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CHAPTER III

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Planning for Invasion

A. EARLY PLANNING

IN addition to providing a well organized, well equipped, and mobile striking force, fully trained in amphibious operations, General Clark was charged with the preparation of plans for and the execution of special operations under directives issued by the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Force. The first mission given Fifth Army was announced prior to its activation. On 24 December 1942 Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower notified the Commanding Generals of Twelfth Air Force, the Center Task Force, the Western Task Force, and the Northern Task Force that Fifth Army would be activated at an early date with General Clark commanding and that these forces would come under his command in the preparation of plans for the occupation of Spanish Morocco in event of Spanish hostility or if Spain should fail to resist German invasion.

The plan provided for the Center Task Force from the southern Mediterranean coast to launch an overland operation to capture Melilla, the Western Task Force to conduct an overland operation from the Port Lyautey area to capture Tangier, and the Northern Task Force by an amphibious operation to occupy the International Zone which bordered the Strait of Gibraltar on the south. This operation was known as Backbone II. Backbone I was the name which had been given to an operation having the same objective, planned prior to the Allied landings in North Africa on 8 November 1942. The limited forces available for the carrying out of Backbone II were a matter of much concern to General Clark during the first part of 1943. The situation was much relieved after the visit of General Orgaz to Fifth Army Headquarters in Oujda early in June, where parades and demonstrations involving the use of paratroopers and air force units were staged.

From the middle of June 1943 the Fifth Army planning staff, working under the direction of the Army G-3, Col. (later Brig. Gen.) Donald W. Brann,

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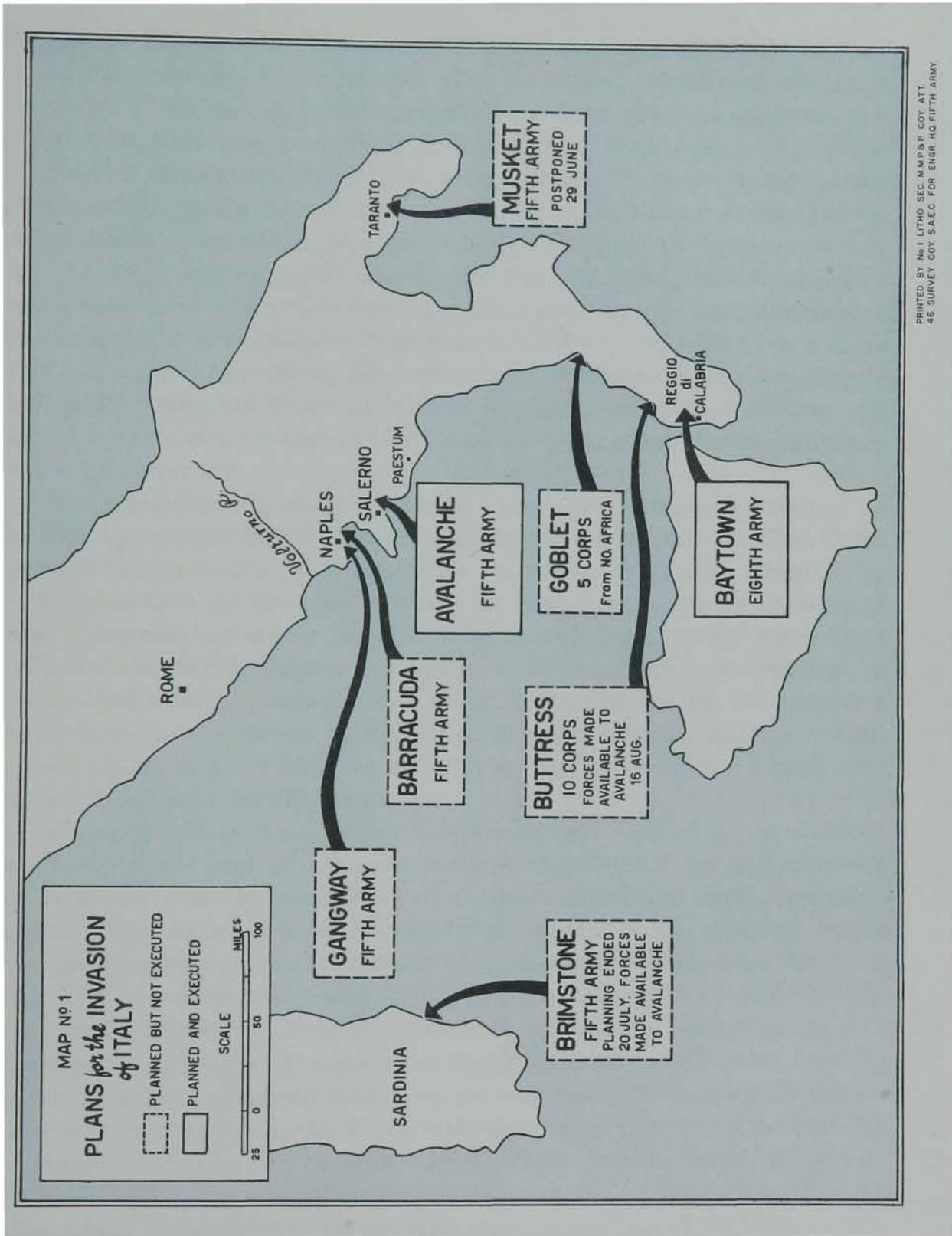
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was busy on several projects for the invasion of Axis territory in Europe. In all, the staff planned five operations, one against Sardinia (Brimstone), and the rest against various parts of the Italian mainland (Barracuda, Gangway, Musket, and Avalanche). (*See Map No. 1.*) The last plan, Avalanche, was finally put into operation as a full-scale invasion of the Italian mainland from the Gulf of Salerno.

The work of the planning staff can best be considered in relation to the strategy for the Mediterranean and along with the planning of the British 5 Corps, 10 Corps, and Eighth Army. When Operation Husky against Sicily was about to be launched, the Combined Chiefs of Staff directed the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Force, to prepare plans for the next mission which was to eliminate Italy from the war and contain the maximum number of German forces. In view of the military resources that might be available after the Sicilian campaign the alternatives at the end of June 1943 appeared to be either an amphibious attack on one of several places on the Italian mainland or an operation against the island of Sardinia. The alternatives were based on the assumption that Husky would be successful, but that Italian resistance elsewhere had not collapsed. It seemed reasonable to assume that Italian morale might be so low that Axis resistance would be less effective and less able to withstand prolonged attack than before Husky. If that proved to be the case at the end of our Sicilian operation, the Commander-in-Chief stated that he would recommend an assault of the Italian mainland with six divisions. If his appreciation were that this attack could not occupy the heel of the peninsula or exploit as far as Naples, he would then recommend Operation Brimstone, the assault on Sardinia.

As far back as the Anfa (Casablanca) conference between President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and Allied military leaders in January 1943, Sardinia had been considered a possible objective of our first European operation instead of Sicily. The capture of Sardinia would deprive the enemy of airfields for attacking Mediterranean shipping, would give us bases for air attacks on the continent, and would furnish a steppingstone for future operations against Italy or southern France. Although the decision was to attack Sicily first, Sardinia remained under consideration as a later objective.

On 10 June 1943 the Commander-in-Chief directed the Commanding General of Fifth Army to prepare plans for the Sardinian operation. A second directive from Allied Force Headquarters on 17 June 1943 instructed General Clark to take responsibility for making contact with the staffs of Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean (Naval) and of Air Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean and informed him that he was to retain his existing commitments in Northwest Africa. Much of the detailed planning for Brimstone was to be carried out in



the Fifth Army area, while a specialized planning staff from Fifth Army in Bouzerrea, near Algiers, co-ordinated the other services and dealt with the larger aspects. So long as the Sardinian invasion remained under consideration, the planning for Brimstone lay entirely in the hands of Fifth Army.

Further plans drawn up by Fifth Army included Operation Musket, a proposed landing on the heel of Italy near Taranto; Barracuda, which contemplated landing a small force on a week's notice near Naples to advance on that city; Gangway, a plan to sail directly into the Bay of Naples. The landings near Naples were expected to encounter slight resistance because of increasing indications of Italian weakness. The planning staffs of the British components were also engaged in planning three operations: Baytown, an assault on Reggio di Calabria across the Straits of Messina by Eighth Army; and Buttress and Goblet, operations of 10 Corps and 5 Corps directed against the toe and instep of Italy respectively.

The possibility of putting these Allied plans into action was delimited on 29 June 1943 when General Eisenhower cabled (*NAF 250*) the Combined Chiefs of Staff that he considered it impossible to mount the Taranto operation by Fifth Army (Musket) that year and that he was arranging for the planning of three possible actions in order to take advantage of any opportunity which might suddenly arise as the situation developed. These three were: (1) landings on the toe (Buttress) and instep (Goblet); (2) landing on the toe followed by a rapid overland exploitation to the heel, Naples, and Rome, and the reinforcement by sea of three divisions into Naples; (3) the Sardinian attack, both on a full and on a modified scale.

On 17 July 1943 the Combined Chiefs accepted for planning purposes General Eisenhower's strategical concept outlined above (*FAN 165*) and expressed their interest "in the possibilities of a direct amphibious landing operation against Naples in lieu of an attack on Sardinia, the indications regarding Italian resistance should make the risks involved worth while." Three days later General Eisenhower cabled General Clark (*Freedom, outgoing No. 2747*) to cease planning on Brimstone. This decision was dictated by the collapse of the Axis forces in Sicily and by the expectation that Italy could be eliminated from the war by rapid and continued attacks on the mainland. The consequent shift of interest from Sardinia to the Naples area eventually resulted in the planning of Avalanche by Fifth Army against Naples and the airfields nearby. On 26 July the Combined Chiefs cabled General Eisenhower (*FAN 175*), urging that he plan at once for Avalanche. On the same date the meetings of the Commanders-in-Chief at Tunis had determined to rush preparations for Avalanche if it could possibly be carried through.

B. PLANNING FOR AVALANCHE

1. *General Planning.* To meet the new demands Allied Force Headquarters issued a letter directive to the Commanding General of Fifth Army on 27 July 1943, instructing him to develop plans for seizing the port of Naples and securing the airfields nearby, "with a view to preparing a firm base for further offensive operations." In later paragraphs this letter of 27 July directed that the target date for the operation should be 7 September and called for a brief outline plan to be submitted by 7 August. The directive specified that joint commanders for navy and air should be appointed by the chiefs of those services in the Mediterranean and that the Commanding General of Fifth Army should co-ordinate his plan with the joint commanders. Rear Admiral J. L. Hall, Jr., (U.S.) and Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder (Br.) were later named to the positions in question. This divided authority placed General Clark at a disadvantage in the planning stage, but the naval and air forces co-operated effectively with Fifth Army during the subsequent invasion.

The planning and mounting of *Avalanche* were to be carried out under the direction of Allied Force Headquarters. The execution of the operation, however, was to be under command of 15th Army Group, the group headquarters command which had been set up under General Sir Harold R. L. Alexander to co-ordinate the operations of Seventh and Eighth Armies in Sicily. 15th Army Group was to continue in the chain of command under Allied Force Headquarters, since at this time the projected operations in Italy promised to involve the American Fifth Army and the British Eighth Army, or in lieu thereof 5 Corps, 10 Corps, or 13 Corps.

The ground forces made available to General Clark for Operation *Avalanche* were the troops allotted for the Sardinian assault plus the British 10 Corps, then assigned to the landing on the Italian toe (Buttress). Initially they comprised the following units:

<i>American</i>	{	VI Corps	{	10 Corps
		34th Division		46 Division
		36th Division		56 Division
		1st Armored Division		7 Armoured Division
		82d Airborne Division		1 Airborne Division

At the time the directive was issued, it was stated that the employment of airborne troops would depend on the available lift, and the plans for this portion

of the force were changed several times as facilities came to hand. Sufficient naval and air forces were to be provided by the respective commanders from resources in the Mediterranean Theater.

In the original directive there was an unusual and prophetic paragraph to the effect that a sudden change in the situation might permit an earlier descent on the Italian mainland than had been envisaged in *Avalanche* and hence that Fifth Army should be prepared to send one division on very short notice. The division was to sail on seven days' warning direct to Naples and to hold that port for the reception of further forces and supplies. The directive also stated that the 82d Airborne Division would be available to aid this operation as far as air transportation would permit. This provision indicates the influence of the secret knowledge of political developments in Italy, developments which were to come to a head fast in the next few weeks.

At the time of the Allied Force Headquarters directive to plan for *Avalanche*, 10 Corps was already well along with its plans for *Buttress*. The Commander-in-Chief cabled General Clark on 27 July that the only solution to the time factor in the problems of shipping, mounting, and equipping the forces for *Buttress* and *Avalanche* was to have 10 Corps prepare for both operations as alternatives and devise loading plans common to both. If *Avalanche* were launched before *Buttress*, the 10 Corps loading scheme for *Buttress* would be fitted into *Avalanche*. Shipping was limited, particularly landing craft; since the Sicilian attack, which had begun on 10 July, was going on and required considerable tonnage, the available craft had to be spread with great care. The 10 Corps plan for *Buttress* called for the use of all available LST's.

From the beginning General Clark opposed this plan, which would not provide a sufficient amount of suitable landing craft for the 36th Division, selected to lead the VI Corps assault. He considered it necessary to have some of the 36th Division Artillery, attached tank and tank destroyer units, and some engineers carried in LST's. As a result of General Clark's insistence three LST's were promised. This number was increased from time to time as more craft became available, thus resulting in revised loading plans with each increase. Ultimately 15 LST's were allotted for the 36th Division and attached troops. At the very last date the 179th Regimental Combat Team from the 45th Division was added to be a floating reserve, and additional craft were finally secured to lift that force from Sicily. Even after these arrangements had been completed two battalions of the 157th Infantry were inserted in the troop list and were brought in the D Day convoy.

The target date had been set on the basis of two factors: the phase of the moon, and the availability of landing craft. Since the landing craft had already

been used in Sicily, some time was required to repair the ravages of action and to make them serviceable. The following table shows the moon stages ⁽¹⁾ :

	<i>rise</i>	<i>set</i>
8 September (<i>first quarter</i>)	1505	0007
9 September	1605	0100
10 September	1701	0200

Furthermore, General Clark was eager to set the date as early as possible to avoid the gales and deterioration of the weather normal to October. D Day was finally fixed for 9 September.

A major question was the site for the Avalanche landings. The possibilities were the Gulf of Salerno area south of Naples and the coast of the Gulf of Gaeta north of Naples. The latter region offered two beach strips, one north and the other south of the Volturno River. The Allied Force Headquarters directive specified the Salerno area for several reasons, chief among them being that it lay within the range of air support from bases in Sicily. Beach study by G-2 indicated that the character of the beaches was better at Salerno than north of Naples. On the coast of the Gulf of Gaeta more small streams flow into the sea; at their mouths a shelf is built up and much more shoal results offshore. The advantages of better fighter cover and of more favorable beach conditions at Salerno were offset by the fact that the terrain and the tactical situation favored the Gaeta region. In contrast to the broad Campanian Plain with its flat expanse and numerous roads to the north of Naples, the shallower and narrower plain south of Salerno is ringed and dominated by a great mountain mass providing observation and commanding positions for the enemy. Another argument for landing in the Gaeta area was the tactical consideration that a foothold there would cut Naples off from the German forces in central and northern Italy. These considerations led the enemy to expect us to land in the Gaeta region. The Germans had mined the beach there more heavily than at Salerno. In fact, after the Avalanche landings had taken place, they left elements of two divisions on the coast either side of the Volturno for three days in the expectation that we would also land in that district.

When General Clark received the directive to plan for Avalanche and began to study the approaches to Naples, he examined the landing possibilities and was impressed with the area north of Naples. The longer he studied the terrain

⁽¹⁾ Standard Army time was B Time, two hours ahead of Greenwich Standard Time (Z). At 0200, 25 September 1943, the time was shifted to A Time, one hour ahead of Z Time.

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and the situation, the more convinced he grew that the area of the Gaeta coast, especially the beach strip south of the Volturno, was preferable to the Salerno region. He saw the advantage of the absence of mountains north of Naples and the opportunity to drop airborne troops on his left along the Volturno and thus block the access roads from the north, down which German reinforcements would have to come.

Following an air drop he could get his infantry in touch with the airborne division very early and reunite his forces. So strong was General Clark's conviction that the landing should be north of Naples and that it could be supported adequately by air strength that he flew to Algiers twice to discuss the problem. He forcibly presented the case for a landing south of the Volturno and found all factors favorable except for firm assurances from the air officers that they could furnish air cover that far from the Sicilian airfields. Air Marshal Tedder was away, and none of the staff of the Air Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean would make an official commitment on the possibility of air cover north of Naples, though unofficially they held it feasible. When General Clark did reach Air Marshal Tedder, the latter returned a negative to the question, so the site north of Naples was abandoned.

Another consideration bearing on the location of the landings was the desire of General Montgomery to have Avalanche farther south than Salerno so as to secure support for the attack of Eighth Army up the Italian toe. Since there was slight opposition to the Eighth Army advance from Calabria, no advantage would have been gained by shifting the invasion beaches of Fifth Army to the south. The Gulf of Salerno remained the landing site, and consequently the plans were drawn for that area.

Deception and cover plans received attention early. By the first week of August, when Buttress and Baytown were both being planned, deception plans were prepared to reduce to a minimum the initial opposition to those assaults. These plans had to avoid compromising Avalanche, for it was expected then that the latter would follow either Buttress or Baytown or both. Cover plans were devised for Sardinia and Corsica and served for Avalanche.

The planning staff at Allied Force Headquarters on 24 August considered the need for an alternative plan for Avalanche to meet unforeseen contingencies and to provide another objective for Fifth Army if Avalanche should prove impracticable. In view of the proximity of D Day for Avalanche, the time element offered difficulties. It was suggested that Fifth Army substitute a direct attack on the heel of Italy for Avalanche, but in order to meet Avalanche target date that plan would entail advancing the sailing date from Oran and Bizerte by one and one-half days. It would also present the problem of completing and

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issuing maps for the new area and require the preparation and dissemination of new orders to troops spread over North Africa from Oran to Tripoli and from North Africa to Sicily. After careful consideration of all factors the planning staff decided that the alternative operation could not be launched on Avalanche D Day but that it could be set up on 21 September, 12 days later. It therefore recommended the alternative plan for that date. The latter target date would not allow much time but would still have a margin adequate for satisfactory progress before October weather conditions could be expected to interfere with air operations in support.

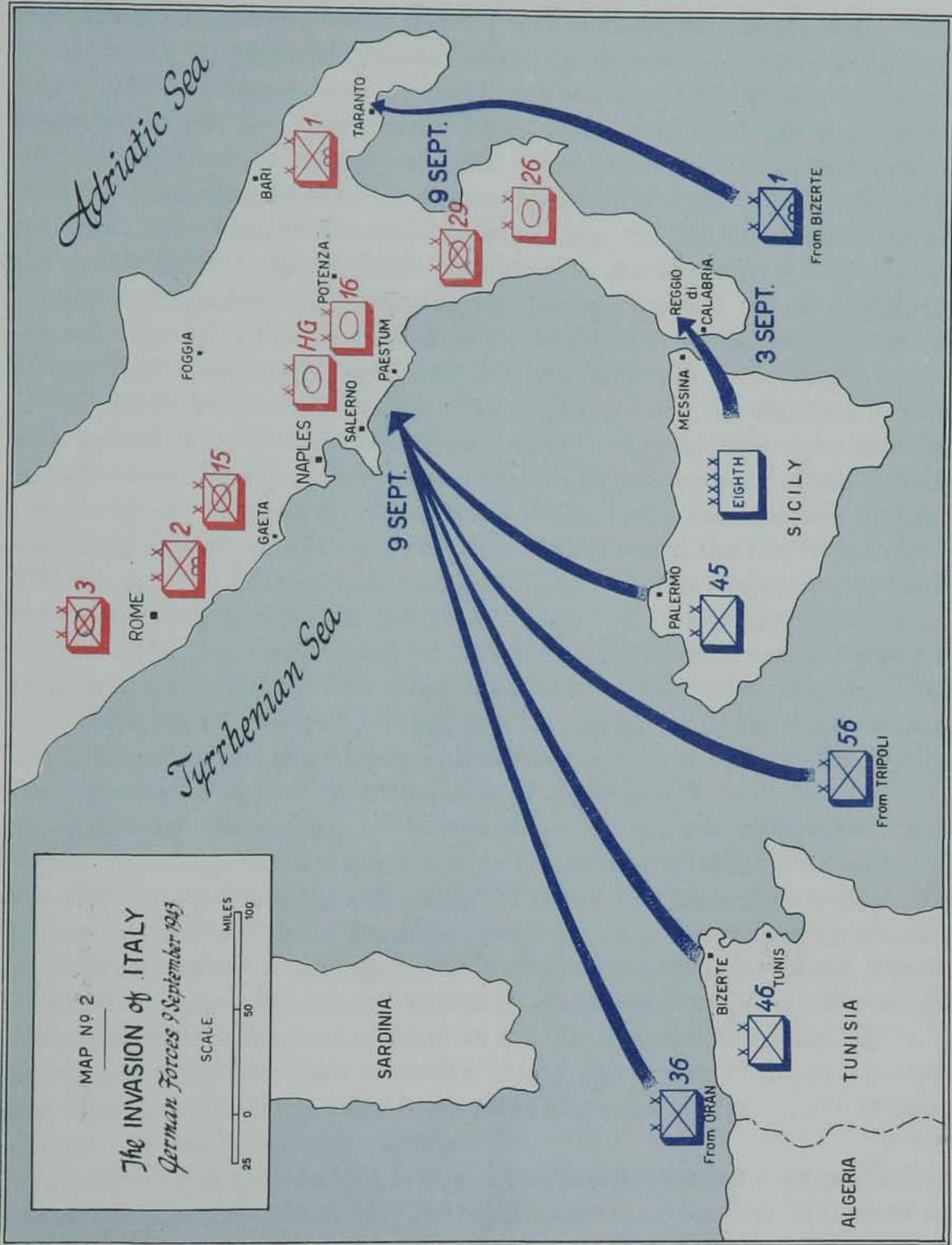
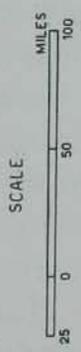
While the Fifth Army planning for Avalanche was going forward, the Commanders-in-Chief at a meeting on 16 August had come to a series of decisions on the future action. Now it was definitely fixed that the invasion by Eighth Army should take place as early as possible. The Sicilian campaign was successfully concluded on 17 August, and Eighth Army forces could be used as planned to launch Baytown from Messina. (*See Map No. 2.*) The date for the attack was to be decided by the Commanding General of 15th Army Group. The Eighth Army bridgehead in Calabria would use only troops and resources already in Sicily. But the danger had been foreseen that we might be led into penning up a large body of men in the toe of Italy where the enemy could easily contain us. Such a contingency would have the further ill effect of tying up landing craft for supplying our forces over the beaches in Calabria and keeping them from availability for Avalanche. Since Naples was the main objective, Baytown was set up for not over three divisions or at most three divisions and one armored brigade.

At the same meeting it was determined that of the other possible operations Avalanche should be the one next undertaken. The target date approved for 9 September might be postponed for not more than 48 hours if necessary. Landing craft for the two operations were to be set aside in accordance with orders to be issued by the Commander-in-Chief. Fifth Army came under command of 15th Army Group, and General Alexander's Headquarters assumed command of the two operations in Italy. Planning for the attack on the instep (Goblet) was to proceed to completion as far as practicable, and when it was finished 5 Corps was to revert to Allied Force reserve.

At this time, in mid-August, another factor arose to influence the main lines of strategy for the United Nations. On 18 August General Eisenhower received a cable (*FAN 196*) from the Combined Chiefs of Staff, then at the Quadrant meeting of the President and Prime Minister at Quebec. The cable directed the Commander-in-Chief to send two staff officers, one American and one British, to Lisbon to report to the British Ambassador for the purpose of

MAP No 2

The INVASION of ITALY German Forces 9 September 1943



negotiating with Italian representatives who were seeking an armistice. For several weeks the progress of these negotiations affected our forthcoming operations. If the armistice were accepted, the prospects of success for Avalanche would be greater, but no one could predict what result the removal of Italian forces would have on German resistance in the peninsula. While our negotiations were going on, General Clark drew up a list of items to secure from the armistice. Chief among them was the demand that the Italians continue to man the coastal defenses and not turn them over to the Germans, a condition the Italians were unable to fulfill because of German pressure. Once signed, the armistice was not to be announced to the world until we should give out the news. The timing of this announcement was important to Avalanche.

2. *Plans for Airborne Support.* The complexity and the difficulty of planning operations of such magnitude as a large landing in force on a defended coast are nowhere more clearly shown than in the employment of the airborne component of the assault. The original Allied Force Headquarters directive of 27 July allotted two airborne divisions to Fifth Army, the British 1 Airborne Division and the 82d Airborne Division (U.S.). General Clark conferred with the commanding generals of these two divisions at Mostagenem on their utilization. It was his desire to drop one division on the southern edge of the Naples plain, north of Vietri sul Mare (Vietri) and southeast of Mount Vesuvius. This force could control the northern mouths of the passes across the Sorrento Ridge and thus prevent the two German panzer (armored) divisions in the Naples area from crossing to oppose us in the plain of Salerno.

Neither of the airborne division commanders nor the troop carrier commander would approve of trying a drop on that zone, since they would only make the dropping run from the sea and could expect the heaviest of flak and the obstacle of the mountains at the end of their run. Since General Clark was unable to convince the air commanders that the run could be made in the opposite direction, this airborne objective had to be abandoned. Accordingly the Ranger Force had to be sent up from Maiori to take the Sorrento Ridge and had to be maintained there with great difficulty. Later the British 1 Airborne Division was taken away from the Fifth Army troop allotment, placed initially in Army reserve, and finally removed entirely.

General Clark then decided to drop a task force of the 82d Airborne Division in the Volturno Valley to destroy the bridges over the river from Triflisco to the sea and to prevent the moving of German forces from the north. The airborne troops were to delay enemy forces crossing the Volturno and were to concentrate at Capua, thence withdrawing southeast along the high ground to rejoin elements of Fifth Army. The chances were good for an early junction of the

paratroopers with the landing force. At one stage of the planning it was proposed to handle the resupply of this task force through nightly drops while it was separated from the infantry, using bombers for the purpose if the enemy defenses in the area were still heavy. On 30 August General Clark cabled the commander of the Western Naval Task Force to limit antiaircraft fire in the area where the airborne elements were to operate to a range of not over 500 yards inland from the beaches.

The next alteration in the airborne plan came on 1 September, when it was decided to reduce the 82d Airborne Division force from a strongly reinforced regimental combat team to a regimental combat team less one battalion. (*See Annex No. 2C.*) The reason for this reduction was the apparent impossibility of maintaining resupply for the larger force from the air. With the force reduced by one battalion, a greater quantity of supplies could be carried in the initial drop. The mission for the reduced force, which was to drop by parachute and glider on the night of D minus 1 to D Day, was to seize and destroy the Capua bridge over the Volturno and then to retire southeast as previously planned. One reinforced regimental combat team of the 82d Airborne Division was placed in the Army floating reserve; the balance of the division was to come by sea from Sicily with the follow-up troops.

Shortly before Fifth Army left Africa, General Clark attended a conference with the Commander-in-Chief in Sicily. The negotiations for the armistice with Italy were in their final stages, and an Italian general was present. The latter urged that we make an air drop on Rome to secure the airfields, for Marshal Badoglio was insisting that an Allied force be placed in Rome to protect the government against German troops near the capital. Accordingly, when it was decided at the conference to carry out an airborne operation in Rome at the time of Avalanche, the 82d Airborne Division was taken from the Fifth Army striking force on 3 September, although it was to remain under command of General Clark. To provide for this new plan the Volturno airborne operation had to be sacrificed. This loss was a serious handicap to the carrying out of the plans of the Army Commander. That the employment of the division as originally scheduled would have been operationally valuable is indicated by the fact that parts of three German divisions crossed the Volturno and marched down unopposed to throw their weight against Fifth Army.

C. OUTLINE PLAN FOR AVALANCHE

1. *The Army Plan.* After weeks of work at high pressure and in closest secrecy the Fifth Army planning staff completed its Outline Plan for Avalanche. A large volume of material had been assembled, evaluated, and co-ordinated with the various services and staff departments. All the strategic information on terrain, military resources and dispositions, economic potential and production centers, enemy defenses and strength, beaches, physiographic and geodetic detail, weather, medical history, and disease prevalence had been compiled and studied. The vital and complicated matters of supply had been worked out and consolidated in an annex to the Outline Plan. The Avalanche Operations Plan with eight annexes (G-2 Intelligence Plan, Troop List, Allocation of Shipping, G-4 Supply Plan, G-1 Administrative Plan, Signal Plan, Antiaircraft Artillery Plan, Harbor Defense Plan) was published on 15 August. A corrected version of the Outline Plan was issued on 26 August to meet changes in the strategic situation.

The Outline Plan, as revised, assumed that Italian resistance would be approximately that encountered in Operation Husky and that Germany's commitments in Russia would continue to hold the bulk of her ground and air forces on the Russian front. It further assumed that Operation Baytown would be mounted. The plan envisaged an assault by two corps and follow-up troops to form an invading army of 125,000 against enemy forces estimated at 39,000 on D Day with a probable increase to over 100,000 by D plus 3. The mission of Fifth Army was to seize the port of Naples and to secure the airfields nearby with a view to preparing a firm base for further offensive operations.

To carry out this mission General Clark planned to employ the British 10 Corps and the American VI Corps in simultaneous assaults on the beaches south of Salerno. Troops assigned to 10 Corps, commanded by Lt. Gen. Sir Richard L. McCreery, included the British 46 and 56 Infantry Divisions, the 7 Armoured Division, the 2 and 41 Commandos, and the American 1st, 3d, and 4th Ranger Battalions. VI Corps under Maj. Gen. Ernest J. Dawley had the American 36th Division (reinforced). Various supporting troops were assigned to each of the two corps.

The Outline Plan also provided for an Army floating reserve divided between two forces. Force I, commanded by Maj. Gen. Troy H. Middleton, consisted of one reinforced regimental combat team of the 45th Division (U.S.) with the mission of embarking from Sicily prepared to land on D Day over any of the previously assaulted beaches. Force II, under Maj. Gen. Matthew B.

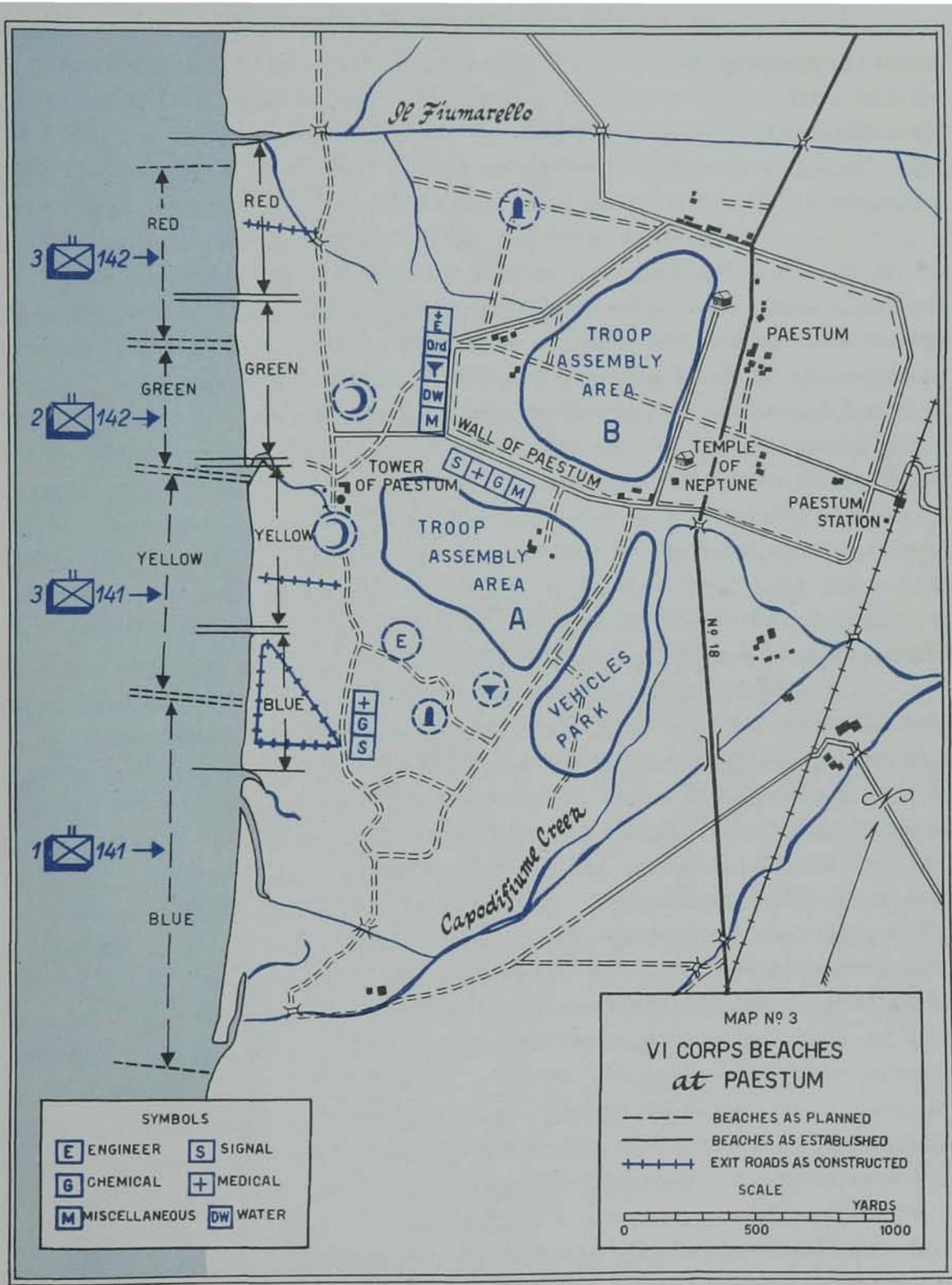
Ridgway, had one reinforced regimental combat team of the 82d Airborne Division (U.S.), which was "to be prepared to land with light equipment on beaches which have not been previously established." The changes in the mission of this division have already been noted; during the first days of the Salerno operation the 82d Airborne Division remained idle. When it was returned to the control of Fifth Army, the division could only be employed in a drop behind a protected beachhead in support of VI Corps, where reinforcements were badly needed to hold our line.

Follow-up troops included the balance of the 45th Division, the 34th Division, the 13th Field Artillery Brigade, the 1st or 2d Armored Division, one American tank battalion (medium), and the 3d Division, together with many supporting troops. The maintenance for both corps was to be primarily over the beaches until the port of Naples became available, although 10 Corps might count on a small amount of supply through the port of Salerno.

2. *Naval and Air Support Plans.* The naval plan, entitled Western Naval Task Force Operation Plan No. 7-43 (short title "Avon/W1"), had appeared on 14 August. It laid down the organization and missions of the Control Force, the Southern Task Force, the Northern Task Force, and the Support Carrier Force. Appended were lengthy annexes containing detailed strategic and theater information. Naval support fire was to be available on call from sub-task force commanders. A special naval force, set up by the Western Naval Task Force and placed under the command of Captain Charles Andrews, U. S. Navy, had the mission of making a feint against the beaches northwest of Naples to divert enemy forces to the coast above Naples and away from the main assaults.

The air plan, published on 18 August, laid out air activity for the following periods: up to D minus 7, D minus 7 to D minus 1, night of D minus 1 to D Day, D Day. Operations subsequent to D Day would depend on the situation. Missions were prepared for protection of the assault convoy and the landing area, fighter cover, ground support, tactical bombing, air-sea rescue, troop carrier flights, and other purposes. In particular, ground support would be secured by prearranged strategic missions and by tactical missions either prearranged or on call. The teamwork displayed in integrating so varied activities of army, navy, and air force was of high order, and the degree of secrecy maintained was remarkable.

3. *The Invasion Beaches.* (See Map No. 3.) The final beaches, which all lay south of the town of Salerno, were by no means ideal for an amphibious operation. The arc of mountains enclosing the plain of Salerno was too far from the beaches for the assaulting troops to reach before daylight. Even after a successful landing the Allied forces would have to defend an open plain under



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possible constant enemy observation and artillery fire. Yet certain favorable characteristics made the selection advisable. The offshore gradient permitted transports to come close to shore; the strip of sand between the water and the dune line was fairly narrow and made the construction of exit routes relatively easy; the low dunes themselves offered no serious obstacles to bulldozers; and the existing road net lay close to the beaches. Finally, the terrain immediately behind the beaches was suitable for the dispersion of dumps.

With the exception of the narrow beaches at Maiori and Vietri, where the Rangers and Commandos were to land, all 10 Corps would come ashore at beaches between Picentino Creek and the Sele River. Initially the landings were to take place on three principal beaches. Red Beach extended from the mouth of the Picentino south for one and one-half miles to the Asa. Green Beach began at the mouth of Tusciano Creek and extended south for one and one-quarter miles. A gap of more than a mile lay between Green Beach and White Beach to the south. These beach areas lie five to nine miles southeast of Salerno. In the VI Corps area four landing beaches, situated between Il Fiumarello and Solofrone Creek and just west of the ancient village of Paestum, had been designated. The beaches were named Red, Green, Yellow, and Blue, and when in operation were identified and delimited by their colored lights and panels. Previous photo reconnaissance had provided accurate information on the beaches.

German defenses of the immediate landing areas were not especially well organized. Some minefields were laid along the beaches, barbed-wire obstacles were erected, numerous machine guns were sited to cover the most likely landing spots, and a few artillery pieces were emplaced inland. The Germans apparently put considerable faith in the ability of tanks, roving behind the beaches, to throw a landing operation into confusion. Furthermore, with unexcelled observation posts on such terrain features as Mount Soprano, the enemy could direct artillery fire upon the plain, the beaches, and landing craft beyond. An Italian-laid minefield in the Gulf of Salerno prevented convoys from approaching close to the shore and would be a hazard to the landing craft.

4. *Landing Plans.* (See *Map No. 4*.) VI Corps and 10 Corps were to make simultaneous landings, with the first waves hitting the beaches at H Hour, set at 0330, 9 September. 10 Corps on the left was to deliver the Fifth Army main assault with the mission of capturing Naples. Immediate objectives were the port of Salerno, the Montecorvino Airfield, the important rail and highway center of Battipaglia, and Ponte Sele on Highway 19 over the Sele River. The 10 Corps zone extended nearly 25 miles from Maiori around the coast to the mouth of the Sele River. The left flank was entrusted to three battalions of Rangers and two battalions of Commandos, all under Lt. Col. William O. Darby. The

Rangers were to land at Maiori and advance north to seize the Mount di Chiunzi Pass and the broad Nocera-Pagani Pass between Salerno and Naples. The Commandos were to land at Vietri, turn east along the coastal road, and occupy Salerno. Meanwhile the bulk of 10 Corps would land on the three beaches south of Picentino Creek, with the 56 Division under Maj. Gen. G. W. R. Templer on the right and the 46 Division under Maj. Gen. J. I. I. Hawkesworth taking over the center of the Corps zone. A gap of more than ten miles lay between the 56 Division and the beaches of VI Corps to the south. This gap would be closed as the two corps moved inland, and the junction of forces was planned to take place at Ponte Sele.

VI Corps was to make the assault with the 36th Division (reinforced). Two regimental combat teams were to land at H Hour, advance to the railroad, reorganize, and move on to their objectives. On the left the objective of the 142d Regimental Combat Team was the high ground running in an arc from Ponte Sele through Altavilla Silentina (Altavilla), Albanella, and Rocca d'Aspide to Mount Vesole and Magliano. On the right the 141st Regimental Combat Team was to maintain contact with the 142d Infantry at Mount Vesole and Magliano and occupy key points in the mountain arc to Agropoli at the southern end of the Gulf of Salerno.

D. GERMAN FORCES IN ITALY

See Map No. 2

To counter the Fifth Army invasion the enemy could count on eight divisions. Two of these were in or north of Rome, two others were in the vicinity of Naples, and the other four were south of Naples. Most of the divisions had incurred heavy losses in personnel and especially in equipment in Sicily.

On 8 September the 16th Panzer Division was in the Eboli-Battipaglia area, where it had moved some ten days previously from the southeast coast of Italy near Bari. At that time it had taken over some of the Italian beach defenses; it occupied the rest on the news of the Italian armistice. In general the 16th Panzer Engineer Battalion held the Sorrento Peninsula; the 64th Panzer Grenadier (Armored Infantry) Regiment, the area from Salerno to the Sele; and the 79th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the sector from the Sele River to Agropoli. The 2d Panzer Regiment at Battipaglia was in position to strike either west or south. Despite rumors on 8 September of a movement of half

of the 64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment north to Capua, the 16th Panzer Division was still defending the Salerno beaches on D Day.

The Hermann Goering Panzer Division was apparently dispersed in the plain of Naples from Caserta south, and the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division was probably northwest of this force, generally in the Gaeta area. Both units had been reorganizing after their losses in Sicily. The 2d Parachute Division garrisoned the vicinity of Rome from the Alban hills on the south to the rail junction of Viterbo on the north; the movement of this division into the Rome area had been the chief factor deterring the proposed drop of the 82d Airborne Division at Rome immediately after the announcement of the Italian armistice. Some elements of the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division were at Frascati south of Rome, probably to guard the headquarters of Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, commanding the German forces in central and southern Italy, but most of this division was apparently well north of Rome as far as Orvieto.

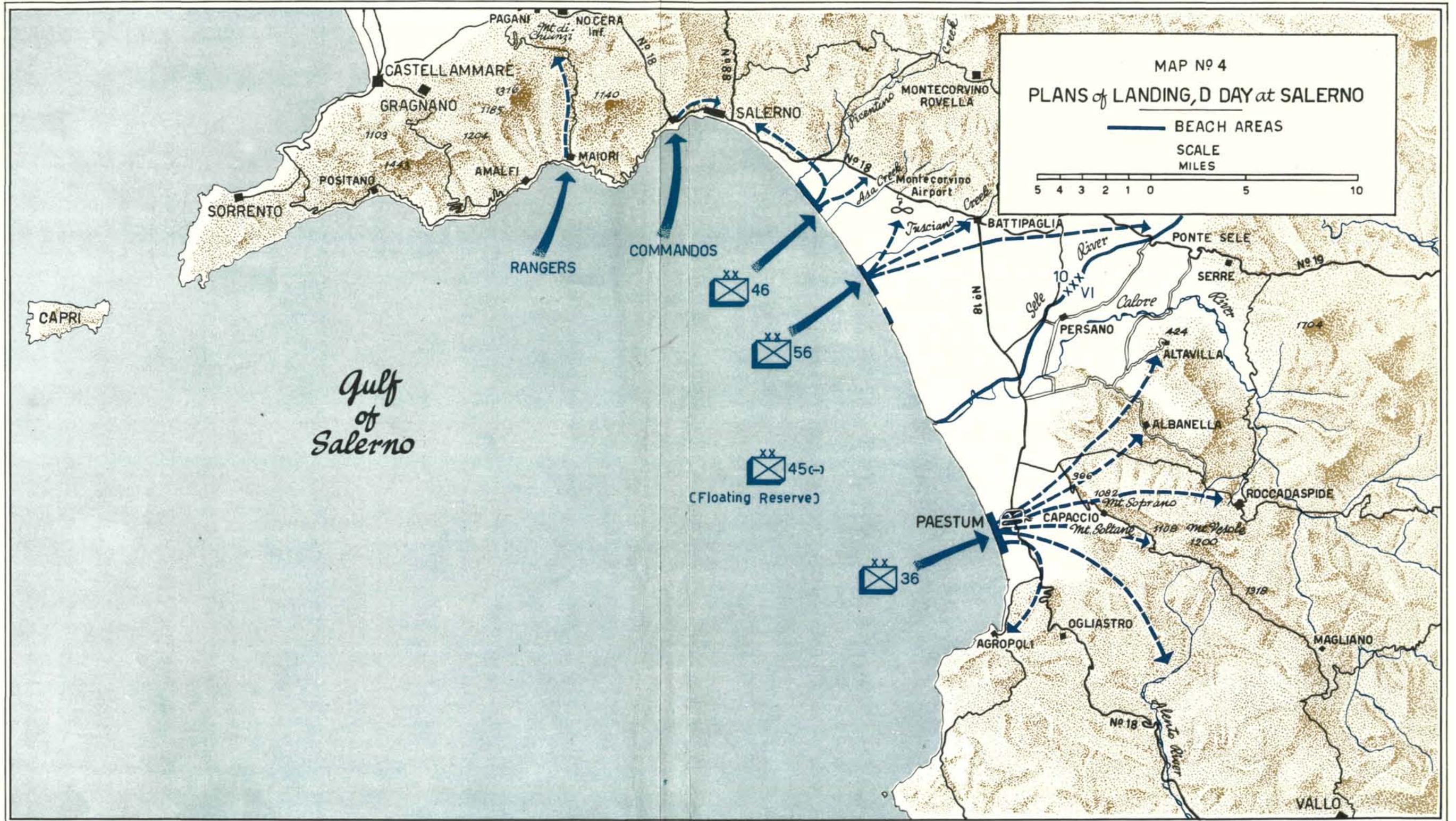
Three enemy divisions remain to be considered. One of these, the 1st Parachute Division, held the Adriatic coast with part of its strength south of Bari. The other two, generally speaking, were in Calabria, but only to a minor extent in direct contact with Eighth Army. The 26th Panzer Division was located halfway up the toe at the end of August. Headquarters and some troops of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division were at Potenza, but Eighth Army met part of its 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment not far from Reggio on 4 September.

It does not appear that any major shifts were being made at the moment when the enemy learned of the approach of Fifth Army to the Gulf of Salerno. Warning orders were undoubtedly transmitted on 8 September to all units, but actual execution of these orders did not follow until after our landing early on the morning of the 9th. Then German motors began to roar, and column upon column swung out onto the roads of southern Italy, driving rapidly north toward the plain of Salerno.

Meanwhile the 16th Panzer Division had received warning of what lay ahead. On 8 September the Chief of Staff, Italian XIX Corps, informed Headquarters, Port Defense, at Salerno: "From 2330/7 hrs inst. this zone is declared to be in 'coastal alarm' following departure of enemy convoy from Sicily heading for Salerno." At 1600, 8 September, the 16th Panzer Division was informed that 36 ships escorted by destroyers had been sighted 25 miles south of Capri, and put into operation the second alarm phase "ready for battle."

E. APPROACHING H HOUR

Fifth Army likewise was "ready for battle." Its long period of training and its careful planning for invasion were about to be tested. Field Order No. 1, dated 25 August 1943 (see *Annex No. 2B*), put the Outline Plan for Avalanche into operation. By 5 September convoys were loaded at many North African ports and the bulk of Fifth Army was aboard ship. On that day the ships cast off from Oran and Mers-el-Kebir, the most distant of the embarkation centers. Moving precisely on skillfully planned schedules, the hundreds of craft bearing the forces for Avalanche converged on the Gulf of Salerno by the evening of 8 September. At 1830 the ship radios picked up the voice of General Eisenhower: "Hostilities between the United Nations and Italy have terminated, effective at once." The troops received the news joyfully, but the senior officer on board each ship made it clear that the original plans would be carried out. D Day was the morrow, 9 September, and H Hour was 0330. Operation Avalanche was about to start. Fifth Army was swinging into action for its initial attack on Fortress Europe.



CHAPTER IV * * * * *

Invasion of Italy

A. D DAY AT SALERNO

9 SEPTEMBER

ON THE night of 8-9 September the Fifth Army convoy stood off the Salerno beaches. The moon went down just before midnight, and under cover of the ensuing darkness the troopships moved in closer to the transport area where men were to board the landing craft. Minefields blocked a close approach to shore, and the reported presence of coastal batteries and railway artillery, located inland about a mile from the beach, constituted another threat to the larger vessels. It was therefore necessary for the troopships to drop anchor some 12 miles from the beaches, a definite disadvantage to the invading forces. The troops were required to remain aboard the landing craft for a longer period of time—and with even a small sea running, a landing craft pitches and rolls. Furthermore, the time needed to reach shore and to return was greatly extended, thus slowing up unloading operations. The mine sweepers immediately proceeded to their work to open gaps for the entrance to the bay.

1. *The Landing.* Fortunately the sea was smooth when initial waves debarked from the troopships. There was some confusion. Difference in signals used by the American and British navies resulted in occasional misunderstanding among the mixed coxwains, and the circuitous routes the craft had to follow through the minefields caused delay in reaching shore. Lanes had been swept through the field, but occasional mines, having broken free, drifted into the cleared paths where they destroyed a few landing craft.

At 0330 everything was working as planned. All assault troops and the necessary vehicles were en route to the beach. Back at the transport area ships' crews were working quietly and efficiently to load the follow-up tanks, anti-aircraft artillery, and ammunition vehicles. Light artillery and antitank guns were already moving shoreward in Dukws — those amazing amphibious craft which were so indispensable in the entire operation. On the American front

there was an unnatural quietness as the landing craft approached the beach. The pre-dawn darkness and stillness were broken only by the naval gunfire preparation to the north where the British were firing. The tense quiet did not last long, however, and any hope of surprise was dispelled when what sounded like a public address system called out in English: "Come on in and give up. We have you covered!"

That grim invitation was only accepted in part—the troops came in. As though on signal the Germans opened fire with artillery, machine guns, and mortars. Machine guns had been emplaced among the dunes, but much of their fire was too high to produce casualties. It was still dark, and the invading troops, impressed with the unhealthy state of the beach, cut paths through or crawled under the wire and dashed inland to find protection among the sand dunes. From there they could go about the task of destroying the machine-gun and mortar crews near the beach. The hostile fire of artillery, mortars, and machine guns from positions farther inland was heavy. A few of the landing craft were hit; others were forced to turn back. Confusion was added to the scene when some coxswains attempted to change direction and go round the hostile fire. Others started to return to their mother ships; some simply milled about.

The assaulting troops continued to fight their way inland while additional troops were constantly arriving. Although the plan called for seven organized waves before the landing craft began shuttling, only three waves came in as such. Just behind the assaulting troops were provisional batteries of antiaircraft artillery formed from the caliber .50 machine-gun squads of the battalions participating. Their purpose was to provide for early beach defense and to meet any contingency which might prevent heavier equipment from getting ashore. Their employment gave adequate security until the 40-mm guns could be emplaced. Beach groups of shore engineers and naval beach battalions went quickly to work under fire to organize the landing areas for supply and communications. Light artillery and antitank guns, all on Dukws, and antiaircraft guns on LCM's landed shortly after dawn.

By daylight the assault forces of VI Corps were approaching their scheduled objectives but were still short of them. Although each battalion was acting as a unit, enemy resistance had caused much internal disorganization, resulting in the separation of troops in the darkness. Members of radio teams and crew-served weapons, such as mortars, machine guns, and bazookas, had become casualties or separated. Consequently many teams were inoperative. By night-fall, however, commanders were being rewarded for the many hours spent in describing the terrain, for large numbers of the missing reported in at the initial objectives of their units.

10 Corps met essentially the same kind of opposition as that encountered by VI Corps on the Paestum beaches. British troops in the first waves hit the beaches at H Hour and the enemy opened up with heavy fire, especially from the Lilienthal strongpoint just south of the mouth of Asa Creek. Allied warships took up the challenge and blasted the areas behind the beaches. In the face of bitter resistance troops of the assault waves rushed ashore from landing craft and started inland.

2. *Fighting Inland.* (See Map No. 5.) The principal opposition encountered by VI Corps on D Day came from at least four groups of tanks which attacked the beaches. One group of tanks, about 15 in number, came in from the south, overrunning the assault troops of the 142d Infantry and passing on toward the north after creating some confusion. A second group of similar size appeared on the front of the 141st Infantry south of Paestum soon after daylight and kept that regiment pinned down near the beaches most of the day. During the afternoon the enemy armor was driven east by gunfire from the U.S.S. *Savannah*. A third attack by 15 tanks struck toward Paestum from the north at about 1020. This force split, and four of the tanks went east toward Capaccio while the others continued south. One-half mile from Paestum they were met by a 105-mm howitzer of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion; a 75-mm gun from the Cannon Company, 143d Infantry; a 37-mm gun of the 36th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop; and an A-36 plane. Five tanks were destroyed in the area around Casa Vannulo, about a mile from the beach, and the others withdrew. A fourth attack involving about 13 tanks came from the north about noon and attempted to reach the beaches. Once more the tanks were driven back before they could get to the beach, again with a loss of five. At about 1300 ten tanks advancing down Highway 18 from the north were stopped by artillery fire, which destroyed three. During these attacks our infantry made good defensive and offensive use of their smaller weapons. One battalion, for example, destroyed six tanks with bazooka fire, two with rifle grenades, and one with a hand grenade dropped in an open turret.

Despite these tank attacks the two assault regiments of the 36th Division reached their D Day objectives. At nightfall the 142d Infantry under Col. John D. Forsythe occupied positions from Tempone di San Paolo, the high ground just west of La Cosa Creek, to the nose of Mount Soprano (Hill 386), and the 143d Infantry under Col. William H. Martin held positions from Hill 386 to Capaccio and Mount Soltane (1). Except for some mixed units, the 141st Infantry under Col. Richard J. Werner was unable to advance throughout the day.

(1) All elevations are given in meters throughout this and succeeding parts of the Fifth Army History. The elevation of a hill may differ on maps of different scale; the authority of the 1 : 50,000 series has generally governed.

Resistance encountered by 10 Corps was even more determined than that in front of VI Corps. A strong enemy tank force attacked the 167 Brigade on the right flank of the 56 Division, but naval fire was decisive in breaking up this assault. As the 46 and the 56 Divisions pushed forward, the 64th Panzer Grenadier Regiment fell back slowly. By nightfall the leading British troops were inland an average distance of 3000 yards and were attacking the Montecorvino Airfield, one of their major objectives. Patrols entered Battipaglia, but enemy infantry and tanks immediately moved into that town and forced a withdrawal. At the end of the day patrols of the 46 Division were approaching Salerno from the east.

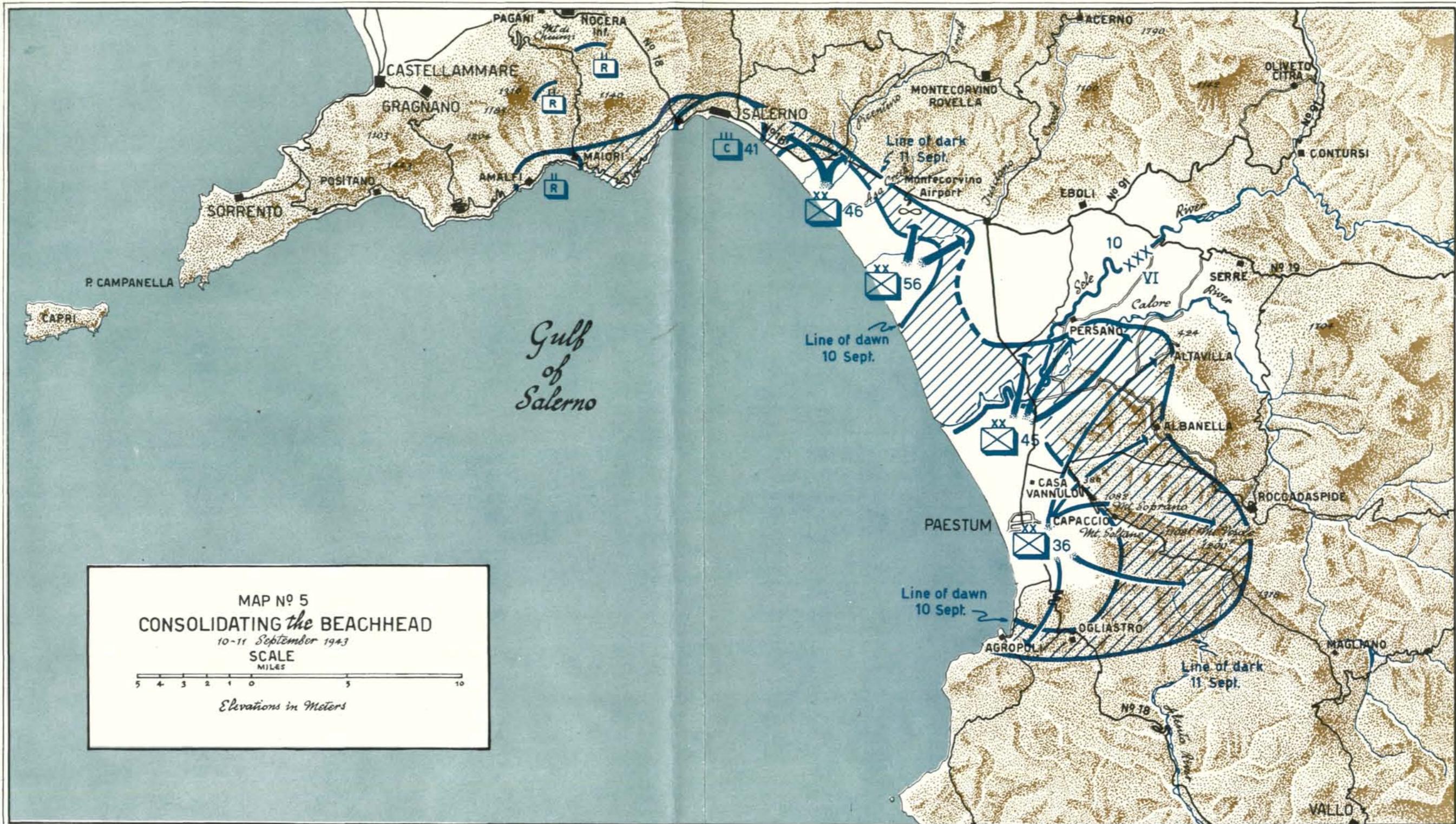
On the left flank the Ranger Force landed unopposed at Maiori. The 3d Ranger Battalion moved north about five miles to the pass below Mount di Chiunzi and reconnoitered routes to Pagani and Nocera Inferiore, while the 4th Battalion secured the beachhead. After eliminating minor opposition at Vietri the Commandos turned east toward Salerno. North and west of Pagani the Germans concentrated forces to meet the Ranger threat, and at nightfall they launched a futile attack against the Ranger positions.

At the end of D Day all units had reached their initial objectives with the exception of most of the 141st Infantry, which remained pinned down near the beaches. Artillery, tanks, and other supporting units were delayed in landing by heavy fire from prepared enemy positions and from tanks employed as roving artillery. These tanks delivered the strongest opposition encountered by Fifth Army, but the remarkable success of the infantry in meeting enemy armor, together with excellent supporting naval gunfire, prevented the enemy from defeating our landing. Throughout the day our forces were handicapped by lack of observation. The hedgerows surrounding each field presented a screen, and only by taking advantage of houses as observation posts could a view be had in any direction. By nightfall the beaches were not fully organized, but they were functioning efficiently under the most difficult conditions.

B. *CONSOLIDATING THE BEACHHEAD*

10-11 SEPTEMBER

VI Corps met practically no enemy opposition on D plus 1 while its troops were getting into position to carry on the attack, for the German strength was concentrated at the time on the left flank against 10 Corps. On the right flank the 141st Regimental Combat Team completed its reorganization and moved



MAP Nº 5
 CONSOLIDATING *the* BEACHHEAD
 10-11 September 1943
 SCALE
 MILES
 Elevations in Meters

out to block enemy access from the south. (*See Map No. 5.*) In the center of the 36th Division zone the 143d Regimental Combat Team occupied positions from the nose of Mount Soprano to Capaccio and Mount Soltane, and sent patrols across the upper Calore River. Meanwhile the 142d Regimental Combat Team moved up to attack the Altavilla hill mass. At the close of the day battalions of the 142d Infantry held Albanella, controlled the ridge line to Rocca d'Aspide, and were ready to attack on the 11th. During the morning of 10 September the 179th Regimental Combat Team came ashore.

On 11 September the 142d Regimental Combat Team continued its attacks, and captured Altavilla and Hill 424 against light opposition. The 179th Regimental Combat Team under Col. Robert B. Hutchins was committed on its left to drive on Ponte Sele through the salient formed by the Sele and Calore rivers, which run west and then south before joining south of Persano. The infantry met stiff resistance. The 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, thrust toward Ponte Sele from the south but was unable to cross the Calore River into the salient, being stopped by tanks and German engineers north of Hill 424. The rest of the combat team advanced up the salient from the southwest, with assault companies nearly reaching Ponte Sele and Highway 19. Struck by enemy tanks and artillery from their rear at Persano and by infantry and tanks on their front, these advance elements fell back to a position northeast of Persano. Meanwhile the 157th Regimental Combat Team under Col. Charles Ankcorn, committed from Army reserve, advanced up the west side of the Sele River, but enemy resistance, centering in a strongpoint at the Tobacco Factory just west of Persano across the Sele, prevented their attack from keeping pace with the 179th Regimental Combat Team. During the day the 45th Division under General Middleton assumed command of the left flank of VI Corps.

On the 10 Corps front, mountainous terrain reaching almost to the shore added to the difficulties to be overcome. In the area between the sea and Highway 18 to Battipaglia the country was generally flat with gently rising slopes well covered with apple, orange, and olive orchards. Immediately beyond Eboli, Battipaglia, and Montecorvino the country rises to hills, mostly 500 to 700 meters high, which dominate the plain below. The enemy, determined to hold at all costs in this important pivotal area, resisted the advance stubbornly on 10 September. On the extreme left, in the Pagani-Nocera zone, German patrols probed the positions of the 3d Ranger Battalion on Mount di Chiunzi. Sharp skirmishes occurred, but the Rangers held their ground. The 4th Ranger Battalion sent patrols more than ten miles west on the coastal road to Positano. Commandos and units of the 46 Division moved north of Vietri astride the road, while other troops of the 46 Division continued to clear Salerno. A strong force of German

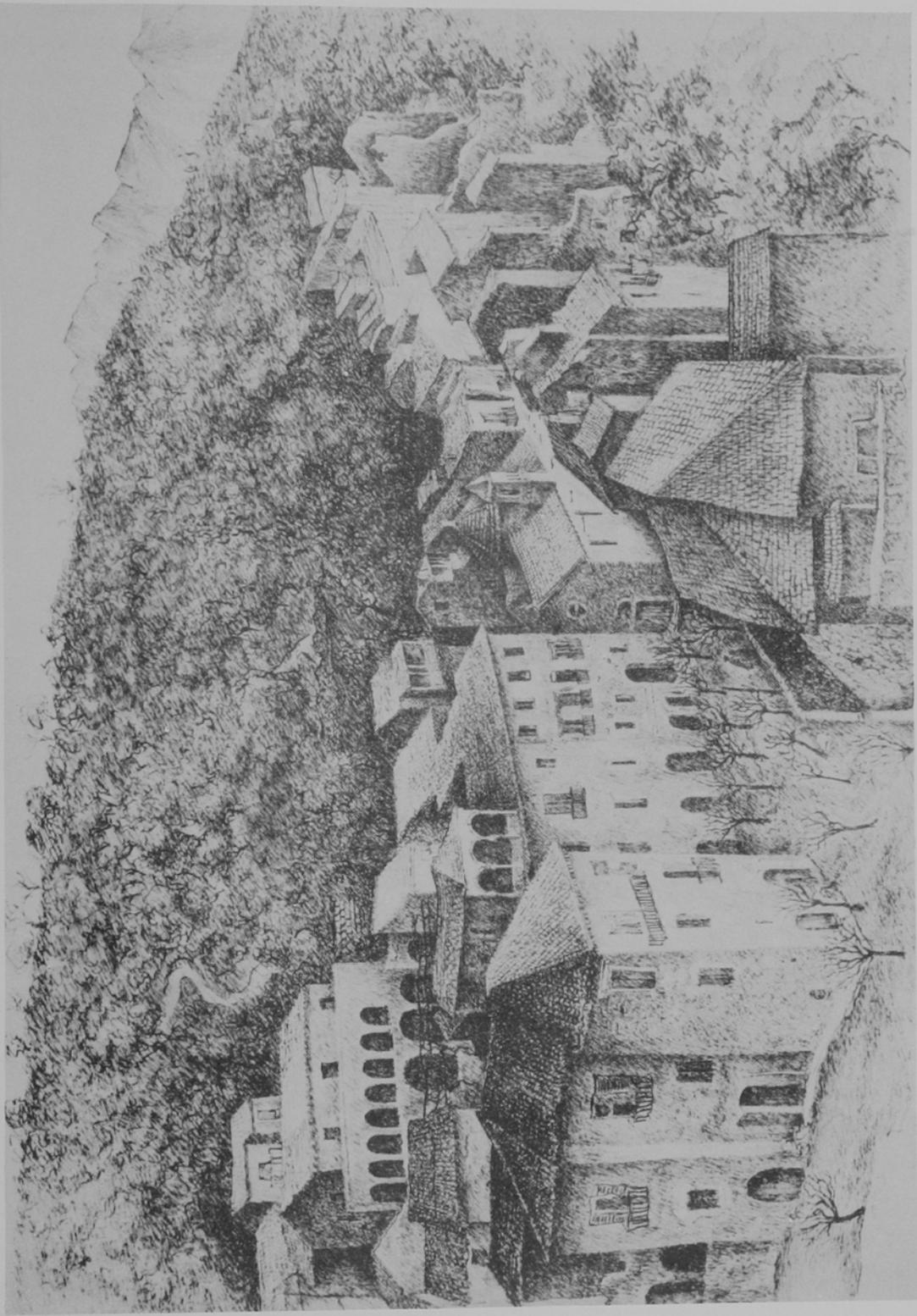
infantry supported by tanks failed in an effort to drive through the Commando defenses. In the center the 46 Division reached a line through the mountains about two miles inland and controlled nearly eight miles of Highway 18 southeast of Salerno by 0300. Opposed by elements of the 16th Panzer Division and reconnaissance troops of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, the 46 Division could make no further gain through the rugged terrain during the day.

On the right the 56 Division exerted its main effort along Tusciano Creek and pushed patrols into Battipaglia before dawn. Enemy reinforcements came up, and fighting continued throughout the day. At nightfall a counterattack by German tanks and infantry drove the 9 Royal Fusiliers (167 Brigade) out of the town. Heavy fighting also occurred around a tobacco factory two miles west of Battipaglia on Highway 18. Here the 201 Guards Brigade was unable to advance. The outcome of the struggle for the Montecorvino Airfield, a major objective of the 56 Division, was still in doubt by nightfall. On 11 September the battle for Battipaglia continued with indecisive results, but 10 Corps troops captured the Montecorvino Airfield. This victory did not make the field available for our planes, however, since it was under artillery fire from nearby hills.

In order to tighten the Fifth Army hold on the passes leading to Naples, General Clark ordered VI Corps to send additional troops to assist the Ranger Force in that area. The Army directive was received shortly after 0001, 11 September, and by 1100 the reinforcements were in position. These reinforcements consisted of the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry; an antiaircraft battery; a battery of artillery; a company each of paratroopers, tanks, tank destroyers, and chemical mortars; and two engineer companies.

The enemy on the 10th and 11th concentrated his efforts against 10 Corps, which experienced bitter fighting around Battipaglia. Operating from a firmly established beachhead, 10 Corps absorbed the strongest counterattacks without permitting the enemy to register any decisive gains. The Ranger Force successfully penetrated to the Mount di Chiunzi and Nocera-Pagani passes and denied the use of this route to the German troops to the north, preventing them from moving against the west flank of the Salerno beachhead. VI Corps was able to move out rapidly and occupy the high ground from Hill 424 around to Agropoli and thus control all the routes of access to the beachhead from the south and southwest. (*See Map No. 5.*) This success compelled the enemy to throw reserves into the fight in order to prevent Fifth Army from driving a wedge between his forces at Salerno and those withdrawing before Eighth Army.

The night of 10-11 September and the following day also saw the greatest enemy air activity so far. During this period no less than 120 hostile aircraft were reported over the beaches. Barrage balloons, antiaircraft artillery and



Altavilla and Hill 424 in the background... drawing by Technical Sergeant Mitchell Siporin

our fighter planes prevented these attacks from being very effective; the most serious damage was caused to the U.S.S. *Savannah*, probably by a radio-controlled rocket bomb. The lack of mass air attack, however, seemed to prove groundless the belief that the Luftwaffe had been withholding a large air reserve to use in repelling an invasion.

C. THE GERMAN COUNTERATTACKS

12-14 SEPTEMBER

By 12 September it became apparent that the enemy was rushing reinforcements into the Salerno area to support the 16th Panzer Division. On 9 September long columns of motor vehicles headed north from the south of Italy. Elements of the 26th Panzer Division and the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division were racing north to escape being trapped by the Eighth Army threat to their rear. Both these divisions entered the battle of Salerno with substantial portions of their strength thrown against VI Corps. As early as 11 September elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, coming south from beyond Naples, were identified in front of 10 Corps, and on the next day units of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division were spotted. At least one battalion of the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division was in the line on 14 September. This enemy build-up in the Salerno battle resulted in a large mixture of units from at least six divisions. The 16th Panzer Division was apparently the only complete division which eventually entered the battle. Under the supreme command of XIV Panzer Corps units from the various divisions were combined into battle groups somewhat resembling our combat teams.

1. *The Loss of Altavilla.* (See Map No. 6.) VI Corps felt the weight of these enemy reinforcements on 12 September. The enemy had begun a counterattack against the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, even before the battalion commander could organize his position on Hill 424, which had been taken late on 11 September. Hill 424, with the town of Altavilla perched on its lower slopes, formed an important part of the Fifth Army beachhead, since its possession would deny the enemy a commanding view of landing operations and the movement of troops below. The hill was, however, of even greater importance to the Germans. Not only did it provide them with observation, but it covered access to the routes of withdrawal which must be used by forces to the south in the event of a retrograde movement. These forces were in double danger from Fifth Army on the north and from the British Eighth Army, moving up from the south.

Each side, therefore, sought to control this key terrain feature; but the hill mass was neither easy to attack nor easy to defend. The slopes rise abruptly from the plain and are covered by scrub growth and olive groves. Numerous ravines cut through this vegetation, adding to the irregularity of the hillside. There is but little level ground on top of the hill, and terracing has been employed to convert its steep sides to agricultural use. Ridge lines radiate downward from the hilltop, eventually forming a junction with the plains below. No central point exists of sufficient size for occupancy by a company in a good defensive position. The terraces and ravines restrict fields of fire to a maximum of 150 yards, and also limit visibility of the slopes of Hill 424 so severely that large attacking forces could approach within striking distance without being discovered. Unless an unnumbered hill to the south, separated from Hill 424 by a deep ravine with heavily wooded sides, were also occupied, Hill 424 would be difficult to hold.

The enemy enveloped the positions of the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, during daylight on 12 September. When the counterattack struck, Company B was occupying the high ground above the road north of Altavilla, Company A was just north of the summit, and Company C was on the south slope of Hill 424. The 2d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, began to infiltrate around the hill, and active enemy artillery pounded our communications severely. The main enemy attack was directed against the area defended by Company C. Lt. Col. Gaines J. Barron, commanding the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, ordered the other two companies to move to its support, but enemy infantry prevented the movements from being executed. When the situation appeared serious, the battalion executive officer ordered a withdrawal since Lieutenant Colonel Barron could not be located. Although the infantry fought magnificently, the hill was untenable and had to be abandoned. Under cover of darkness the various companies, isolated from one another, fought their way through the German lines and dug in on a knoll southwest of Hill 424. The enemy had regained this important terrain feature.

2. *Shifts in the Center.* (See Maps Nos. 6 and 7.) While the fight was in progress for the possession of Hill 424, our positions improved considerably on the left flank of VI Corps. The 179th Regimental Combat Team captured Persano; west of the Sele the 157th Regimental Combat Team drove the enemy from the Tobacco Factory and advanced to the Grataglia Plain just west of Persano. Nevertheless the left flank of VI Corps was weak. Except for the 23 Armoured Brigade (reconnaissance) there was a gap of five miles between 10 Corps and VI Corps. General Dawley ordered extensive shifts in the front-line units of VI Corps to take place during the night of 12-13 September. After these shifts had been completed, VI Corps planned to drive again toward Hill 424.



On 12 September the enemy launched another unsuccessful assault against the Rangers on the left flank of 10 Corps. Later in the day a Ranger attack against Gragnano likewise failed. The Ranger Force appeared strong enough to hold the Sorrento Peninsula and maintain control over the Nocera-Pagani Pass, but it could not exploit its commanding positions. The 46 Division made no significant gains during the day, and the 167 Brigade (56 Division) was driven out of Battipaglia. Although the enemy was held on the outskirts of the town, the 167 Brigade lost heavily and was relieved by the 201 Guards Brigade at the first opportunity.

The shifting of units within VI Corps was well under way by daybreak on 13 September. Taking up positions on the left of the 157th Regimental Combat Team, the 179th Regimental Combat Team greatly strengthened the left flank of VI Corps. Later in the day two battalions of the 141st Infantry also arrived on the left flank, having been moved by truck from the Ogliastro area, which the enemy had evacuated. One of these battalions was moved again to reinforce the Cosa Creek line during the night of 13-14 September. In order to fill the gap in the Sele-Calore salient caused by withdrawing the 179th Regimental Combat Team, the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, was ordered on 12 September to take up positions east of Persano. This battalion, which had come from Tempone di San Paolo to Mount San Chirico earlier in the day, accordingly moved again to the banks of the Calore River during the afternoon and prepared to cross into the salient under cover of darkness. By early morning of the 13th the battalion had reached its positions.

3. *Attacks and Counterattacks.* (See Map No. 7.) While these movements were taking place on the left flank of VI Corps, the Martin Force under the command of Colonel Martin of the 143d Infantry was assembling for the attack on Altavilla. The 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, marched from Albanella; the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, moved from the vicinity of Capaccio to Hill 140 and then on to the assembly area below Altavilla. These two battalions, with the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, in reserve, were to attack Altavilla, Hill 424, and the unnumbered hill at 0600, 13 September. Although there was no time for a daylight reconnaissance of the terrain, the attack jumped off as scheduled. The 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, occupied the unnumbered hill with a portion of its force but was compelled to withdraw after dark. The 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, succeeded in occupying the high ground north of Altavilla. Though enemy counterattacks surrounded the battalion, it remained on the hill until the night of 14-15 September, when it was ordered to withdraw. Late on the 13th all units in front of Altavilla were ordered to organize a defensive line along La Cosa Creek.

On the left flank of VI Corps the Germans also attacked strongly on 13 September in an apparent effort to break through to our beaches. Early in the

morning the 157th Infantry attempted to advance to form a junction with the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, in the Sele-Calore salient but could make no progress. In the afternoon the Germans launched a tank-infantry attack that drove the 157th Infantry back beyond the Sele River crossing at Persano. The enemy then crossed into the salient, hit the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, from front and rear, and smashed the battalion. After this success the German infantry and tanks drove on down the salient to attack our rear areas. This attempted breakthrough near the junction of the Sele and Calore rivers was stopped by the 189th and 158th Field Artillery Battalions (45th Division), which gathered up every available man to form a defensive line and also poured heavy fire on the enemy armor.

On 14 September VI Corps made readjustments along its entire front. The 45th Division organized a defensive line from Bivio Cioffi on Highway 18 to the Sele-Calore junction, and the 36th Division was reinforced with troops of the 504th Parachute Infantry which had dropped on the night of 13-14 September. During the day the enemy made several efforts to break through this line, but each attack was thrown back with heavy losses. On the 14th General Clark visited the front line, passing through the enemy artillery and small-arms fire personally to impress upon his soldiers the necessity for holding their positions. He stopped again and again to talk to them telling them that under no circumstances must any ground be yielded. While there he observed a tank attack forming up and personally took charge of the situation, placing antitank guns into positions so that the attack was broken up. Six of the enemy tanks engaged in the thrust were destroyed.

10 Corps troops held their ground against the enemy onslaught of 13-14 September. The 167 Brigade came into the line on the right of the 56 Division sector and established contact with VI Corps. Slight adjustments were made along the line, but the division spent most of the day in reorganizing. General McCreery had now committed all available troops and felt considerable anxiety about the situation around Salerno town. The 16th Panzer Division opposed him north of the Sele River, and the greater part of the 29th Panzer Division was in reserve near Contursi, some 16 miles east of Battipaglia. The enemy had at least 30 tanks in the Battipaglia area, where the main German weight might be thrown against 10 Corps. Stabs down the Avellino-Salerno and Cava-Vietri roads could be expected to occur on the left. During the night of 13-14 September the Germans attacked with infantry and tanks from Battipaglia. All attacks were repulsed. The 128 Brigade on the right of the 46 Division and the 169 Brigade on the left of the 56 Division pushed ahead slightly on 14 September. ³⁴ Enemy units on the road between Battipaglia and Eboli were brought under accurate naval fire, and the air forces heavily bombed German positions in the area. The British

7 Armoured Division under Maj. Gen. G. W. E. Erskine was unloading on 14 September, bringing needed strength to cope with enemy armor.

4. *Summary of the Situation.* During this phase of the operation Fifth Army had penetrated to positions which were of utmost importance to the enemy. His counterattacks against our forces at Hill 424, in the Sele-Calore salient, at Battipaglia, toward Salerno from the north, and against the Ranger Force on the Sorrento Peninsula indicated clearly that each of these areas was vital to the successful execution of his planned defense against the invasion. German units had raced up from the south and had come down from the north, thanks to the cancellation of the proposed drop by the 82d Airborne Division at the Volturno, with the result that the enemy counterattacks were mounted with force as well as determination and skill. They had succeeded in forcing VI Corps to take up the defensive line from Bivio Cioffi around the Sele-Calore junction and behind La Cosa Creek. The enemy's greatest success occurred during the last hours of daylight on 13 September when he threatened to break through VI Corps south of the Calore River. Extensive shifting of troops enabled VI Corps to strengthen the weakest portions of its line sufficiently to throw back the enemy thrusts on 14 September. The decisive period in the battle for the beachhead therefore occurred on 13-14 September. Having held the full weight of the enemy forces on those days, Fifth Army was enabled to complete a necessary reorganization and build up its strength to continue the attack.

D. THE ENEMY WITHDRAWS

15-19 SEPTEMBER

By the morning of 15 September the crisis had passed, and the enemy began to revert to the defensive all along the Fifth Army front. The reasons for his shift are clear. The British Eighth Army was continuing its advance, though more slowly than expected, and had reached Sapri about 40 miles to the south; the most desperate attacks of the Germans had not driven Fifth Army into the sea; and the build-up of supplies and reinforcements on the beaches was steadily increasing the Fifth Army strength. The 505th Parachute Infantry was dropped behind our lines south of Paestum the night of 14-15 September; and the 325th Glider Regimental Combat Team came in by LCI's on the 15th. The 180th Regimental Combat Team (45th Division), which had landed early on the 14th, went into Army reserve. American forces were further augmented on 18 September with the arrival of the 3d Division.

The situation in front of 10 Corps during the German counterattacks had been so grave that General Clark ordered the drop of a parachute battalion in the Avellino area to block the road net at that important point and to disrupt communications in the rear areas of the German forces opposing 10 Corps. This drop was originally scheduled for the night 12-13 September, but preparations could not be finished by that date; and the 2d Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry, under Lt. Col. Doyle R. Yardley did not finally drop until the night 14-15 September. The paratroopers were rather widely scattered and took to the hills, where they coalesced into small groups and made raids against supply trains and down into the plains during the next week.

From the 15th on, the enemy dug in along most of the Fifth Army front and was content with minor jabs, easily repelled. German artillery was fairly active and also difficult to neutralize, for the enemy shifted his gun positions often to avoid our counterbattery fire. By the 17th the enemy in front of VI Corps was withdrawing up Highway 91 through Contursi, thinning out his positions from his left flank. Two battalions of the 504th Parachute Infantry under Col. Reuben H. Tucker accordingly attacked the hill mass by Altavilla during the night and morning of the 17th, but they were pinned by enemy artillery fire until the 18th, when our troops took Altavilla for the third time. By then the enemy had withdrawn his covering screen in front of VI Corps, and patrols reported no contact. The 131 Brigade (7 Armoured Division) occupied Battipaglia without resistance late in the afternoon of 18 September.

During the 19th the 56 Division extended its bridgehead slightly while the 46 Division held its positions. All units of VI Corps made substantial advances in accordance with Fifth Army Field Order No. 3, 18 September 1943. (*See Annex No. 2E.*) The 45th Division moved up through Persano and the Tobacco Factory to the heights on both sides of Eboli, and units of the 36th Division occupied Serre and Ponte Sele. Fifth Army now held the Salerno plain, and the bridgehead was completely secure. Commenting on this situation, the Secretary of War, the Honorable Henry L. Stimson, wrote to General Clark on 23 September 1943:

I have been following your Salerno operation with keenest interest... I send you and your brave men my heartiest congratulations on the successful accomplishment of one of the most difficult and hazardous operations in the history of warfare.

Meanwhile on 15-16 September reconnaissance elements of Eighth and Fifth Armies met at points 15 to 20 miles southeast of Agropoli. Eighth Army continued to concentrate toward the right flank of Fifth Army in order to drive on up the east and center of the Italian peninsula.

