 3561, 3563, 3565, 3			

31st JANUARY, 1944

MEDITERRANEAN ALLIED AIR FORCES

NOTE.—OPERATIONAL COMMAND AND CONTROL ONLY
M.A.S.A.F. including M.I.Q., M.I.A. } — 3,976
M.I.C., M.I.P., M.I.E. } — 794
GRAND TOTAL — 4,770

Spds.	Role	Aircraft Est.	Type
No. 118	A.C. (S.D.) Wing, R.A.F.	11	Halifax II
No. 624	S.O.E.	11	Halifax II
No. 1596 Flight (Polish)	S.O.E.	6	Halifax II

M.A.S.A.F.

Spds.	Role	Aircraft Est.	Type
No. 211	Strat. B. (Det. from D.A.F.)	12	Spitfire VIII
U.S. 57th MEDICAL BOMBARDMENT WING			
814, 82nd, 82nd, 431st	M.B.	Total 64	Mitchell II
445th, 466th, 477th, 480th	M.B.	Total 65	Mitchell II
486th, 497th, 498th, 499th	M.B.	Total 64	Mitchell II

M.A.T.A.F.

Spds.	Role	Aircraft Est.	Type
345th, 375th, 505th, 433rd	M.B.	Total 64	Marauder IA II
437th, 458th, 439th, 440th	M.B.	Total 64	Marauder IA II
445th, 472nd, 439th, 440th	M.B.	Total 64	Marauder IA II

M.A.S.A.F.

Spds.	Role	Aircraft Est.	Type
No. 27, 70	No. 27th GROUP, R.A.F.	13	Forcres II, Mitchell II
No. 40	M.B.	Total 40	Wellington X
No. 104	M.B.	Total 50	Wellington XI, X
No. 146, 150	M.B.	Total 40	Wellington X

U.S. FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

Spds.	Role	Aircraft Est.	Type
U.S. 3th HEAVY BOMBARDMENT WING			
26th, 49th, 66th, 459th	H.B.	Total 48	Forcres II
50th, 51st, 52nd, 414th	M.B.	Total 40	Forcres II
56th, 57th, 58th, 416th	H.B.	Total 48	Forcres II
57th, 71st, 64th	H.B.	Total 48	Forcres II
37th, 48th, 49th	T.E.F.	Total 75	Lightning P3B G
37th, 48th, 49th	T.E.F.	Total 75	Lightning P3B G
37th, 48th, 49th	S.E.F.	Total 75	Thunderbolt P31 D

U.S. 47th HEAVY BOMBARDMENT WING

Spds.	Role	Aircraft Est.	Type
52nd, 54th, 55th, 413th	H.B.	Total 48	Liberator IIIA
57th, 59th, 54th, 510th	H.B.	Total 48	Liberator IIIA
71st, 71st, 71st, 71st	H.B.	Total 48	Liberator IV
70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd	H.B.	Total 48	Liberator IV
74th, 75th, 76th, 77th	H.B.	Total 48	Liberator IV
80th, 66th, 97th	T.E.F.	Total 75	Lightning P3B G

M.A.S.A.F.

Spds.	Role	Aircraft Est.	Type
No. 40 (M.A.S.A.F.)	No. 27 Wing, R.A.F.	11	Marauder IX
No. 80	S.O.E.	5	Spitfire IX/FLY XI
U.S. 96th PHOTOGRAPHIC RECONNAISSANCE WING			
9th, 14th, 15th	T.B.	Total 30	Lightning P3B G

M.A.C.A.F.

Spds.	Role	Aircraft Est.	Type
3 (F.A.F.)	G.R.	15	Lancaster 308
4 (F.A.F.)	G.R.	14	Walrus III
40 (F.A.F. and both U.S.N.)	G.R.	14	Wellington XII XIV
No. 438 (R.A.A.F.)	G.R.	20	Wellington XI XII XIII XIV
1, 5, 10, 16 (both F.A.A.F.)	T.E.F.	Total 12	Avrochica VI
1 (F.A.A.F.)	T.E.F.	Total 12	Beaufighter VII
1 (F.A.A.F.)	S.E.F.	25	Avrochica IX
No. 32 (F.A.A.F.)	S.E.F.	16	Spitfire VIII IX
No. 33 (F.A.A.F.)	S.E.F.	16	Beaufighter VII
No. 31	T.E.F.	16	Beaufighter VII

A.H.Q., MALTA

Spds.	Role	Aircraft Est.	Type
No. 51	A.C. 75 Wing, R.A.F.	16	Reliance IIIA IV
No. 61	G.R.	16	Blenheim V (Italy)
No. 171	S.E.F.	16	Hurricane IIC, Spitfire VII G/7
No. 172	T.E.F.	16	Beaufighter VII G/XIX
No. 69	R.A.F. Station, Lasp	16	Blenheim IV V
No. 37	G.R.	16	Wellington XI, XII, XIII
No. 371	G.R.	16	Mosquito XII
No. 350	T.E.F.	16	Spitfire VI, IX
No. 188, 219	S.E.F.	Total 32	Spitfire VI, IX

No. 212 GROUP, R.A.F.

Spds.	Role	Aircraft Est.	Type
No. 93	A.C. 206 Wing, R.A.F.	16	Spitfire VI IX
No. 11	G.R. (Det. from U.S. 93rd)	16	Marauder IA
No. 105	S.E.F.	16	Spitfire VII G
No. 439	T.E.F.	16	Beaufighter VII G
410th (F.A.S.)	T.E.F.	16	Beaufighter VII G
No. 608	G.R.	16	Wellington IIIA V, VI
No. 1435	S.E.F.	16	Spitfire IX
No. 73	S.E.F.	16	Spitfire VI, IX

U.S. XII FIGHTER COMMAND

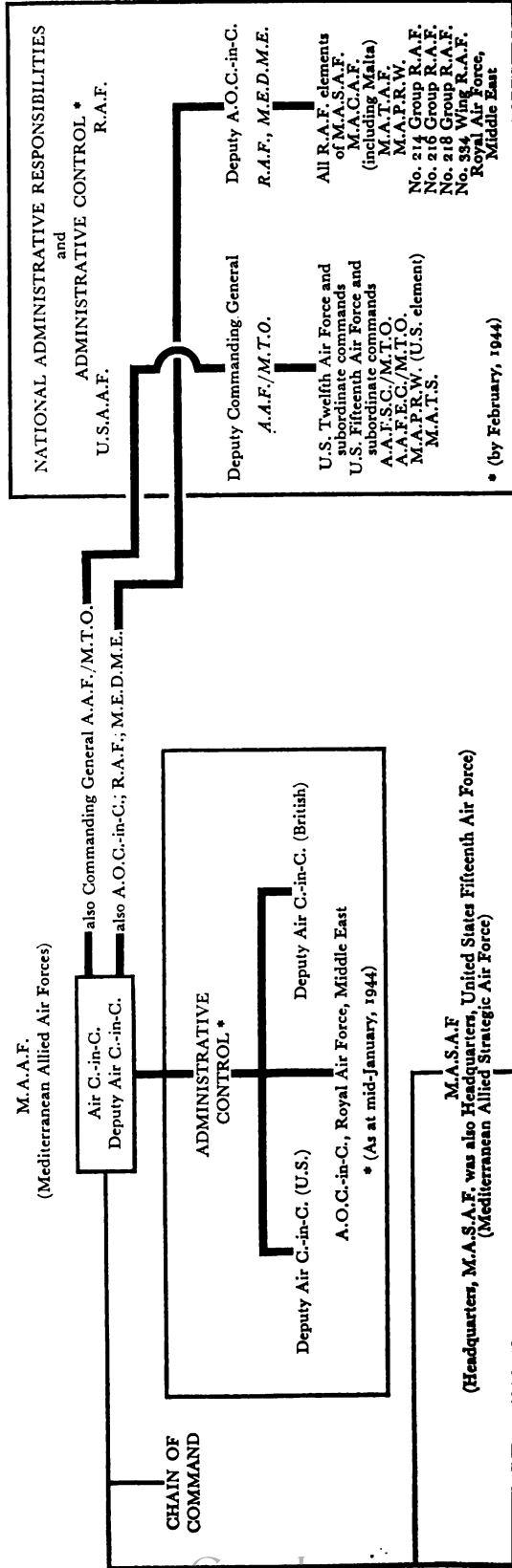
Spds.	Role	Aircraft Est.	Type
U.S. 1st FIGHTER WING			
91st, 92nd, 101st	S.E.F.	Total 75	Mustang I
116 (F.A.A.F.)	S.E.F.	16	Spitfire VII IX
No. 138 (F.A.A.F.)	S.E.F.	16	Spitfire VII IX
U.S. 6th FIGHTER WING			
No. 36, 37 (both F.A.A.F.)	S.E.F.	Total 32	Spitfire VII IX

APPENDIX 5

CHAIN OF COMMAND— ALLIED AIR FORCES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND MIDDLE EAST THEATRE

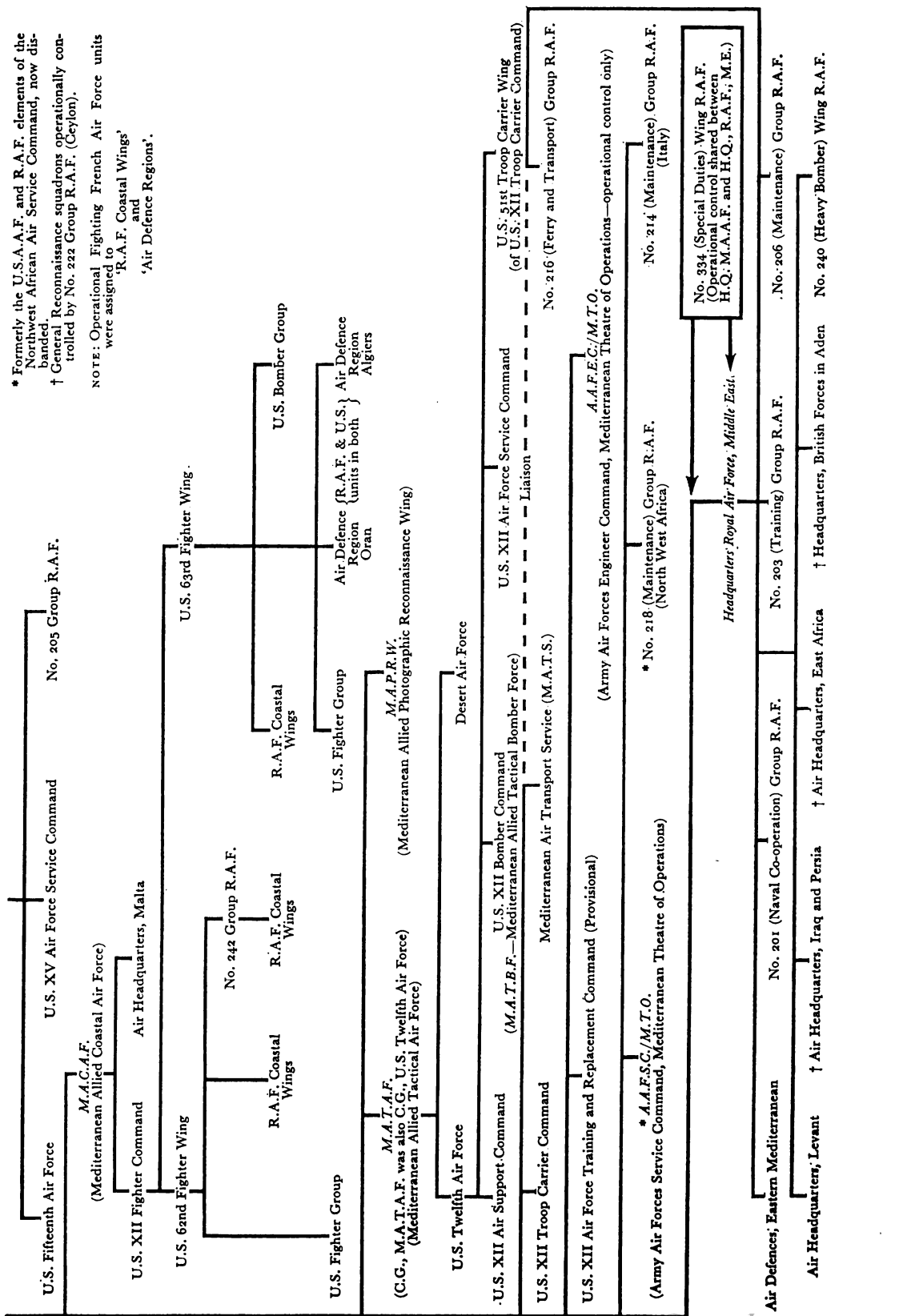
(15th January 1944)

LEGEND
 CHAIN OF COMMAND ———
 ADMINISTRATION ———



* Formerly the U.S.A.F. and R.A.F. elements of the Northwest African Air Service Command, now disbanded.
 † General Reconnaissance squadrons operationally controlled by No. 222 Group R.A.F. (Ceylon).

NOTE: Operational Fighting French Air Force units were assigned to 'R.A.F. Coastal Wings' and 'Air Defence Regions'.



APPENDIX 6

SOME PARTICULARS OF
ALLIED AND ENEMY AIRCRAFT
IN USE IN THE MIDDLE EAST
AND MEDITERRANEAN
THEATRE DURING THE PERIOD
OF THIS VOLUME

The figures in these tables are no more than a general guide to the characteristics and capabilities of each type of aircraft. The performance is affected by the climate, the skill of the pilot, the accuracy of navigation, and the uncertainties of flying in the presence of the enemy. For these reasons a safety margin has to be imposed, so that the operational range—not to be confused with the radius of action—is always much less than the still air range. Broadly speaking, after allowing for the running of the engines on the ground and for the climb to the height quoted, the still air range is the distance that can be flown in still air until the tanks are empty.

Notes:

- (i) The most economical cruising speed is the speed at which the greatest range is achieved.
- (ii) The height given in column IV is the optimum height for the maximum speed.
- (iii) In some instances the American and British names of an aircraft of American design and manufacture vary. For example, the American Warhawk fighter is known to the British as the Kittyhawk. To avoid confusion only the British names of such aircraft are used in these tables.
- (iv) Particulars of Allied and enemy aircraft in use during the period of this volume but not included in the following tables may be found in the relevant appendices in previous volumes.

FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

British

Aircraft	Fuel and Still Air Range at Most Economical Cruising Speed	Most Economical Cruising Speed in Miles per Hour	Maximum Speed in Miles per Hour	Armament	Remarks
Beaufighter Mk. X Twin-engine monoplane Crew 2	<i>Galls.</i> 682 682 <i>Miles</i> 1,470(a) 1,565(b)	205 at 5,000 ft.	321 at 8,300 ft.(c)	1 × 0.303 4 × 20 mm	(a) With rocket projectiles or torpedo. (b) With bombs. (c) With Hercules XVIII engines. Could carry rocket projectiles. (a) With cannon only. (b) With extra tanks, jettisoned when empty. (c) With Hercules XVIII engines.
Beaufighter Mk. XIC Twin-engine monoplane Crew 2	550 882(b)	210 at 5,000 ft.	321 at 8,300 ft.(c)	7 × 0.303 4 × 20 mm	Could carry rocket projectiles. (a) With cannon only. (b) With extra tanks, jettisoned when empty. (c) With Hercules XVIII engines.
Hurricane Mk. IV Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	97	176 at 2,000 ft.	284 at 13,500 ft.	2 × 0.303 2 × 40 mm	Could carry rocket projectiles or bombs in lieu of 40 mm guns.
Kittyhawk Mk. IV Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	123 166(a)	195 at 15,000 ft.	355 at 12,000 ft.	4 × 0.50	(a) With extra tank. American design and manufacture.
Mosquito Mk. VI Twin-engine monoplane Crew 2	450 613(a)	255 at 15,000 ft.	368 at 14,000 ft.(b)	4 × 0.303 4 × 20 mm	(a) With extra tanks. (b) Performance slightly superior with Merlin 25 engines.
Mosquito P.R. Mk. IX Twin-engine monoplane Crew 2	657 857(a)	250 at 15,000 ft.	408 at 26,000 ft.	None	(a) With extra tanks.
Mosquito Mk. XII Twin-engine monoplane Crew 2	400	255 at 15,000 ft.	370 at 14,000 ft.	4 × 20 mm	
Mosquito Mk. XIII Twin-engine monoplane Crew 2	450 613(a)	255 at 15,000 ft.	370 at 14,000 ft.	4 × 20 mm	(a) With extra tanks, jettisoned when empty.
Mosquito P.R. Mk. XVI Twin-engine monoplane Crew 2	657 857(a)	250 at 15,000 ft.	415 at 28,000 ft.	None	(a) With extra tanks.
Mustang Mk. III Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	150 275(a)	253 at 20,000 ft.	450 at 28,000 ft.	4 × 0.50	(a) With two extra 62.5 gallon tanks, jettisoned when empty. Could carry 2 × 500 lb bombs in lieu of tanks. American design and manufacture. Fitted with Packard Merlin engine V-1650-3. Performance with Packard Merlin engine V-1650-7 is shown under 'Fighter Aircraft—United States'.
Spitfire Mk. VIII Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	120 290(a)	220 at 20,000 ft.	408 at 25,000 ft.	4 × 0.303 2 × 20 mm or 4 × 20 mm	(a) With extra 170 gallon tank, jettisoned when empty.
Spitfire P.R. Mk. XI Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	217 307(a)	260 at 30,000 ft.	442 at 26,500 ft.(b)	None	(a) With extra 90 gallon tank, jettisoned when empty. (b) With Merlin 70 engine. Performance slightly inferior with Merlin 69 engine.

BOMBER AIRCRAFT

British

Aircraft	Still Air Range with Associated Bombload	Most Economical Cruising Speed in Miles per Hour	Maximum Speed in Miles per Hour	Armament	Remarks
Baltimore Mk. IV Twin-engine monoplane Crew 3	<i>Miles</i> 830 2,270	200 at 15,000 ft.	300 at 13,000 ft.	7 × 0.50	American design and manufacture.
Baltimore G.R. Mk. V Twin-engine monoplane Crew 3	1,000 2,500	200 at 5,000 ft.	300 at 13,000 ft.	7 × 0.50	American design and manufacture.
Boston Mk. IIIA Twin-engine monoplane Crew 4	1,240 2,035	200 at 15,000 ft.	318 at 10,500 ft.	7 × 0.30 1 × 0.303	American design and manufacture.
Catalina Flying Boat Mk. IVB Twin-engine monoplane Crew 9	1,395 2,950	123 at 5,000 ft.	177 at 5,000 ft.	2 × 0.303 2 × 0.50	American design and manufacture. Performance of Mk. I, IB and II was very similar to that of Mk. IVB.
Dakota Mk. III Twin-engine monoplane Crew 3	1,530(a) 1,910(b) 3,220(c)	160 at 10,000 ft.	220 at 10,000 ft.	None	Transport aircraft. American design and manufacture. (a) With 31 troops. (b) With 26 troops. (c) With 8 troops.
Halifax Mk. V Four-engine monoplane Crew 6	580 1,660	195 at 15,000 ft.	253 at 10,000 ft.	9 × 0.303	American design and manufacture.
Hudson Mk. VI Twin-engine monoplane Crew 4	1,140 1,980	150 at 5,000 ft.	253 at 5,600 ft.	7 × 0.303	American design and manufacture. Performance of the Mk. V was similar to that of the Mk. VI.
Liberator Mk. III Four-engine monoplane Crew 8	1,290 2,470 3,280(a)	200 at 20,000 ft.	275 at 20,000 ft.	4 × 0.303 8 × 0.50	American design and manufacture. (a) Ferrying tankage.
Liberator Mk. VI Four-engine monoplane Crew 8	990 2,290 2,990(a)	193 at 20,000 ft.	270 at 20,000 ft.	4 × 0.303 8 × 0.50	American design and manufacture. (a) Ferrying tankage.

BOMBER AIRCRAFT (Continued)

British

Aircraft	Still Air Range with Associated Bombload	Most Economical Cruising Speed in Miles per Hour	Maximum Speed in Miles per Hour	Armament	Remarks
Marauder Mk. IA Twin-engine monoplane Crew 6	<i>Miles</i> 387 1,870	190 at 15,000 ft.	293 at 14,000 ft.	2 × 0'30 3 × 0'50	American design and manufacture.
Marauder Mk. II Twin-engine monoplane Crew 6	1,200 2,600(a)	175 at 10,000 ft.	305 at 15,000 ft.	12 × 0'50	American design and manufacture. (a) Ferrying tankage.
Sunderland Flying Boat Mk. III Four-engine monoplane Crew 10	2,500 3,120	143 at 5,000 ft.	212 at 1,500 ft.	7 × 0'303	
Ventura G.R. Mk. V Twin-engine monoplane Crew 5	1,530 2,670(a)	165 at 5,000 ft.	278 at 15,000 ft.	4 × 0'50 2 × 0'30	(a) With extra tanks, jettisoned when empty. American design and manufacture.
Wellington Mk. XI Twin-engine monoplane Crew 6	1,485 2,786	160 at 5,000 ft.	255 at 13,000 ft.	6 × 0'303	
Wellington Mk. XII Twin-engine monoplane Crew 6	1,435 2,040	160 at 5,000 ft.	256 at 6,000 ft.	6 × 0'303	Leigh Light installed.
Wellington Mk. XIII Twin-engine monoplane Crew 6	1,390 1,986	155 at 5,000 ft.	244 at 700 ft.	8 × 0'303	
Wellington Mk. XIV Twin-engine monoplane Crew 6	1,425 2,030	155 at 5,000 ft.	250 at 700 ft.	6 × 0'303	Leigh Light installed.

FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

United States

Aircraft	Fuel and Still Air Range at Most Economical Cruising Speed	Most Economical Cruising Speed in Miles per Hour	Maximum Speed in Miles per Hour	Armament	Remarks
Airacobra Mk. I & IA Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	Galls. 100 240(a)	Miles 630 1,520	363 at 6,500 ft.	1 × 37 mm and 4 × 0·30 2 × 0·50 or 6 × 0·50	(a) With extra tanks, jettisoned when empty. Could carry one 500 lb bomb in lieu of tanks. (b) The Mk. IA had one 20 mm cannon in place of one 37 mm cannon.
Beaufighter Mk. VIF Twin-engine monoplane Crew 2	550 610(a)	1,480 1,640	333 at 15,000 ft.	6 × 0·303 4 × 20 mm	British design and manufacture. (a) With extra tanks.
Kittyhawk Mk. IV Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	183 166(a)	845 1,138	355 at 12,000 ft.	4 × 0·50	(a) With extra tank.
Lightning (P.38G) Twin-engine monoplane Crew 1	242 492(a)	640 1,270	408 at 28,000 ft.	4 × 0·50 1 × 20 mm	(a) With extra tank.
Mustang Mk. III Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	190 275(a)	950 1,710	442 at 28,000 ft.	4 × 0·50	(a) With two extra 62·5 gallon tanks, jettisoned when empty. Could carry 2 × 500 lb bombs in lieu of tanks. Fitted with Packard Merlin engine V-1650-7. Performance with Packard Merlin engine V-1650-3 is shown under 'Fighter Aircraft—British'. The performance of the Mustang A36A dive-bomber with Allison engine was similar to that of the Mustang Mk. II. With the Packard Merlin engine it was similar to that of the Mustang Mk. III.
Spitfire Mk. VC Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	84 174(a)	469 1,135	360 at 19,500 ft.	4 × 0·303 2 × 20 mm or 8 × 0·303 or 4 × 20 mm	British design and manufacture. (a) With extra 90 gallon tank, jettisoned when empty.
Spitfire Mk. VIII Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	120 290(a)	660 1,530	408 at 25,000 ft.	4 × 0·303 2 × 20 mm or 4 × 20 mm	British design and manufacture. (a) With extra 170 gallon tank, jettisoned when empty.
Spitfire Mk. IX Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	85 255(a)	434 1,355	408 at 25,000 ft.	4 × 0·303 2 × 20 mm	British design and manufacture. (a) With extra 170 gallon tank, jettisoned when empty. Could carry one 500 lb and 2 × 250 lb bombs in lieu of tank.
Thunderbolt (P.47D) Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	254 504(a)	840 1,810	420 at 26,000 ft.	6 or 8 × 0·50	(a) With extra tanks, jettisoned when empty. Could carry two 500 lb bombs in lieu of tanks.

BOMBER AIRCRAFT

United States

Aircraft	Still Air Range with Associated Bombload	Most Economical Cruising Speed in Miles per Hour	Maximum Speed in Miles per Hour	Armament	Remarks
Boston Mk. III Twin-engine monoplane Crew 4	<i>Miles</i> 1,020	200 at 15,000 ft.	304 at 13,000 ft.	7 × 0.303	
Catalina Flying Boat Mk. III Twin-engine monoplane Crew 9	4,000 lb Nil	126 at 5,000 ft.	179 at 5,000 ft.	3 × 0.303 2 × 0.50	
Dakota Mk. III Twin-engine monoplane Crew 3	1,520(a) 1,910(b) 3,220(c)	160 at 10,000 ft.	220 at 10,000 ft.	None	Transport aircraft. (a) With 31 troops. (b) With 26 troops. (c) With 8 troops.
Fortress Mk. III Four-engine monoplane Crew 9	1,140 2,740 3,510(a)	196 at 20,000 ft.	280 at 20,000 ft.	13 × 0.50	(a) Ferrying tankage.
Liberator Mk. IIIA/IV Four-engine monoplane Crew 8	1,290 2,470 3,280(a)	200 at 20,000 ft.	275 at 20,000 ft.	10 × 0.50 or 11 × 0.50	(a) Ferrying tankage.
Liberator Mk. VI Four-engine monoplane Crew 8	990 2,290 2,990(a)	195 at 20,000 ft.	270 at 20,000 ft.	8 × 0.50 or 10 × 0.50	(a) Ferrying tankage.
Marauder Mk. II Twin-engine monoplane Crew 6	1,200 2,600(a)	175 at 10,000 ft.	305 at 15,000 ft.	12 × 0.50	(a) Ferrying tankage.
Mitchell Mk. II Twin-engine monoplane Crew 5	1,150 2,260	210 at 15,000 ft.	295 at 15,000 ft.	1 × 0.30 4 × 0.50	
Mitchell (B.25G) Twin-engine monoplane Crew 5	1,525	200 at 15,000 ft. (estimated)	281 at 15,000 ft. 260 at sea level	1 × 0.30 4 × 0.50 1 × 75 mm	

FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

German

Aircraft	Fuel and Still Air Range at Most Economical Cruising Speed	Most Economical Cruising Speed in Miles per Hour	Maximum Speed in Miles per Hour	Armament	Remarks
Fw. 190 Mk. A-4 Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	<i>Galls.</i> 115 <i>Miles</i> 497	225 at 19,000 ft.*	418 at 21,000 ft.	2 × 7.9 mm 4 × 20 mm	* Estimated Performance figures based on those of the Mk. A-3 in the absence of complete details of those of the Mk. A-4 which were similar to those of the Mk. A-3. The Mk. A-4/UJ8 fighter-bomber could carry 4 × 110 lb bombs or 1 × 551 lb bomb or 2 × 551 lb bombs with corresponding reductions in armament, speed and range.
Ju. 88 Mk. C-6b Twin-engine monoplane Crew 3	370 790(a)	200 at 18,000 ft.*	311 at 20,000 ft.	3 × 7.9 mm 2 × 13 mm 3 to 5 × 20 mm (b)	* Estimated Night-fighter version. The performance of the day fighter version (the Mk. C-6a) was similar. (a) With extra tanks. (b) Some aircraft carried two extra 20 mm cannon firing upwards.
Me. 109 Mk. G-6 Single-engine monoplane Crew 1	88 154(a)	260 at 19,000 ft.	386 at 23,000 ft.	2 × 13 mm 1 × 20 mm (b)	(a) With extra tanks. (b) Carried additionally 2 × 20 mm cannon in wing packs.
Me. 410 Mk. A-1/U2 Twin-engine monoplane Crew 2	528	257 at 18,000 ft.	388 at 22,000 ft.	2 × 7.9 mm 2 × 13 mm 4 × 20 mm	The Mk. A-1/U1 was of similar performance. It was fitted with a camera and used for long-range reconnaissance.

BOMBER AIRCRAFT

German

Aircraft	Still Air Range with Associated Bombload	Most Economical Cruising Speed in Miles per Hour	Maximum Speed in Miles per Hour	Armament	Remarks
Do. 217 Mk. E-2 Twin-engine monoplane Crew 4	<i>Miles</i> 1,430 1,740(a)	245 at 17,000 ft.	320 at 17,000 ft.	3 × 7.9 mm 2 × 13 mm 1 × 15 mm or 2 × 7.9 mm 2 × 13 mm	(a) With extra tanks. The performance of the Mk. E-5 which carried the Hs. 293 radio-controlled glide bomb, and that of the Mk. K-2 which carried the FX. 1400 radio-controlled free-falling bomb were similar to that of the Mk. E-2.
He. 177 Mk. A-5/R2 Four-engine monoplane (twin-coupled engines) Crew 6	3,400 3,100	210 at 20,000 ft.	303 at 20,000 ft.	3 or 4 × 7.9 mm 3 × 13 mm 2 × 20 mm	In lieu of Hs. 293s or FX 1400s could carry externally parachute sea mines or torpedoes or, internally, 110 lb, 551 lb or 1,102 lb bombs. Capable of carrying for a short distance a maximum bomb-load of 13,200 lb stowed externally and internally.
Ju. 87 Mk. D-1 Single-engine monoplane Crew 2	510 720	180 at 15,000 ft.	255 at 13,500 ft.	4 × 7.9 mm (a)	(a) Carried additionally up to 12 × 7.9 mm guns in wing packs, especially on short-range sorties.

INDEX

To make reference easier, this Index is based on a frame-work comprising the three fighting Services—Air Forces, Land Forces, Naval Forces and their Administration. Under each of these major headings are subheads relevant to nationalities, formations, units and administrative matters: in each case alphabetically arranged. Royal Marine Commandos have been listed under Land Forces. For the period before the Italian surrender, 'Axis' is a word which covers German and Italian forces or policy. After that surrender, the term co-belligerent is used when reference is made to Italian forces operating with the Allies. The names of individuals appear in their alphabetical order, as do general matters such as Climate and Topography, etc.

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