

85th INFANTRY
DIVISION

MINTURNO
TO THE
APPENNINES

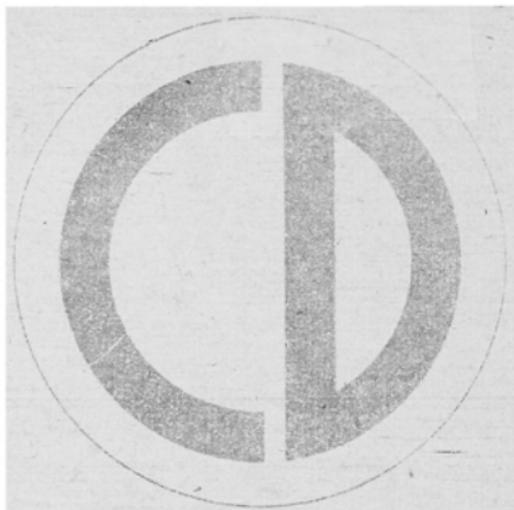
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THE DIVISION INSIGNIA

When the 85th Division of the American Expeditionary Forces was in training at Camp Custer, near Battle Creek, Michigan in 1917, it became known as the "Custer Division." When the Division prepared to entrain for embarkation camps along the Atlantic seacoast, it became necessary to find a distinctive 85th Division mark for the baggage. The Division Quartermaster at the time was Colonel John A. Berry, and it was he who created the design which was stencilled upon the Division's material.

This design was a conventionalized "CD" in keeping with the nickname "Custer Division." Later, in France, when orders were received directing that the 85th Division adopt a shoulder patch insignia, Major General Chase W. Kennedy, at that time the Division Commander, chose the old baggage-marking symbol as the basic design. The patch, as finally evolved, was a circle of khaki upon which the monogram CD appeared in bright red letters

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FOREWORD



It is with pleasure and great pride that I look upon the achievements of the 85th Infantry Division during 1944. May this booklet help you as it has me to remember the great part we have played in the defeat of the enemy during this period and provide inspiration for further achievement.

JOHN B. COULTER.

Major General, U. S. Army.

905121

INTRODUCTION

HEADQUARTERS, 15th ARMY GROUP

During the course of the Italian campaign the arrival of the 85th Infantry Division was an event which to me was of profound significance. Its arrival in Italy had been heralded by glowing reports which told of a thoroughness and completeness in training which few U. S. combat units had been able to equal. Seldom had adequate time and opportunity been available in such full measure prior to a division's entry into combat.

The excellent combat record of the 85th Infantry Division attests eloquently to the soundness of our War Department policy to grant the maximum in training facilities to our fighting troops. You of the 85th Division have thereby contributed not only in the military victories which you have gained but also in passing on to your successors the heritage of indisputable proof that there is no substitute for intense, well-planned and intelligently executed training, under superior leadership.

I was glad to welcome the Custer Division to my command. I am and always shall be proud to include it among those gallant fighting forces on which I may place the fullest dependence under all conditions of combat.

To General Coulter, to the officers and men of the 85th Infantry Division I extend my sincerest congratulations on a tough job well done.

MARK W. CLARK,
General, U. S. Army.
Commanding.

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The photos of Minturno, Scauri, Formia and Itri are reprinted through the courtesy of the Mediterranean Allied Interpretation Unit (West).

* Photographs of paintings by T/4 HARRY A. DAVIS
Headquarters, Fifth Army.

Remaining photos by T/5 WILLIAM SHANKS, Division
photographer.

Manuscript by T/4 JOHN ARTHOS.

Maps by Sgt. GEORGE GULBRANDSEN.



Colle San Martino, with Castellonero in background,
and beyond, the Petrella Hill Mass.

THE EARLY HISTORY

It was in another war against the Germans that the Division was first established as part of the National Army, on August 25, 1917. Organized at Camp Custer, Michigan it became known as the Custer Division.

After nearly a year's training the Division embarked for England. From here the 339th Infantry Regiment, with attached engineer and medical units, was shipped to Russia where it participated in bitter fighting against the Bolshevik Revolutionary Army. The remainder of the Division was moved to France where individual organizations supported the IV, V, and VI Corps. In France the Division served primarily as a replacement depot division, furnishing some 20,000 replacements to other organizations. Several units, however, remaining intact — the 160th Field Artillery Battalion, the 310th Field Signal Battalion, the 2nd Battalion, 310th Engineers and the 310th Ammunition Train — saw action on the Western Front, in Lorraine, in the St. Mihiel operation, and in the Meuse-Argonne sector.

At the close of the war parts of the Division served in Germany in the American Army of Occupation. By August 1919, however, the last elements of the Division had returned to the United States.

Shortly after this the Division was inactivated. During the years of peace that followed it continued to exist in the VI Corps Area as a Reserve Division with Reserve Officer personnel.

TRAINING FOR THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In January, 1942 the War Department ordered the reorganization of the 85th Division as a triangular unit. The Division was reactivated at Camp Shelby, Mississippi on May 15th. Brigadier General Wade H. Haislip was designated as the Commanding General, becoming Major General Haislip shortly before assuming command. The Official Mobilization Training Program was begun early in June. In January, 1943 the first programs were undertaken in the training of Combat Teams, as the next step in developing the coordination of all the elements of the Division in preparation for combat.

On February 21st Major General Haislip became the Commanding General, XV Army Corps, and Brigadier General John B. Coulter, the Assistant Division Commander, succeeded him as the Division Commander. On March 12th Brigadier General Coulter was promoted to the rank of Major General. On March 18th Colonel Lee S. Gerow was promoted to Brigadier General, and became the Assistant Division Commander.

Early in April the Division began its move to the maneuver area near Leesville, Louisiana. Here for 2 months the conditions of combat were simulated, division fighting against division much of the time. In June the Division had completed its training in this area, and then moved to Camp Pilot Knob, California, where it began still more arduous training in the Desert Training Center. In August the Division was moved to Camp Coxcomb, Cali-

fornia where desert training was continued until October. This training was brought to an end by orders transferring the Division to Fort Dix, New Jersey, the last move before shipment overseas. At Camp Coxcomb Brigadier General Pierre Mallett became Division Artillery Commander, succeeding Brigadier General Jay W. MacKelvie, who had been with the Division since its activation but was now transferred to the command of XII Corps Artillery.

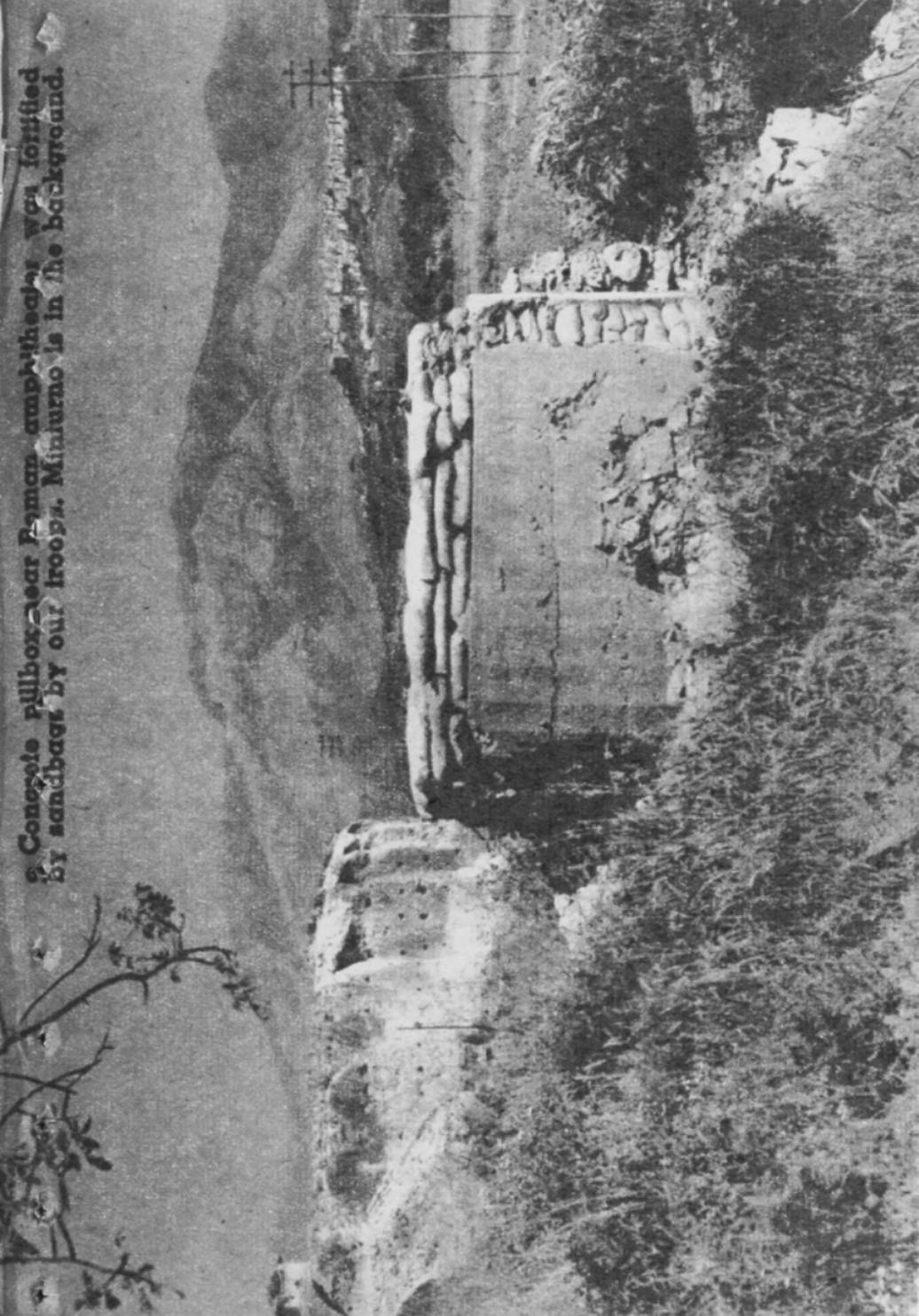
At Dix the final preparations were made for entrance into combat. On December 16th the Advance Detachment of the Division set sail for Africa. A camp was established south of St. Denis Du Sig on the northern coast of Algeria, near Oran. The remainder of the Division sailed in December and January. By mid-January the entire Division had been assembled and was undertaking a program of intensive training in mountain warfare. Early in February the Division moved to Port-Aux-Poules for a period of amphibious training. While here the first orders were received to alert the units of the Division for movement to Italy. The 339th Regimental Combat Team was the first to be moved. Arriving in Italy on March 14th it was attached to the 88th Infantry Division and became the first regiment of the Division to see combat in the present war. Shortly afterwards the other units of the Division reached Italy, landing at Naples, and the final preparations were made for the Division to go into the line near Minturno, about 40 miles to the north.

THE GUSTAV LINE

At 8 o'clock on the morning of April 10th the Division was committed to action as a unit for the first time in its history. In the left sector of the II Corps zone the Division took up positions a few miles north of the Garigliano River along a low ridge of hills facing the Gustav Line. The front extended from the Tyrrhenian Sea on the south, north along the low hills beyond Minturno to the Ausente River. The 339th Infantry (with Companies L and M of the 338th attached) moved up first to hold a front extending 5500 yards in from the sea, with 3 battalions abreast. By April 14th the 337th Infantry had taken over a 4000 yard front, on the right of the 339th, extending to the Ausente River. One platoon of the 85th Reconnaissance Troop was placed as a guard over the bridge across the Garigliano, about 2 miles southeast of Minturno on the site of the ancient town of the same name. All the traffic to our forward areas was obliged to use this bridge, which thereby became a point of vital importance to the Division. The remainder of the Troop patrolled the coast, on the watch for any attempts by the enemy to encircle the Division flank by an amphibious operation and to apprehend agents landing by boat. While holding these positions the Division prepared for the May offensive.

The Tyrrhenian Coast runs west from Minturno and Scauri to Formia. About a mile beyond Scauri is the Croce Road Junction where the road south from Cassino joins Highway 7 about 6 miles above

Concrete pillbox near Roman amphitheater was fortified by sandbags by our troops. Minirno is in the background.



the Minturno Bridge. West of the Junction the Highway for 5 miles crosses a narrow plain, dominated by Monte Campese, to Formia where the mountains come down to the sea. At Formia the Gaeta Peninsula juts off to the south, but the Highway cuts sharply northwest across the mountains to Itri and Fondi, at the northern limit of the Fondi Plain. At Fondi the road turns southwest, crossing level plains for 5 or 6 miles. Then, skirting the mountains, it continues some 5 miles more to Terracina, built between high rocks and the sea.

The Gustav Line was anchored on the beaches near Scauri and in the low hills rising from the Capo D'Acqua at the base of the Aurunci Mountains. Once the Gustav Line should be broken the efforts of the advance would ultimately be to secure Highway 7 as far as Terracina.

The enemy — consisting chiefly of elements of the German 94th Infantry Division — was dug in along the western anchor of the Gustav Line. His positions extended from the coast near Scauri, north, across the low hills of Colle San Martino, then northeast across the Solacciano Ridge to Santa Maria Infante. Between ours and the enemy's lines was a narrow grassy valley which was less than half a mile wide.

Our troops were dispersed in fox-holes, behind rocks, and in buildings. Outposts were established a few hundred yards ahead of our forward positions. Some of these were used as waystations for the patrols as they went out and came back. Some had names -- "Ferdinand's," "Snuffy's," "Mother's Place."

Every night for a month each battalion sent out one or more patrols, and on the basis of the patrol

reports and the aerial photographs taken from Cub planes and P-38s, we learned the location of many enemy positions. On this sector of the Gustav Line most of the enemy positions were on the reverse slopes of the hills. On the forward slopes there were minefields and wire barriers, placed in such a way that men advancing up the hills, feeling out the unobstructed passages, would come to points on the crest where they would be met by interlocking bands of fire from the machine guns in their positions on the reverse slopes. From the higher hills behind the first ridges the artillery, mortars and self-propelled guns were in position to blast at any of our troops coming down to attack the dug-in positions.

Minturno, the Bridge, Tufo, and Tremensuoli received harassing fire regularly. The main street of Tremensuoli was nicknamed "Purple Heart Alley," and it is reported that troops stationed in Tremensuoli had figured out that a man could appear on that street for no more than 20 seconds before drawing fire.

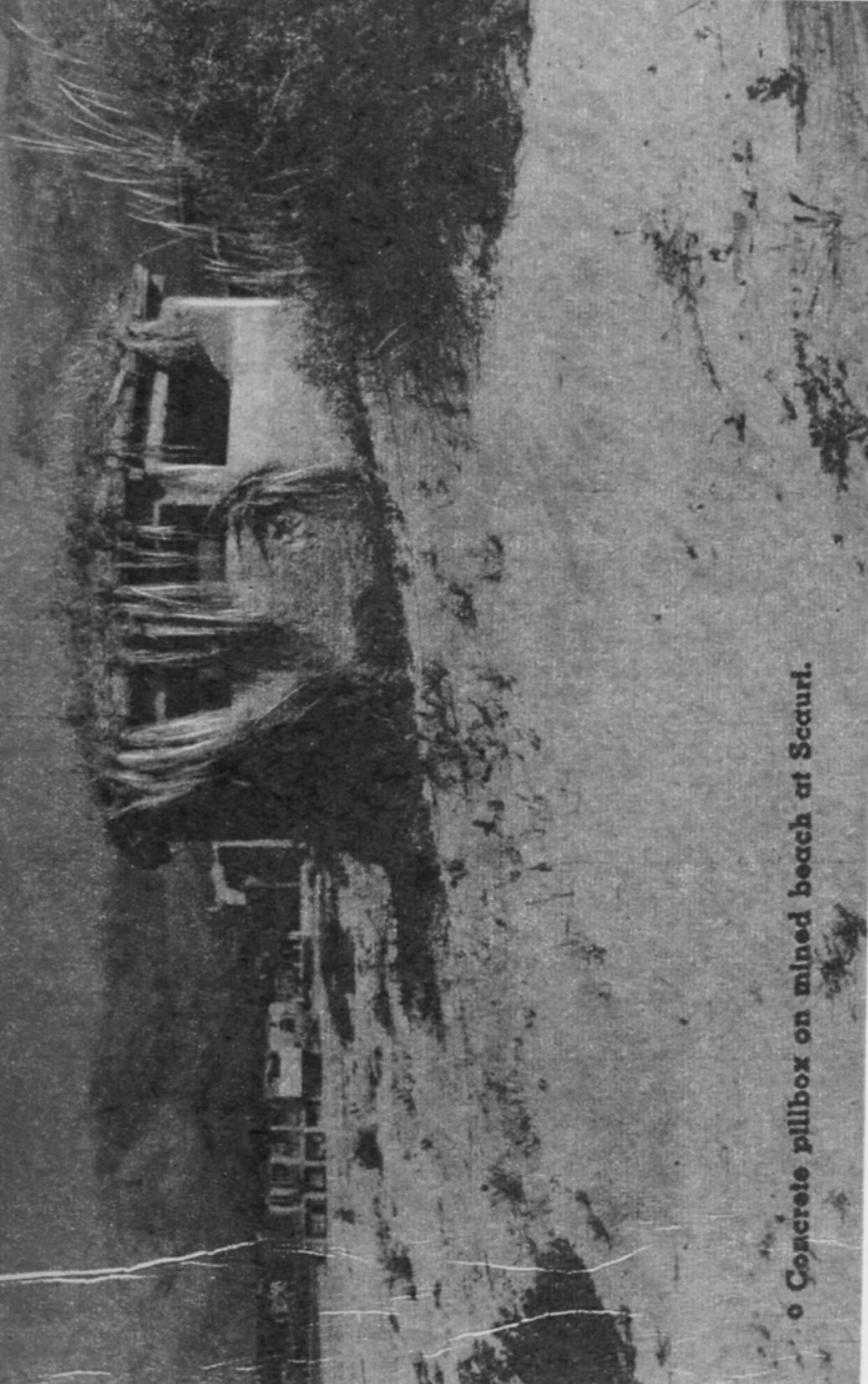
The important fact concerning the enemy's defenses in the coastal sector was that he expected an attack from the water. Along the beaches there were thousands of mines, dense barriers of concertina wire, concrete posts to block landing barges and tanks, and elaborate concrete pillboxes. Along the entire Gaeta Peninsula were batteries of coastal guns. Many of these defenses had been erected by the Italians and the Germans had added their improvements. But although the enemy's preparations to meet an attack from the sea were elaborate, it was soon to be found that the defenses of the Gustav Line were equally formidable.

Through April and the early part of May the artillery supporting the Division fired constantly against enemy movements and artillery positions. From the very beginning the policy was established of firing about 5 rounds for every German shell. Our superiority in this respect compelled the Germans to remain in their dugouts throughout the day, restricting all their movements to the hours of darkness.

The weather was fine. On the steep crags of the Petrella Mountain Mass to the north there was still snow, but around Minturno the valleys and hills were green with new growth.

Mist sometimes settled down, and sometimes at night fog came in from the sea. But already the white dust was thick on the roads, not to be laid by rain till another autumn.

On April 24th the 338th Infantry relieved the 339th along the coast, while that regiment took a short rest. Then, as plans for the attack matured, the 339th returned to the line to take the left half of the 338th sector in from the coast, with 2 battalions in the line. Two battalions of the 338th now held approximately one half of their former regimental sector. The 337th Infantry was meanwhile relieved by elements of the 88th Division and became the Division reserve in an area southwest of Tremensuoli, except for the 3rd Battalion which was attached at this time to the 339th Infantry. Attached to the Division now were the 756th Tank Battalion, the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 5th Italian Mule Pack Group. The artillery remained under Division control and received the direct support of the big guns of the Corps Artillery, as well as of the entire 36th Division Artillery.



o Concrete pillbox on mined beach at Securt.

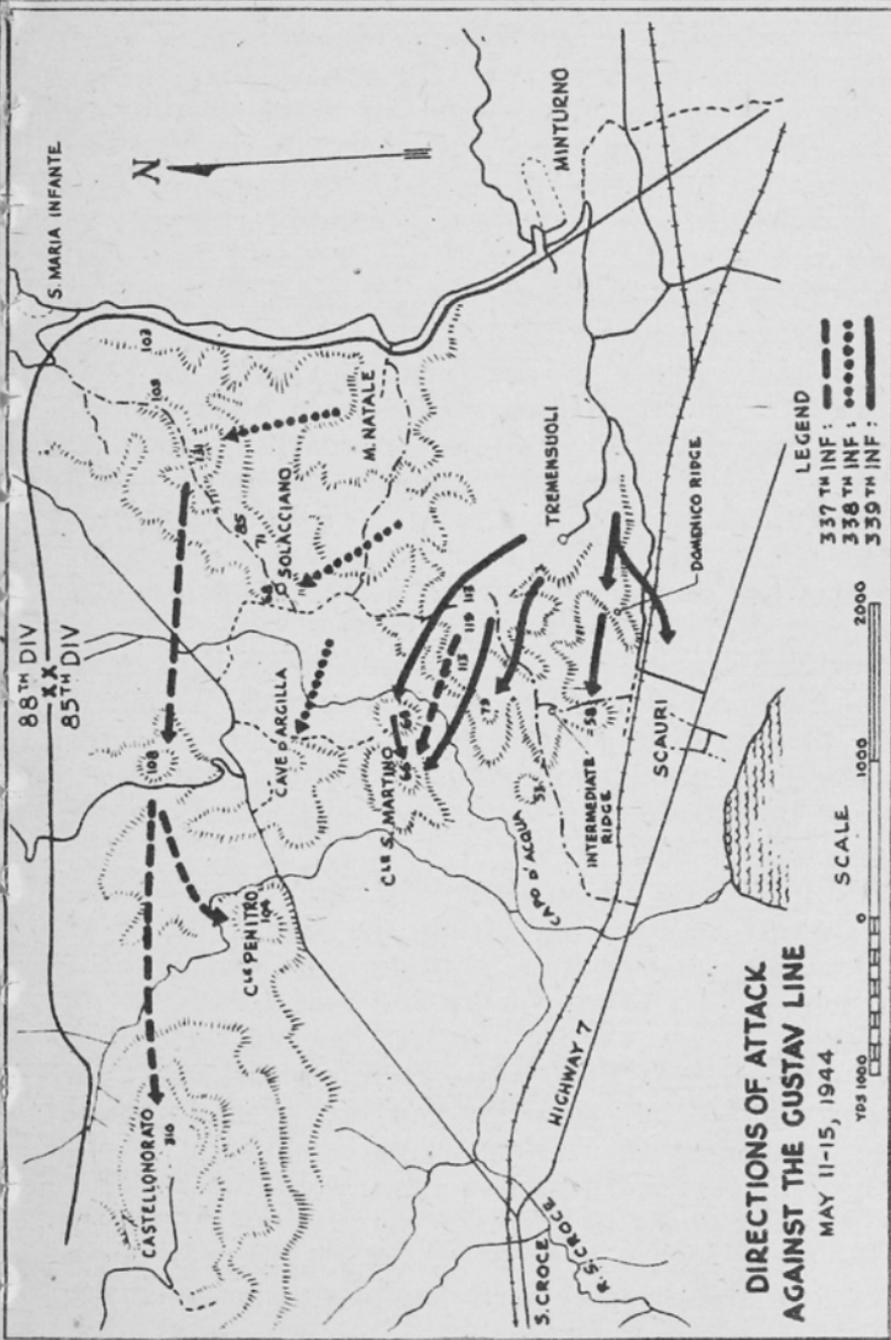
Along the Division front the night of May 11th, there was no moon and enough layers of mist in the upper air to obscure the stars. In the dark, along the entire line, from the Tyrrhenian Sea through Cassino to the Adriatic, men waited to attack.

At 11 o'clock the great artillery barrage began. Long Toms, the great 240mm guns, 75mm pack howitzers, cannon, British 6 and 25 pounders, 105's, 155's, everything let go at that moment. For a full half-hour shells were poured into the German positions, tens of thousands of them. Almost nothing could be heard but the thunder of guns, and the air was lit up by the flashes of the powder charges. From the Minturno Hill Scauri could be seen as if by daylight, and in flashes the valley and the enemy's hills came into clear view out of the darkness.

The infantry moved up to the edges of the barrage. As the guns ceased firing, companies, platoons and squads advanced slowly into the fire that immediately met them.

On the right the 338th moved out to attack the Solacciano Ridge. The 339th on the left attacked the Domenico Ridge, the low hills extending to its left, and Colle San Martino, made up of Hills 66 and 69. The enemy apparently did not expect an attack at this time, but after the initial surprise he recovered from the shock of the bombardment, and held firm.

What was beginning now was a bitter up-hill fight across exposed slopes, almost every move made under the eyes of the enemy. There could be no let-up in the assault once it had begun, and as we came to grips with the enemy in his closely-crowded positions the fighting went on without pause day and night.



88TH DIV
XX
85TH DIV

S. MARIA INFANTE

N

MINTURNO

M. NATALE

SOLACCIANO

TREMENSUOLI

DOMENICO RIDGE

CAVE D'ARGILLA

S. MARTINO

SCAURI

HIGHWAY 7

S. CROCE

CASTELLOROTARO

C. S. PENITRO

CAPO D'ARGILLA

INTERMEDIATE RIDGE

**DIRECTIONS OF ATTACK
AGAINST THE GUSTAV LINE**

MAY 11-15, 1944

100 1000

SCALE

1000

2000

LEGEND

- 337TH INF: [Symbol]
- 338TH INF: [Symbol]
- 339TH INF: [Symbol]

It took time to get through the minefields before the dug-in positions could be reached, and in that time the enemy let go with his machine guns and mortars, covering every approach. A small stream, the Capo D'Acqua, proved one of the most bitter obstacles. Troops struggling through its current and up the steep banks which tanks could not climb advanced into the direct fire of machine guns and mortars "zeroed in" on them.

Attacking towards the Solacciano Ridge the 338th ran into fire from thick-walled farm houses the enemy had fortified, and in approaching these the troops made their way through the most densely laid minefields of all. Troops of I Company drove the enemy from one of these houses, and waited while the artillery levelled a neighboring house occupied by the enemy. Then they took over the fortified positions in time to meet the reinforcements the Germans sent to take the houses back. Attacking in the draws a platoon of A Company lost man after man to machine gun fire until it was able to close in and destroy the enemy with hand grenades and bayonets.

The 339th was meeting the same kind of fierce resistance. Advancing along the low hills of the Domenico Ridge, one platoon lost several of its members in the minefields and still others to machine gun fire. When the rest reached their objective and dug in, the enemy counterattacked. Word was received by radio that our men were surrounded, and after that no messages came back. When this hill was recaptured 2 days later, the bodies of the leader and 5 of the men were found. At another point the bodies of most of the members of a platoon of B Company were found surrounded by 53

dead Germans.

In the bitter fighting several companies were reduced to 50 and 60 percent of their strength. The reinforcements coming up through the mine-fields, which could be cleared only slowly and in the dark, suffered heavily from the mines and from the artillery fire the enemy laid down to cut them off. The first ridges were to be taken only at heavy costs.

The fighting was as brave as it was fierce. Company G, 339th Infantry was cited by the President for its outstanding performance of duty during this period. In advancing towards its objective, the Company took advantage of the artillery barrage to seize part of a hill before the barrage ceased. The 2 assault platoons, closing with the enemy before he could recover, killed 60 and captured 40 of the defenders, demolished 8 bunkers, reduced 7 pill-boxes and captured 25 automatic weapons. The objective taken, the company immediately used the enemy weapons to assist the assaults of adjacent companies. Meanwhile the company's own positions were pounded by artillery and mortar fire for 48 long hours. The enemy counterattacked 3 times, and was repulsed each time though our casualties were increasingly heavy and no reinforcements could be brought up. For 36 hours the men were without food or water, but they held out until the advance on other parts of the line made their position secure.

It was in the first day's fighting that Lieutenant Robert T. Waugh, leader of the first platoon of this company, engaged in the beginning of a series of actions that was to win him the Congressional Medal of Honor for conspicuous gallantry. He reconnoitered

a minefield before entering it with his platoon, and then, directing his men to fire against 6 bunkers, he advanced alone against one position after another. Reaching the first bunker he threw phosphorous grenades into it, and as the defenders came running out he killed them with a burst from his tommy gun. Then he passed on to each of the remaining 5 bunkers, killing or capturing all of their occupants.

The attack of the 3rd Battalion of the 339th Infantry against Hill 66 and Hill 69, the Colle San Martino, met perhaps the fiercest resistance of all. At the very beginning a squad of L Company was destroyed by artillery as it passed through Tremensuoli towards Hill 113 East. Following the trail out of the town still another squad was wiped out by the enemy artillery. But the remainder of the company and the battalion pushed on across the Capo D'Acqua to the slopes of Hill 69. Bitter fighting raged through the night, as platoon after platoon moved up, but by 5 o'clock next morning the hill was captured.

May 12th and 13th passed in an unceasing struggle. The gains were small, and fiercely won. Wherever we moved the enemy threw in heavy, accurate fire, and every break we made in his lines he tried to repair, counterattacking with all the strength he could collect. K Company of the 337th came up on the 12th to attack Hill 66, but by the time it reached the base of 69 it had suffered such heavy losses that it could not continue. It then dug in to reinforce the troops on 69. And at 9 o'clock that morning the enemy sent down 200 men and a tank to drive us out. He failed. But it was certain that still other attacks were being prepared, and the need to capture Hill 66 became more urgent. So the

1st Battalion of the 337th was brought up under cover of a smoke screen to pass through the exhausted 3rd Battalion of the 339th.

The fresh battalion pushed on slowly over Hill 69, and began its attack on Hill 66 at 4:30 the afternoon of the 12th. The enemy who had seen our troops advancing met them with such heavy fire that they were soon driven back. But the withdrawal was made only in order to reorganize. Twelve battalions of the II Corps Artillery now laid down a barrage on 66, and the infantry moved out again at 6:30. The opposition was still stubborn, but the enemy soon had all he could take. Colle San Martino was captured, and our troops immediately consolidated their newly won positions.

The next morning the enemy counterattacked. Fifty men firing machine pistols stormed the hill. They came within 50 yards of our positions unopposed. Then the order to fire was given, and every man of the enemy group was killed. Later others tried it again, and met the same results. Company C of the 337th Infantry received a Presidential Citation for its performance of duty in this action.

On the 13th the enemy was counterattacking everywhere, and all along the line the men fought bitterly to hold their gains. And they continued to push slowly ahead. Gradually the sum of the gains became more important. By the morning of the 14th we held Hills 79 and 69 and several positions on the Solacciano Ridge. Troops were ready to move into Scauri. It now remained to reorganize for the final breakthrough. The 2nd Battalion of the 337th came up to attack between the 338th and 339th. On the afternoon of the 14th supported by tanks,

they attacked Hill 108, overrunning it and taking more than 80 prisoners and the 338th was clearing the last enemy resistance on the Solacciano Ridge.

By noon of the 15th the 339th was holding Hills 66, 79 and 58; the newly committed 2nd Battalion of the 338th had captured the Cave D'Argilla area; and the 337th was on 108. The last counterattacks had been beaten off. The Gustav Line was broken. The drive which was to secure Highway 7 to Terracina was now to begin.



o Smoke covering bridge
near Minturno.

THE SECOND PHASE

The coordinated Division attack began on the afternoon of May 15th. The enemy had a secondary line between Castellonorato and Scauri, and the Division prepared to attack before the enemy had time to get set. The 338th Infantry was ordered to strike west to seize Monte Penitro, then to drive southwest to the Croce Road Junction and on to Highway 7. If successful this attack would by-pass Scauri and Monte Scauri on a jut of land west of the Highway. On the right the 337th Infantry was ordered to seize Castellonorato, and then push west along the mountain road to Maranola, a distance of about 5 miles, prepared to turn south there, following the road leading to Highway 7 just below Formia.

By this time the 88th Division on the right, with the assistance of the 338th Infantry, had reduced the important enemy strong-point in Santa Maria Infante. In order to coordinate the advance of the 2 divisions the 349th Infantry Regiment of the 88th Division was now attached to the 85th. Attacking west from La Civita, on the mountains north of Castellonorato, this regiment was ordered to strike due west across the roadless mountains, parallel to the advance of the 337th.

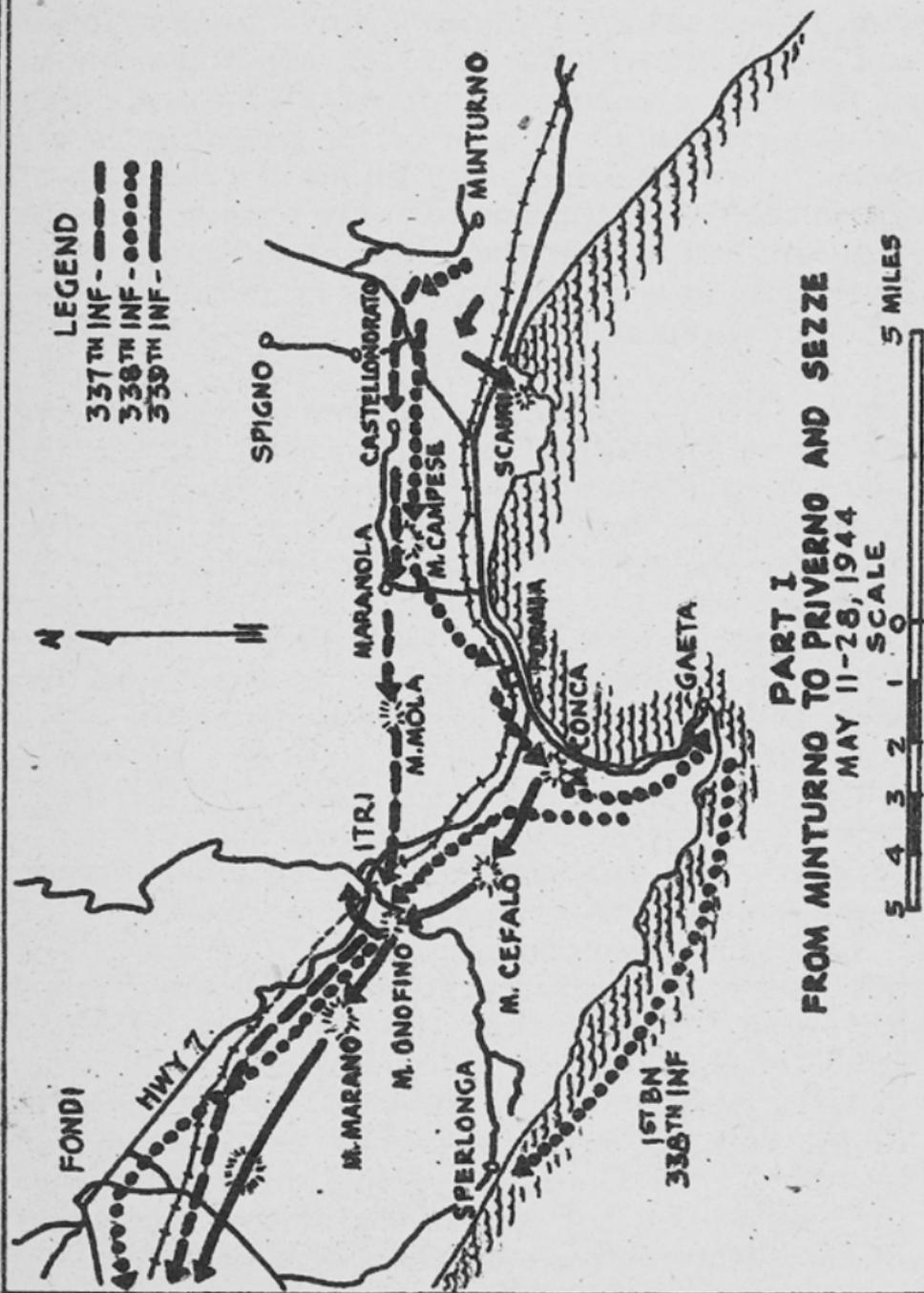
The enemy apparently relied on the extremely rugged, mountainous country to hold up our advance. He had neglected to construct any considerable number of defenses, though hasty positions served him well, and from the positions on Monte Campese and with the support of guns on the Gaeta

Peninsula he was attempting to cover the withdrawal of his troops to Formia. Guns on Monte Penitro and Tripoli were being used to delay the advance of our troops on Castellonorato and beyond.

There was little attempt to defend the first hills. The 3rd Battalion of the 337th Infantry, relieved from attachment to the 339th, and shifting over to take up positions on the left of the 2nd Battalion, came under fire from Monte Penitro, but they went on, the companies in lines of squad columns, and Castellonorato was captured by dark. The enemy was now withdrawing all along the line. He abandoned Monte Scauri when our seizure of Penitro made his positions there untenable and on the 16th the 339th moved into the town of Scauri and cleaned out a few delaying positions on Monte Scauri.

Advancing from Penitro towards the Croce Road Junction the 338th Infantry was held up by the last counterattack in this area. The enemy was trying to save the remnants of his forces now deeply outflanked by the 88th Division driving west across the mountains north of the Formia corridor. By this time the 94th Division had been reduced to approximately 1200 men, and to save these the enemy threw in a battalion of impressed foreign laborers and some troops from the 274th Grenadier Regiment, attacking from the banks of the Aquatraversa stream. He also brought to bear concentrated artillery fire from Monte Campese and Gaeta. This held the regiment up during the 16th, but by the end of the day that resistance was also overcome.

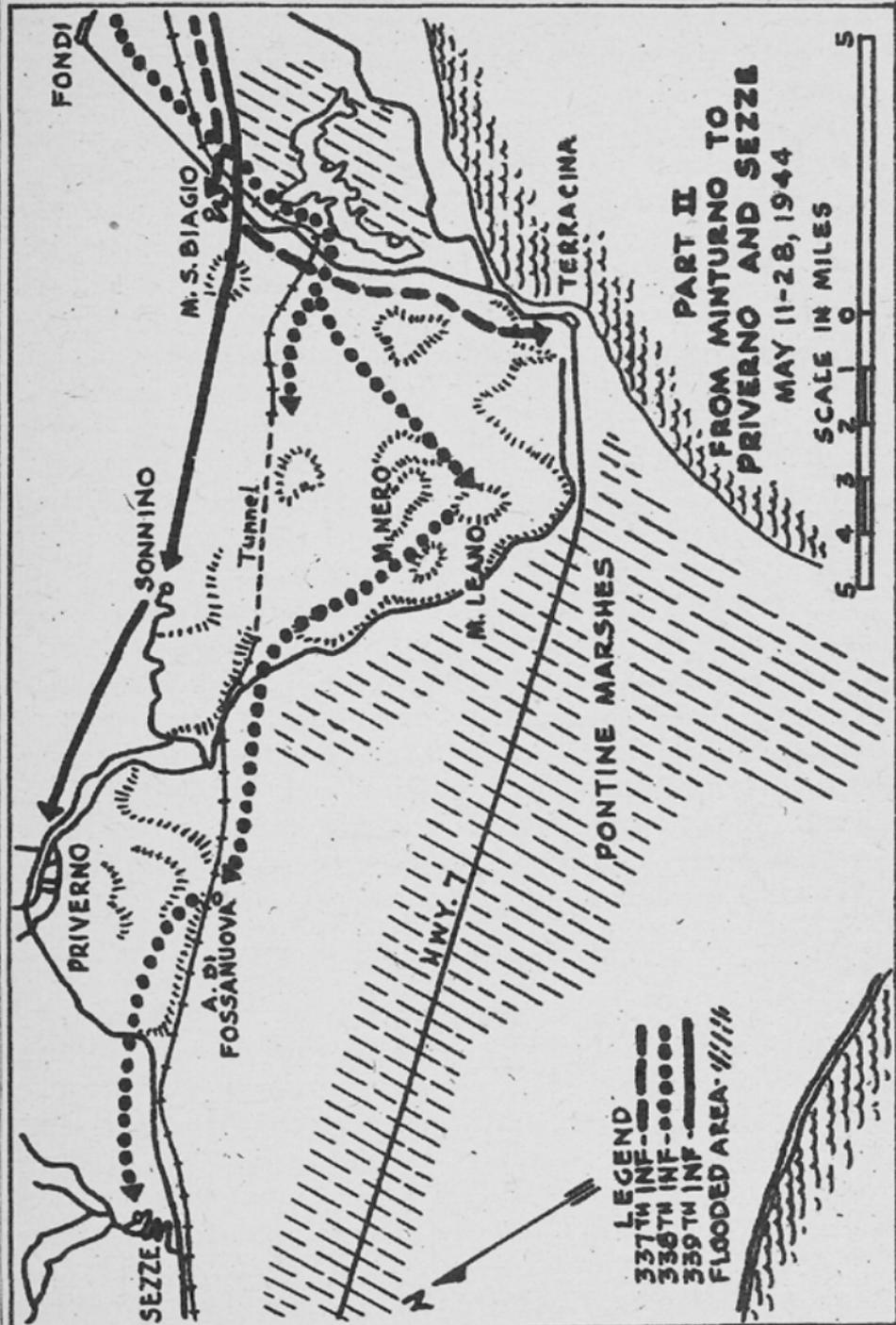
On the 16th the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 337th advanced to the west beyond Castellonorato,



crossing the Aquatraversa, and moving towards Maranola. One company of the 3rd Battalion, as it came close to Monte Campese, received heavy mortar and automatic weapons fire. Its troops then dug in at the base, awaiting the arrival of the remaining companies who also dug in before renewing the attack. But next morning they found that the bulk of the enemy had withdrawn. It only remained for the 3rd Battalion to clear the pillboxes and sniper posts on the heights while the 2nd went on to capture Trivio and Maranola.

The enemy resistance had now cracked everywhere. The enemy had neither the forces nor the time to establish a line in front of the Division. Elsewhere he had also been defeated. The last desperate resistance on the central Italian front at Cassino was to be wiped out on the 18th, and on the west the final push was under way to join with the forces from the Anzio Beachhead. On May 16th the 85th Division was placed on a 72-hour alert, prepared to move to Anzio by water, but it soon appeared that the joining of the forces would be achieved sooner than had been originally expected. The final decision was that the Division would continue its drive towards Terracina.

Now that Campese was taken, the last major obstacles in the advance of the 338th on Formia had been removed. On the 17th the regiment advanced into the town, cleaning out the little remaining resistance the next day. Late in the night of the 18th the regiment moved out of Formia to capture Monte Conca. In doing this they opened the road to Itri, and arrived at positions in the rear of the enemy defenses on the Gaeta Peninsula. On



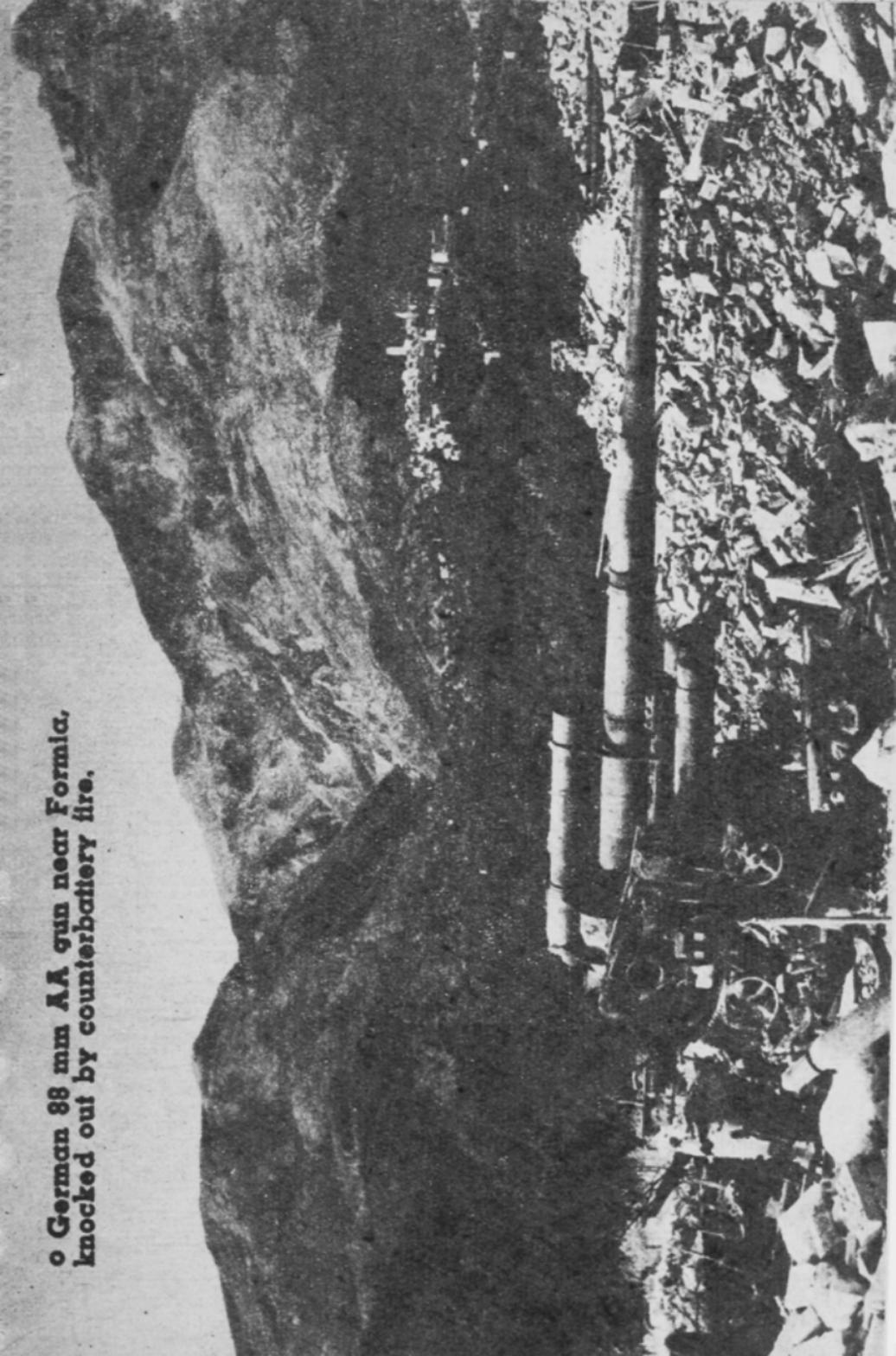
the 19th the 338th Infantry and the 85th Reconnaissance Troop cleared out a few pockets of resistance in the Peninsula with little difficulty, and troops entered the town unmolested. The enemy's next refuge was the so-called Hitler Line, anchored at Terracina.

The 339th Infantry had now come up from the vicinity of Scauri along the Highway to Formia, where it began to advance along the Highway to Itri. Seizing mountains on the left of the road—Monte Cefalo and Monte San Onofino—the regiment was for a time harassed by fire coming from Itri. The 2nd Battalion was dispatched to clear the enemy forces from a section of the town, and accomplished its mission in short order.

In Formia, Gaeta and Itri the enemy had left a large amount of valuable equipment behind, and it was apparent that he had been forced to withdraw in haste. Along the roads there began to appear the debris of a defeated enemy—unpacked boxes of ammunition, unlaidd mines, discarded gas masks. Later there was to be the much more impressive litter of a rout, but now were the first signs of a serious defeat.

At this time a pursuit force was organized to hound the retreating Germans. The 2nd Battalion of the 337th Infantry was motorized, operating with a company of tanks, a platoon of the 85th Reconnaissance Troop and a platoon of engineers. This force detrucked at Itri, and moved over to the base of Monte Cefalo where it prepared to attack Monte San Biagio which descends to the northern edge of Highway 7 at the Fondi Plain. The remain-

o German 88 mm AA gun near Formia,
knocked out by counterbattery fire.



der of the regiment went into a reserve status for a brief period.

The 339th Infantry now began an arduous advance from the vicinity of Fondi, lately captured by elements of the 88th Division, crossing steep, almost trailless mountains north to Sonnino, a distance of 12 miles. The troops struck out across this rocky country, following the compass, and their supplies were brought to them by mules and by men carrying rations and ammunition on their backs.

The regiment possessed almost no knowledge of the enemy's dispositions in this area, and contact with the Germans was temporarily lost. The 94th Division was nevertheless known to be in desperate need of reinforcement as it retreated into the mountains north of Fondi and along the Highway to Terracina.

Between San Biagio and Sonnino there were 3 mountains in a direct line, each more than 1500 feet high. The 1st Battalion moved ahead first in the advance on Sonnino. The 2nd following the 1st was obliged to clear out several enemy bands as it climbed the high ground overlooking Highway 7, and its advance went slowly. It was not before the morning of the 23rd that all these pockets had been cleaned up. Shortly before noon of that day the 1st Battalion had come into positions for the attack on Sonnino, but before the 2nd Battalion had come abreast of it enemy anti-aircraft guns opened up on both battalions. As our own artillery had been outdistanced it could not lend support to our infantry. Nevertheless, preparations for the attack continued, the 2nd Battalion took positions on high ground from which it could lend support.

ing fire, the 3rd Battalion by now had joined the 1st, and the attack jumped off at half-past four. The advance went ahead steadily, and after 2 hours' fighting the town was ours. In addition to the killed, the enemy lost 73 men as prisoners. One of these was the commander of the 3rd Battalion of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment who said that our troops had not been expected to cross over the mountains and that the first intimation he had had of our presence was when he suddenly received a message that the Americans were on both flanks and that retreat was impossible.

Meanwhile, on May 21st, the 337th Infantry had been recommitted, and, passing to the rear of the 339th, advanced on the left flank of that regiment to take Monte San Biagio, where it found little resistance though it captured a considerable number of prisoners.

The 338th had enjoyed a short rest after mopping up Gaeta. Billeted briefly in what remained of the villas along the coast, the troops had a chance to swim in the salt water, get a change of clothes, and replace damaged equipment. On May 21st, however, orders were received to move on to take positions west of Fondi to begin the advance on Terracina.

Highway 7 was the single road serving several of the III. Corps units, and from the Croce Road Junction on there was a solid mass of traffic. The long lines of supply trucks and artillery, the battalions of foot troops, the tanks, the reconnaissance cars, the liaison jeeps, all created the picture of a great military action and its vast momentum. Partly to avoid delays caused by the road traffic, the 1st Battalion

of the 338th moved by water in DUKW'S (two-and-a-half ton amphibious trucks) to Sperlonga, about 12 miles west of Gaeta. They were prepared to find enemy on the beach, but when they arrived they discovered that the Germans had already pulled out, and the battalion proceeded immediately by DUKW and on foot to join the remainder of the regiment near Fondi.

In the meantime the 337th Infantry was crossing the mountains and following the highway southwest towards Terracina. Along the entire Division front the enemy resistance stiffened as the strength of the German reinforcements made itself felt. Both the 337th and 339th Regiments were now encountering troops of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and still other forces hastily withdrawn from Anzio and thrown into the defense of Terracina.

Pushing over the mountains northwest of that city the 337th Infantry captured Monte Autone and Monte Copiccio on May 21st after much weary climbing. By taking these positions they cleared a long stretch of Highway 7 and the 1st Battalion, with strong armor support, now moved down the Highway until they ran into heavy fire covering the defile between San Angelo and the sea. Several truckloads of enemy troops had been rushed to the end of the Terracina Aqueduct, where they occupied prepared positions. Here the fire from small arms and mortars stopped further passage along the road.

Troops and trucks were lined up in the bright daylight waiting for the artillery to be brought up to wipe out the resistance. The enemy guns had already been pulled out as had most of his mortars, and the advancing forces halted just out of range of small arms fire, where the enemy could see them but

could do little. When heavier guns were brought up, the Germans were put to flight and the advance continued.

Further, more serious opposition was met on the outskirts of Terracina. The point of the march column was within 500 yards of the city when the enemy opened up on it with automatic small arms fire. The beach on the left of the road was known to be mined and on the right the enemy had dug in on the steep bluffs. Tanks were sent ahead, but these were halted by a crater road block. There was nothing to do for the moment but withdraw, and the battalion now took up positions on the northern and forward slopes of Monte Croce.

When the sun came up in the morning the troops discovered that the crest of the mountain was held by large groups of the enemy. Throughout most of the day the battalion was pinned down by fire from here and by numbers of roving snipers with machine pistols. The snipers were disposed of by patrols, and in the late afternoon the battalion moved to the reverse slopes of the mountain where the enemy in his fixed positions could not reach them. A rolling barrage was called for, covering the crest of the mountain yard by yard, and in a short time the positions on Croce were wiped out.

The 3rd Battalion, coming up along the right of the 1st, had also been troubled by fire coming from Monte Croce. Climbing through heavy brush on the steep slopes of Monte Stefano, they were supplied only by mules and hand carry. But during the night of the 22nd and the early morning of the 23rd the heavy weapons elements were brought up, and the battalion moved forward over the rocks, firing every weapon it possessed against the strong points on the

slopes of Croce opposite them. When the enemy was finally wiped out by the artillery, the 3rd Battalion had reached positions from which it could overlook Terracina. Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion had moved through the 1st, prepared for a coordinated attack on Terracina with the 3rd Battalion on the morning of the 23rd.

The battle for Terracina developed into a battle for the cemetery on the outskirts of the city. This cemetery was on high ground and the approaches were rocky and steep. A light rain had made the slopes slippery and this hindered the tanks, but excellent close support was rendered the infantry by several battalions of self-propelled 105's belonging to the 6th Field Artillery Group. In the cemetery the enemy had dug in beneath the tombs. Machine guns, mortars and snipers were using the monuments for cover. The battle raged the entire day, but just before dark the last enemy resistance had been overcome, and by midnight the 2nd and 3rd Battalions had taken up positions on the edge of the town.

Meanwhile the 1st Battalion had reorganized and moved over on the right to the northwest of Terracina. All during the night our artillery fired into the roads leading to the north, and what was left of the once beautiful city crumbled. After dawn the battalions moved easily into the town. The bottleneck, Terracina, was captured, and the road to the Anzio Beachhead was opened.

To assist the fighting around Terracina the 338th Regiment had been ordered on the 22nd to move out and capture the mountains on the right of the 337th in order to outflank that city. At the begin-

ning of the advance a brief encounter occurred at the southern end of a 5-mile long railroad tunnel. The Germans used this tunnel as a protected route of supply and evacuation and through it had been coming some of the badly needed reinforcements. Emerging from the tunnel and preparing positions these troops were surprised by our advancing forces. After our supporting air units had blocked the northern end of the tunnel by bombing, tank destroyers and reconnaissance troop weapons fired directly into the mouth of the tunnel. Stories of what happened here spread everywhere, and were multiplied in the telling. The essential point was that the tunnel was no longer of any use to the Germans. After this initial engagement the 3rd Battalion of the 338th Infantry, reinforced by elements of the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, remained on guard near the tunnel to make certain that none of the enemy escaped, and other elements of the regiment went on to capture Monte Leano and Monte Nero with little difficulty.

The enemy was now withdrawing from Terracina along the Highway on the edge of the Pontine Marshes, which he had flooded, and beyond Sonnino he was withdrawing northwest across the Amaseno River. The pursuit continued.

Our advancing troops now saw more and more of the results of the work done by the artillery and the air forces. The Germans had been compelled to give up their policy of moving only at night, and in their need of getting out they had taken to the roads in daylight despite our overwhelming air superiority. This decision perhaps saved them from complete destruction, but it was nevertheless a ruinous escape. Burnt out trucks and tanks were every-

where, abandoned spiked artillery, ammunition dumps, and the bodies they had not had time to bury.

The problem now was to keep contact with the enemy. Dismembered and defeated, his organization fell apart, and the signs of confusion spread everywhere. By May 26th it seemed that almost all traces of a coherent organization had disappeared. Instead of fighting by platoons, companies and battalions, the enemy now threw together so-called "Battle Groups," miscellaneous troops gathered wherever they could be found, put under an officer or an NCO and thrown into the line. Since May 22nd the enemy had had almost no artillery support. His scattered foot troops received only the occasional aid of self-propelled guns and a few machine guns hastily dug in in pockets of the hills. Contact was consequently maintained only with a few delaying forces.

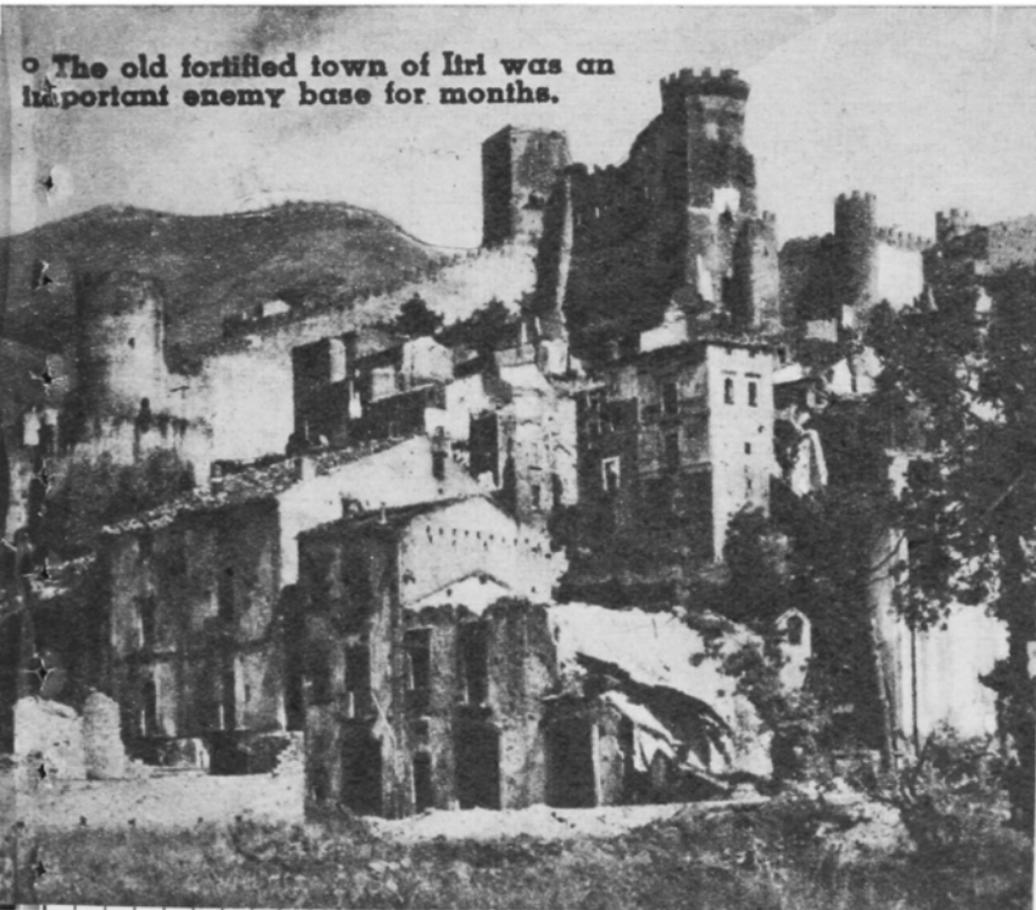
The Division now pressed forward with all possible speed in the hills north of the Pontine Marshes. During the 25th and 26th it had advanced west of the Abbe di Fossanuova and Priverno. At this time the 338th was marching in a column of battalions, meeting practically no resistance until it arrived at an impromptu enemy line in the hills east and northeast of Sezze. Monte Trevi was quickly seized, and the last resistance in Sezze was mopped up by elements of the regiment after the town had been entered by troops of the 117th Reconnaissance Squadron. The 338th Infantry was advancing northwest towards Monte San Angelo, when on the 27th it was relieved by the 351st Infantry Regiment of the 88th Division.

By now forces pushing out from the Anzio

Beachhead had joined with other Allied units coming from the east. As a result the 85th Division had been "pinched out." After 49 days' continuous service in the line the Division passed to reserve, moving to Sabaudia, formerly a resort on the coast below Anzio.

Between May 11th and 28th the Division had broken the Gustav Line and driven the enemy before it 45 miles over a long series of rugged mountains. It had routed the Germans, destroyed enormous amounts of equipment, and had taken 1173 prisoners. Victory was in the air.

o The old fortified town of Itri was an important enemy base for months.

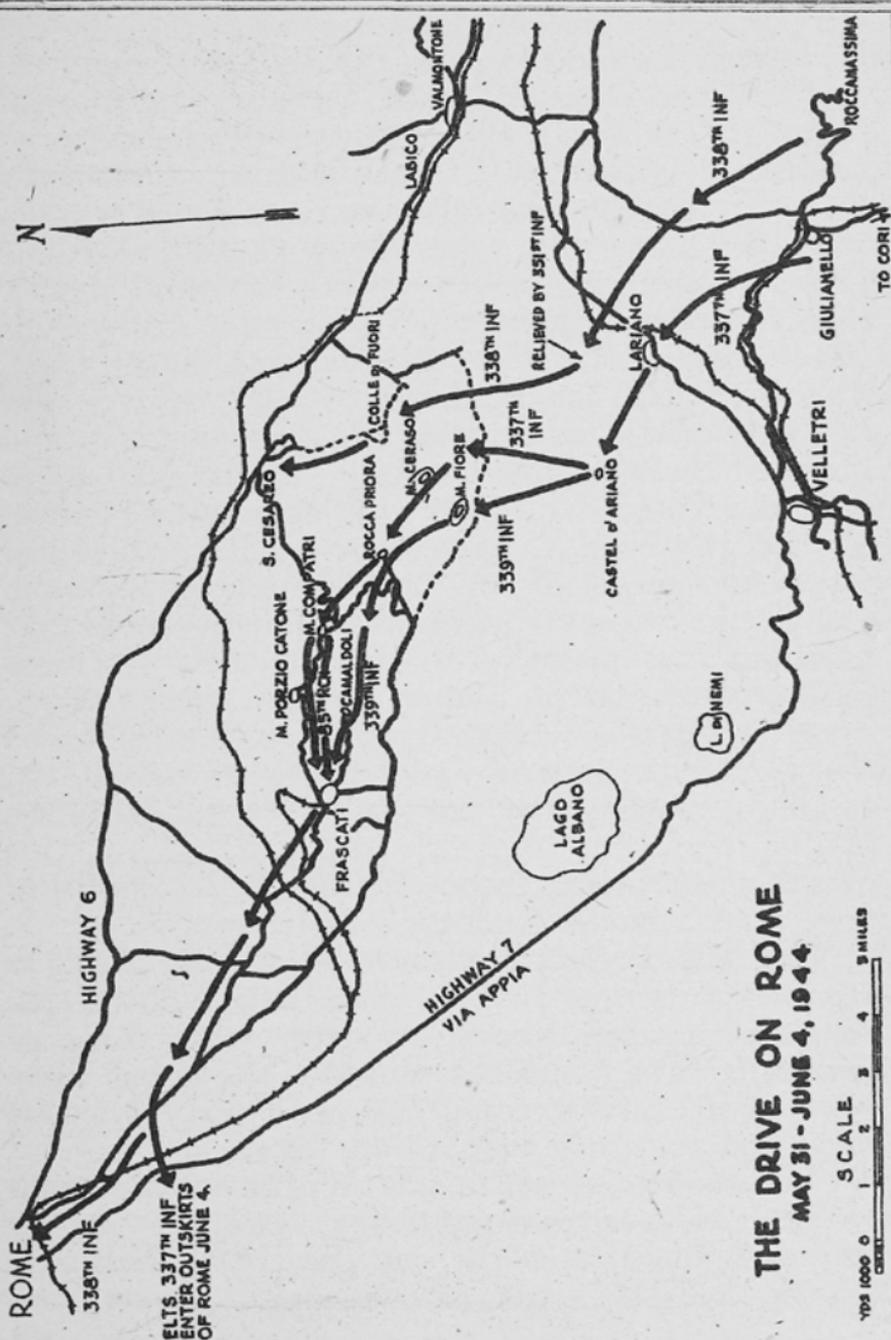


THE DRIVE ON ROME AND TO THE NORTH

Along the entire front the advance of the Allies was rapidly accelerating. The enemy was on the point of rout, and the pressure of the pursuit needed to be intensified; Rome and the destruction of the enemy were almost realized objectives. Accordingly, orders were now given to move the Division northeast to the Lariano-Guilianello sector. The Division took up its new sector on May 30th.

In Lariano and the hills to the north the enemy still manned a defensive line. In positions here the famous Hermann Goering Panzer Grenadier Division hoped to delay our advance sufficiently to permit the escape of other troops along the roads. While the positions they held in the vicinity of Lariano, though few, were well prepared, beyond that locality the Germans were compelled to erect only the hastiest kind of field fortifications, hurriedly cutting down trees to clear fields of fire and to provide tank barriers.

But now the sense of conquest had grown stronger among the troops, and every step meant that Rome was that much closer. There was still the ugly job of destroying the snipers lurking in the brush and woods, the machine guns placed in the railroad cuts, and still at night the occasional German planes came over to harass the troops. But miles now were being covered each day, and the advance was accelerated. The service companies and the rear command posts had more and more difficulty in keeping up with the troops. The weather continued bright and clear. Everywhere the trees



were growing greener—poppies were thick in the fields, and around Cori the cherries were ripe.

The new Division sector lay between 2 great highways leading to Rome. About 5 miles north of Lariano Highway 6, from Cassino, came into Rome from a southeasterly direction. About 4 miles west of Lariano was Highway 7, leading to Rome from the south. The route of the Division advance lay across a region crowded with steep rocky hills till it reached the Tiber Valley, and Rome itself, some 23 miles distant. Much of the region was heavily wooded with pines and chestnut trees, and many of the hills bore the now familiar terraces on which olive orchards and vineyards were planted.

The 337th and 338th Infantry Regiments had relieved elements of the 3rd American Division, and the Division Artillery was brought up to take positions in support of the infantry. At 1 o'clock in the afternoon of May 31st the attack began. The 1st Battalion of the 337th on the right and the 3rd on the left advanced on either side of Lariano, by-passing the town. The 2nd Battalion sent a reinforced company into Lariano to wipe out the rear guard there, which it accomplished only after a bitter, prolonged fight.

The 3rd Battalion was now moving along a front slightly less than a mile wide, down the slopes of a ridge thickly covered with rows of vineyards. The advance went slowly, but one company in the early evening had reached the opposite slope and consolidated positions there.

On June 1st the 338th Infantry, advancing north of Lariano, overcame stubborn resistance in the morning, but late in the day the enemy resistance failed, and the signs of withdrawal were un-

mistakable. That midnight the regiment was relieved by the 351st Infantry Regiment of the 88th Division, but when it was seen that the enemy retreat was about to turn into a rout the 338th was recommitted immediately to pursue the badly beaten remnants of the Goering Division. On the night of June 2nd the battalion entered San Cesareo and cut Highway 6, killing a large number of Germans who were trying to escape along the road. At this point the regiment passed to Division reserve except for the 3rd Battalion which was attached to the 339th Infantry to become the reserve battalion for that regiment.

The 339th Infantry, passing through Giulianello on June 1st, attacked through thickly wooded hills to seize Castel D'Ariano, the highest point of the Maschio D'Ariano Hill Mass. Progress was steady and quick for several miles, the only resistance fire from snipers and an occasional self-propelled gun. But the next day, as the regiment veered to the northwest, it met resistance from mortars and artillery on Monte Fiore, southwest of Rocca Priora. But this resistance was reduced in short order, and on June 3rd the regiment seized 2 more hills, Monte Salamone and Monte San Sebastiano.

Just south of Monte Compatri the 85th Reconnaissance Troop ran into a heavy fire fight the night of June 3rd, in which they killed 40 of the enemy and took 65 prisoners. The next day elements of the Troop cleared Frascati of snipers. The 339th Infantry occupied the town somewhat later, and went on to advance to within 3 miles of Rome when it halted for the night.

The 337th Infantry continued to meet heavy resistance. Through the thickly wooded draws mo-

torized patrols and roving snipers harassed the troops, and several times wedges were driven into the exposed right flank of the 1st Battalion. At one time the infiltrating enemy completely surrounded the 1st Battalion CP, and it was necessary to round up every available man to scout out and kill the enemy. Tank destroyers were meanwhile brought up to aid the 3rd Battalion, tanks were aiding the 1st, and now hill after hill fell into our hands.

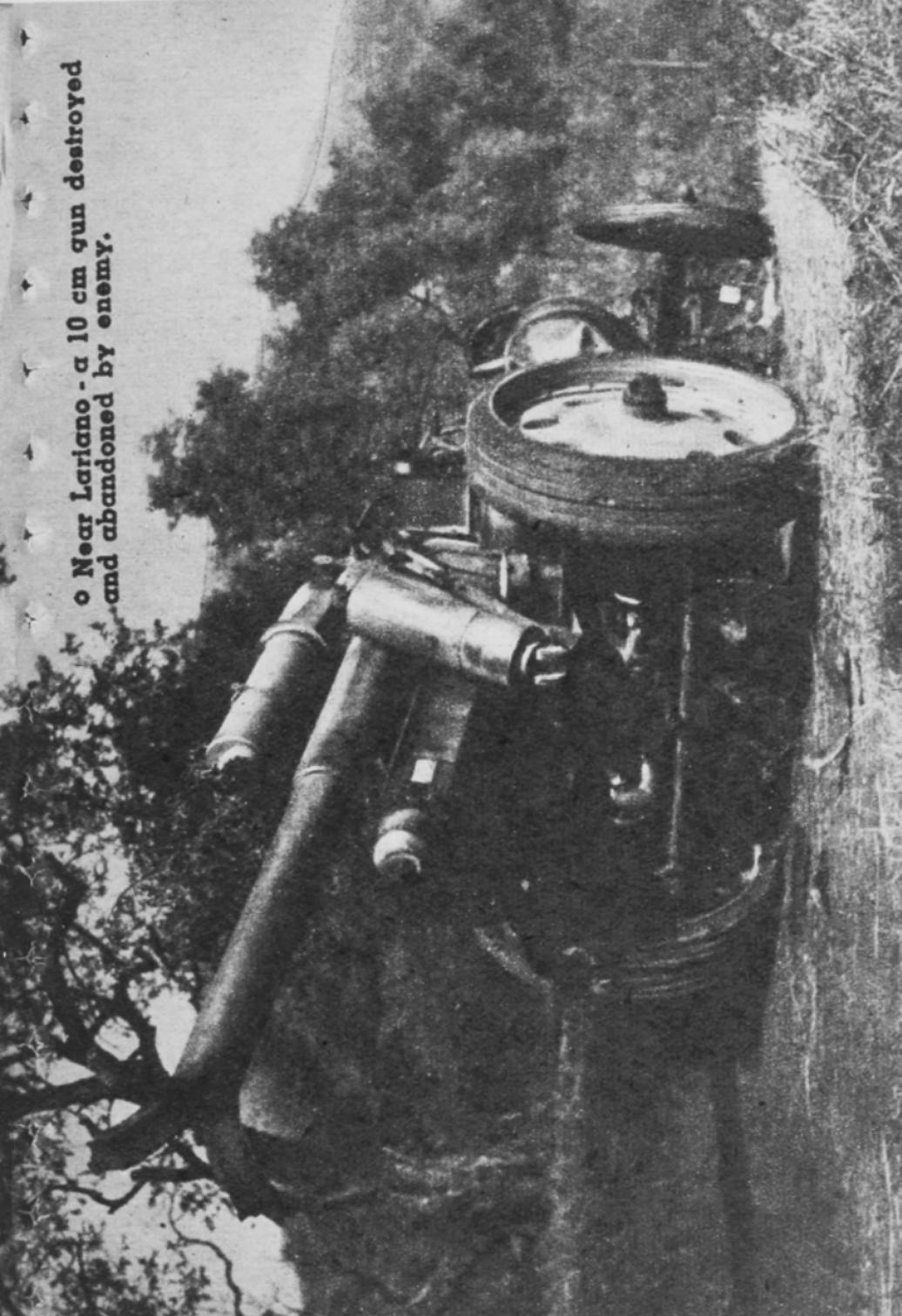
In this sector resistance was still stiff. The enemy did not want to give in. But by nightfall of June 2nd the troops had pushed through to seize Monte Ceraso, and the 2nd Battalion had reached a point only 1200 yards south of Highway 6. By this time they were more than 2 miles in advance of the rest of the line.

On June 3rd new orders changed the direction of the regiment's advance from north to northwest. By now contact was lost with the enemy, and the 1st and 3rd Battalions, in approach march formations, moved west on parallel roads. After an interval the 2nd passed through the 1st to capture Monte Compatri without much trouble. Some light resistance was met before Monte Porzio Catone was taken, but this was soon wiped out.

Before us now lay the Tiber, and in the early morning the domes of the churches of Rome could be clearly seen, the first sight of the beautiful prize of weeks of hard fighting. In the warm sunlight of May the city seemed to be waiting for the troops to enter it.

One company of the 3rd Battalion of the 337th, motorized and reinforced as a task force, supported

o Near Lariano - a 10 cm gun destroyed
and abandoned by enemy.



by tanks, tank destroyers, engineers and artillery, was now ordered to advance along Highway 6 into Rome and to seize and protect 2 bridges across the Tiber west of Rome. The I and R Platoon, preceding the advance, had reached the suburbs of Rome by half-past eight the morning of June 4th, the first troops of the Division to reach that city.

At the city limits the task force was held up by an armored unit engaged in wiping out an enemy strongpoint along the road, and while here orders were received again changing the mission of the regiment. The 337th was ordered to turn southwest to take up a defensive position astride Highway 7 about 4 miles out of Rome, and to prevent any further enemy withdrawal by that route. Pressing ahead through the traffic congestion of VI Corps troops speeding along the highway into Rome the regiment cut the highway. This move was in large part responsible for the capture of 743 prisoners taken by the Division in the 24-hour period from noon to noon 4th - 5th June. In marching from Frascati to Rome the 3rd Battalion, 338th Infantry accounted for 300 prisoners.

A task force composed of the 2nd Battalion of the 338th Infantry, reinforced by tanks, tank destroyers, and engineers, was sent into Rome on June 4th to secure 3 bridges across the Tiber in that city. Preceded by the regimental I and R Platoon, this force entered Rome in the middle of the afternoon, and by nightfall had reached their objectives, which, however, were already guarded by a Special Service Force whom they later relieved.



June 5th saw the advance of the Division through Rome. Entry into a conquered capitol must always be one of the greatest experiences a soldier may know. Everywhere the people ran out into the streets to hug and kiss and shake hands with the marching soldiers, shouting and cheering. They ran beside the jeeps and trucks, chattering and laughing unrestrainedly, throwing flowers, waving their hands, and some of them pathetically saluting in the Fascist manner. It was a spontaneous, happy welcome.

On June 5th the 339th Infantry passed through the city and along Highway 2 to a bivouac area northwest of Rome. The 338th and 337th Regiments followed, and the pursuit was continued.

Following along Highway 2 to the northwest towards Viterbo and the Lago di Bracciano there were more and more of the signs of the routed Germans — burnt out and abandoned wreckage everywhere — though here it appeared that the enemy had had no time to wreck his own equipment. The Germans had fled in everything they could lay their hands on, ambulances, trucks, Italian omnibuses, motorcycles, and bicycles.

North of Rome Highway 2 wound through gentle rolling country, rich pasture land, well tended olive vineyards, and a few patches of woods. At some places a hill or a bluff offered the enemy the opportunity to set up a number of delaying positions, and snipers were still found in the haystacks. But more often than not contact was lost with the enemy these first days above Rome. The Germans were now retreating towards the Arno as fast as they could travel.

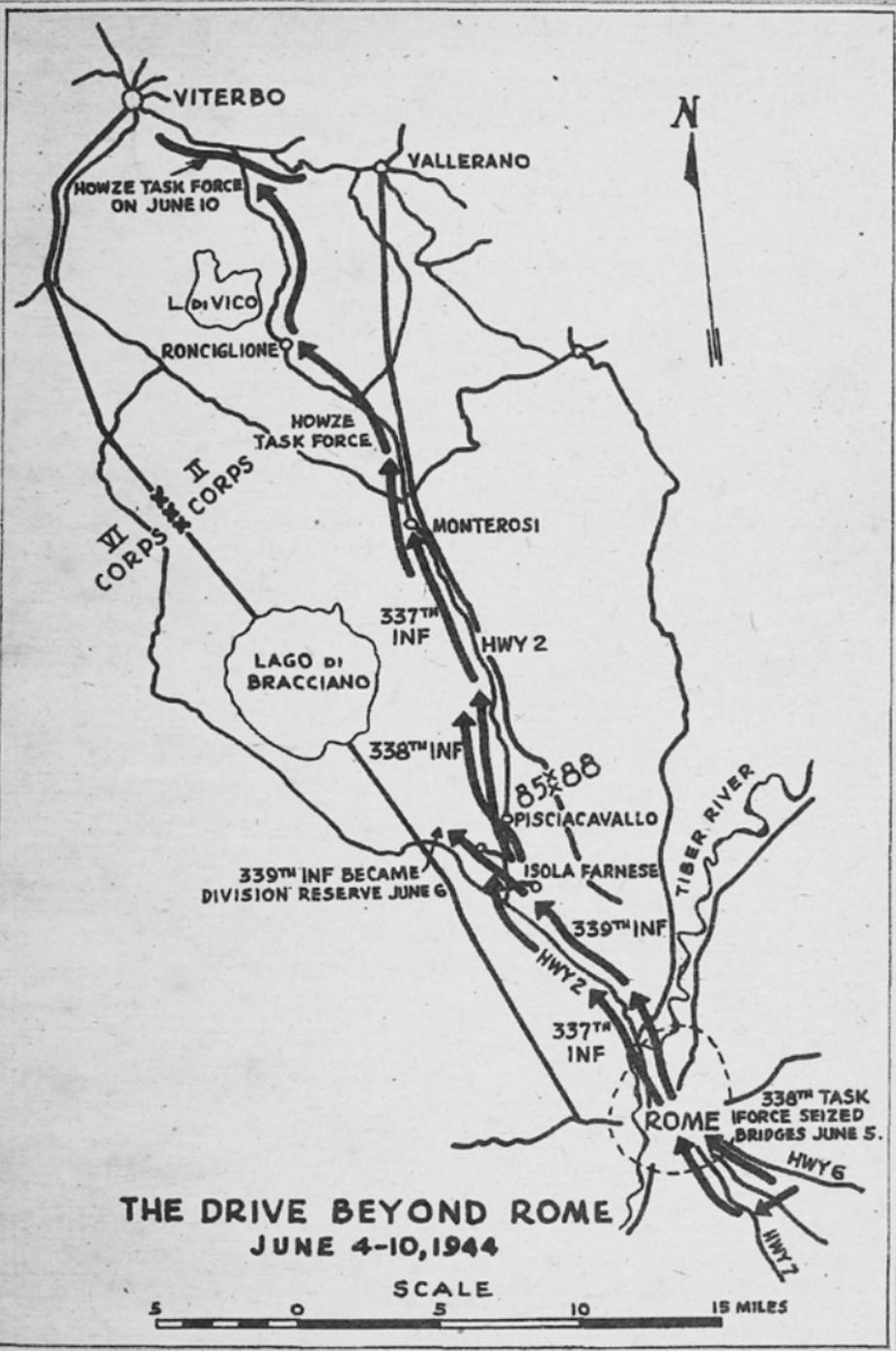
The 339th Infantry had pursued the enemy

beyond Olgiata when it passed to reserve. The other 2 regiments took up the chase, passing through the 339th. These were organized as combat teams, each with a company of tanks, a company of tank destroyers, and a platoon of the 85th Reconnaissance Troop attached. On June 7th the Howze Task Force was attached to the Division, and this fast armored unit, with the 1st Battalion of the 337th Infantry attached, drove ahead to give the enemy no chance to pause.

These forces met small groups left behind to man a few self-propelled guns, some groups in armored cars and firing automatic weapons made harassing raids, and here and there a machine gun made a short stand. Near Monterosi the approaches to the village were mined, but nothing was more indicative of the enemy's haste and his inability to organize any substantial delaying action than his failure to lay extensive minefields.

Each day the prisoners were taken in droves, the confused, isolated remnants of the rout. Among these were members of a cooks' and bakers' school the enemy had seen fit to give rifles and orders to delay and hinder our advance. In the great mixture of forces left behind in the rout were parts of the 20th German Air Force Division and the 4th Parachute Division, the latter to be our first opponent on the Gothic Line.

But now the Division's part in driving the enemy north was coming to a pause. On June 10th the Division was relieved from the line some 46 miles beyond Rome. Since April 10th it had been in action 60 out of 62 days. Since May 11th it had advanced 135 miles, breaking the Gustav Line, opening the road to the Anzio Beachhead, and



playing an important part in the capture of Rome. It had virtually destroyed the German 94th Division and cut up much of the 29th and the Goering Panzer Grenadier Divisions. From these units and all the other scrambled organizations of the enemy it had taken 2461 prisoners.

Now had come the time for a rest.



◆ Assistant Division Commander,
Brigadier General Lee S. Gerow



● Division Artillery Commander,
Brigadier General Pierre Mallett

BETWEEN ATTACKS

Shortly after relief from the line the units of the Division began moving to bivouac area a few miles south of Rome, on the grounds of the Castel Porziano, a large hunting estate belonging to the King of Italy. Here for a period the troops rested before resuming training, and here they obtained their first passes permitting them to visit Rome, and to enjoy the city they had helped to capture.

On June 18th, in recognition of distinguished service as Commanding General of the Division from May 11th to June 10th, General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, United States Army, presented the Distinguished Service Medal to Major General John B. Coulter.

The Division remained in the Castle Grounds until July 10th, continuing training, and giving special instruction to the replacements who were being received at this time. Then began the movement to the vicinity of Roccastrada, about 150 miles to the north, where further training was conducted preparatory to whatever new mission might be assigned the Division.

On July 17th the 339th Regimental Combat Team together with the 85th Reconnaissance Troop was ordered to move to the vicinity of Volterra where it was placed in Fifth Army Reserve prepared to resist any counterattacks the enemy might make along the boundary between the American Fifth and British Eighth Armies. The commitment of the Division, however, waited upon the accomplishments of other units of the Allied Armies and the

maturing of various plans. At one time it appeared that the Division might take part in the attack on Leghorn and the remaining elements of the Division were accordingly moved on July 18th to the vicinity of Rosignano Marittimo, a few miles in from the Ligurian Coast below Leghorn. But it soon became apparent, after the capture of Leghorn, that the Division would take part in the operations farther east along the Arno River. On July 28th the Division was ordered to assemble in an area between Volterra and San Gimignano, the famous medieval city which once had 73 towers. In this region the troops continued their training in river crossing and mountain warfare. The 339th Combat Team now returned to Division Control.

At first the Division prepared to take part in an offensive operation, that of crossing the Arno and attacking to the north. But these plans were changed and between August 15th and 17th the Division took over the defense of the Arno on a front extending along the south banks of the river from near Bellosguardo on the east to Capanne on the west, a distance of about 24 miles. Over this extensive front the Division set up strong points and outposts. After the 19th of the month the Division's sector was increased still farther. Since all 3 regiments were already stretched out along the line, the 85th Reconnaissance Troop and the 310th Engineer Battalion were assigned sectors which they held, functioning as infantry. The Division front now extended 2000 yards farther to the east.

The chief enemy forces opposing us at this time were elements of the 26th Panzer Division, the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 362nd Infantry Division. The north bank of the Arno rose

quickly into hills, and holding these the enemy generally commanded good observation of the country to the south. He also continued to maintain a few strongpoints on the south side of the river, notably at La Lisca, Fornaci and Tinaja. Since our supply routes were generally under observation, most of our traffic moved by night. When there was heavy traffic during the day the enemy shelled the roads, but otherwise his firing was chiefly of a harassing nature. On most days fewer than 400 rounds fell in the Division sector, though that many fell in one concentration at the time the 310th Engineers were moving into their sector. As it happened, there were no casualties on this occasion.

Our units regularly sent patrols to the banks of the river, and some patrols and raiding parties were sent to feel out the enemy positions on the opposite bank and to take prisoners. On his part the enemy conducted even more aggressive patrolling since it was his rather than our forces expecting to be attacked. From German prisoners taken at this time it was learned, and correctly, that the enemy intended to withdraw in the event of a full-scale attack, but that otherwise he would merely resist our patrolling and infiltration. In order to determine if and when we would attack he sent patrols and raiding parties into our area, mostly at night, and these groups operated very boldly. Stiff firefights sometimes developed, but as a whole the period passed quietly.

On August 26th the Division was relieved from the line, and moved south to assembly areas between Montespertoli and Certaldo, on the slopes of the ridge separating the Elsa and Pesa River valleys. After 2 days rest the troops resumed training in the

well-cultivated and beautiful country of mid-Tuscany. While here the expectation of big things to come began to grow. The day was not far off when the Allied attack on the Gothic Line would get under way, the system of German defenses protecting the great ridges of the Appennines and the descent into the Po Valley. Accordingly the training was pointed more and more towards the problems of mountain warfare.

Occasionally the enemy sent over a few planes to bomb and strafe the roads and installations in nuisance raids. Beaufighters were up to cut him off, but on many nights a solitary German plane, known to many as "Bed-check Charlie," came over in the bright moonlight, dropping his flares and bombs and scooting back. Now and in the months to come this was the usual effort of the German Air Force, accomplishing not much more than letting us know he still had some aircraft in Italy.

THE GOTHIC LINE

After the Germans lost Rome they were driven farther and farther north along the entire breadth of Italy. Withdrawing as fast as possible to the next natural barrier, the Arno, they had fought delaying actions in the hills to the south of the river, but their next main line of defense was the Gothic Line, extending roughly from north of Pisa to Rimini. For about a year the Todt Organization had been constructing a line of defenses over the great mountains of the northern Appennines. After the collapse in southern Italy the construction of these defenses had been greatly speeded up, and they had now become a formidable defense system.

The mountains themselves were difficult obstacles to an attacking force. Rising steeply to a great ridge whose peaks varied from 3000 to 5000 feet high, crossed by few roads, these masses offered difficulty even in scaling. Beyond the first ridge 20 miles farther north rose another high ridge before the descent into the Po Valley began. It was the first ridge, the watershed, that the enemy was defending.

The American Fifth and British Eighth Armies in the first weeks of September launched a coordinated attack against this line. Fifth Army was to attack the western half, and II Corps was making the main effort of Army on the right flank. The 85th Division, when it joined in the attack, was to make the main effort for Corps on the Corps' right flank. The problem that faced the Division initially was to cross the mountains, breaking through that part of the Gothic Line defending Il Giogo Pass through

which wound the single first-class road to the north in the Division sector.

As the Division moved up through Florence in the second week of September the mountains facing it appeared a solid wall. After the ascent began the growth thinned out. At the top there was little but great splintered rocky masses and steep cliffs.

Here and there along the lower slopes a cart road wound to a solitary stone farmhouse, beyond these mule and goat trails climbed a short distance into the scrub and vanished, and then there was nothing but ragged rock. The highway which passed through Il Giogo was bordered by stands of pine and hemlock, but most of these before and during the attack were reduced to stumps and torn branches by the terrific concentrations of artillery fire. Lacking roads, mules and men brought up supplies on their backs. Approximately 1000 mules supported the operation.

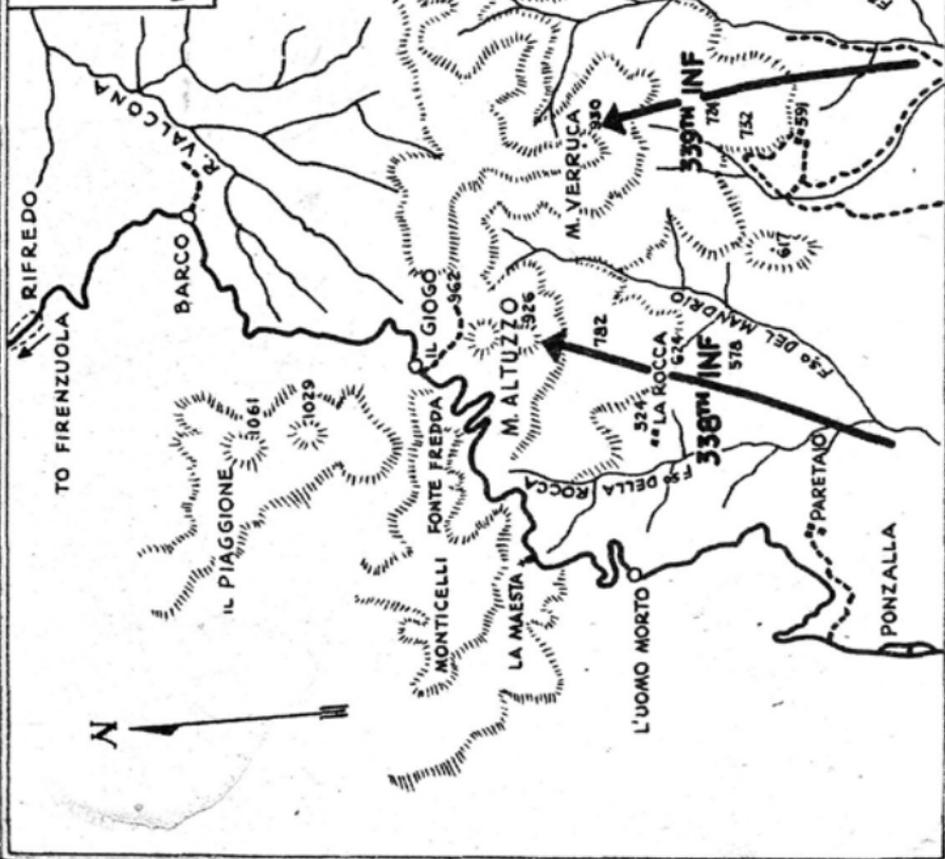
The fall rains had begun in the first days of September, but these had let up before the attack. The weather was now often clear and bright, though in the evening and early morning, mist settled in the ravines and draws. The autumn chill had begun, but there was no frost.

At the beginning of the attack the 1st Battalion of the 12th Parachute Regiment of the 4th Parachute Division composed the chief forces opposing the Division. Later, elements of the 3rd Battalion were thrown in when it was evident that a main effort was being made here.

Altuzzo, immediately to the right of Il Giogo Pass, dominated the road passing over the mountains to Firenzuola, and from his positions on this mountain and on Monticelli, in the 91st Division

THE ATTACK ON THE GOTHIC LINE SEPTEMBER 13-17, 1944

SCALE



sector on the left, the enemy denied our forces the use of the road. East of Altuzzo the next mountain, Verruca, was also strongly fortified, and from this the enemy not merely protected the ridge but was also able to fire upon troops attacking Altuzzo.

Approaching Altuzzo from a low ridge, the ground sloped steeply to a narrow stream. Beyond its steep banks a gradual slope fanned out for a few acres in pasture land and cultivated fields. This slope was inclosed on 3 sides by a fringe of woods and brambles until the slopes and ravines of the mountain itself were reached. Troops moving up from the stream into the fields along the bordering woods were exposed to view from 2 and sometimes 3 sides of the arms of Altuzzo. The ridge leading to the southern crest of the mountain, Hill 926, included 3 hills 578, 624, and 782. The formation of Verruca was similar, the advance leading up steep ascents and ravines: The approach followed by the forces attacking the summit, Hill 930, led along the ridge including Hills 591, 732, and 724.

The enemy bunkers were on the forward slopes. Dug 20 to 30 feet into the ground and rock, covered with great piles of enormous logs and boulders, with the fire slits opening through rocks or fallen trees, these bunkers were vulnerable to artillery only if hit directly. The infantry would be obliged to clear them individually. Machine gun nests and connecting trenches were protected by logs and slabs of rock.

The Division attacked at 6 o'clock on the morning of September 13th. To begin with, 2 regiments were on the line, each with 2 battalions abreast. On the left the 338th Infantry attacked towards

Altuzzo, and the 339th, on the right, towards Verruca. During the early hours of the morning a tremendous artillery barrage had been laid upon the enemy positions by the Division Artillery and the supporting II Corps artillery units. The barrage was not concentrated in such a short period of time as that preceding the Minturno push, but the total number of rounds fired was even greater. The great 240's, now and during the entire attack, were an especially important factor in the smashing and gradual demoralization of the enemy. The air force also sent over planes to bomb and strafe the roads and the supply installations in the rear as well as the emplacements on the crests.

The 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry attacked on the left of the regimental sector in a column of companies. The 2nd, on the right, attacked with 2 companies abreast. All were immediately met by intense mortar barrages and small arms fire that increased in intensity as the day wore on. The 1st Battalion moved from south of La Rocca and in the midst of this storm of fire attacked towards Hill 926. By dark, however, it had made little substantial progress. The 2nd Battalion met no better fortune.

The 339th Infantry, with the 1st Battalion on the left and the 2nd on the right, advanced towards Verruca, moving up Hill 617 and the Poggio Rotto Ridge. Their advance was quickly blocked by severe artillery concentrations and grazing machine gun fire. This fire was so intense that the troops had no opportunity to improve the positions they had won initially. Tank destroyers of the 805th Tank Destroyer Battalion began firing on the 3 fortified houses on Hill 591 that blocked the way

to Verruca, and during the day and night the resistance here was gradually beaten down. One company of the 2nd Battalion succeeded in coming within 150 yards of the Verruca crest, but as yet no permanent progress was assured.

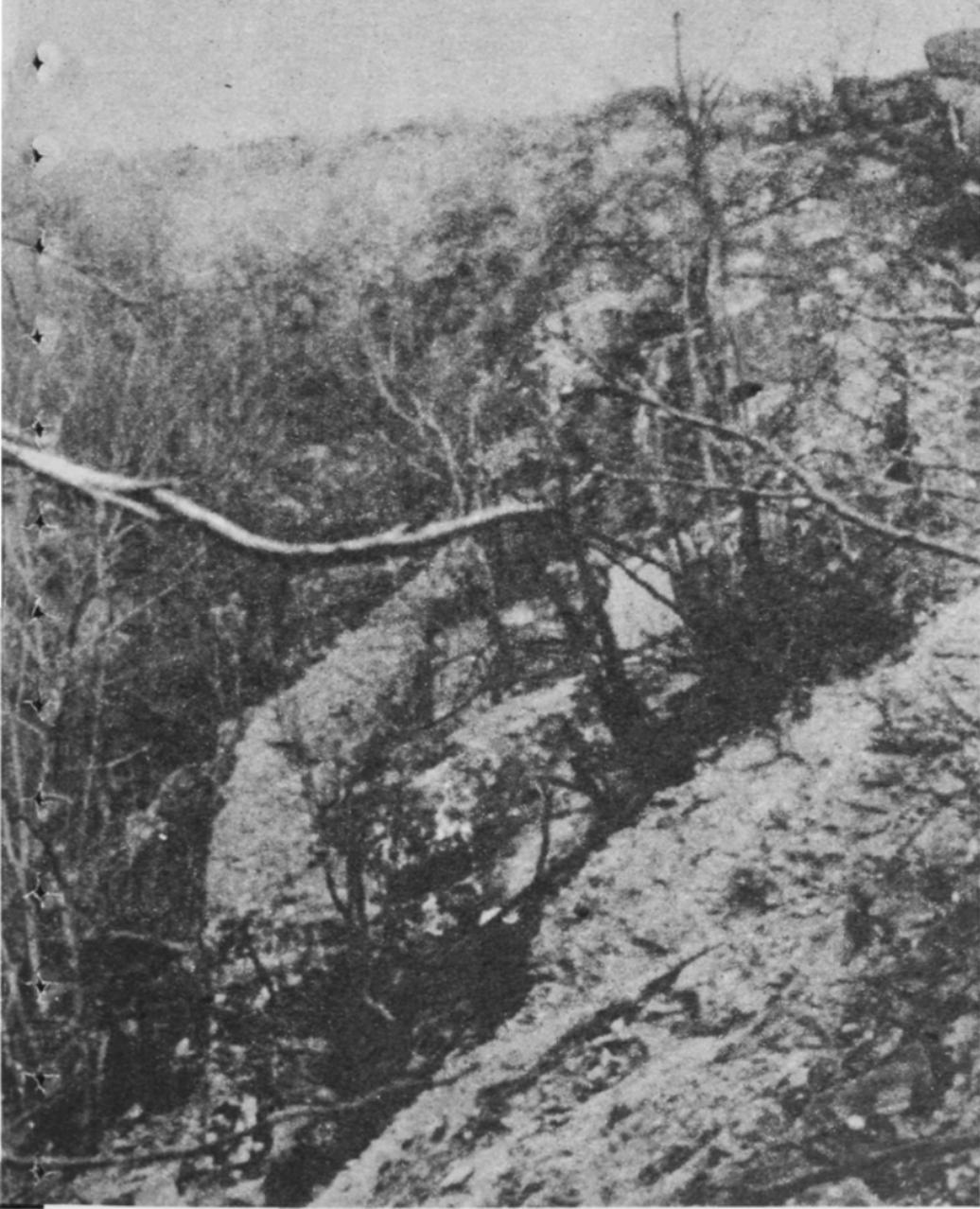
The first day's attack, in short, had made little headway. Though the difficulties of the attack were becoming clearer, there had been no expectation that this would be an easy battle. What was called for was a constant hammering. Accordingly, while the troops dug in, the artillery kept up intermittent fire throughout the night, and in the early morning let go with another tremendous barrage before the infantry jumped off again.

This time the 1st Battalion of the 338th made somewhat better progress. Company B, spearheading the attack, reached a point within 75 yards of one of the crests of Altuzzo. Company E of the 2nd Battalion tied in with the left of B Company to keep abreast of the advance. But the gains they made were not to be easily held.

B Company, advancing over rocky, exposed slopes, came to a point where it had little cover and where it soon found itself fired upon from 3 sides by machine guns. Even while it attempted to prepare itself for defense the enemy began counterattacking, in a repetition of the same, long-tried German tactics, and the Germans were repulsed each time. For its action on Altuzzo B Company received a Presidential Citation.

For conspicuous gallantry in the attack on Altuzzo on September 14th, Staff Sergeant George D. Keathley, B Company, 338th Infantry, was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of

◦ Rocky Crest on Altuzzo.



Honor. When the leaders of the 2 forward platoons were wounded, Staff Sergeant Keathley, platoon guide of the supporting platoon, took over the command of the other 2 platoons. The enemy was counterattacking fiercely, and after 3 of these attacks only 20 men remained from the 2 platoons. Staff Sergeant Keathley reorganized these, placing each man in a position where he could best defend the badly exposed position on the hill. Ammunition was running low, and Staff Sergeant Keathley, while directing the defense, passed among the killed and wounded, collecting ammunition from men who could no longer use it, and distributing it to the remaining defenders.

A fourth enemy counterattack by 2 companies almost overran the position. The Germans charged, firing machine pistols and throwing hand grenades, and the fight now became a bitter hand-to-hand struggle. One grenade shattered Staff Sergeant Keathley's abdomen, but he fought on, holding his entrails in with his left hand. He continued to direct his men and to fire his rifle effectively for some 15 minutes till, with the help of artillery fire, the counterattack was driven off. After the enemy had retreated, Staff Sergeant Keathley was led to a sheltered place where he died. The example he had set, and the skill of his direction, were largely responsible for the repulse of the enemy.

Heavy resistance met the 339th Infantry on September 14th. Three battalions were now committed, the 3rd having come in between the 1st and 2nd. Company L made the initial attack of the 3rd Battalion on Hill 591. The houses at the top were captured only after hard fighting. A tank destroyer and a 57mm anti-tank gun aided the

attack. But at this time the advance of the regiment was being retarded by fire coming from the right rear, and in order to even the lines the 1st British Division, on the right, made a strong attack in the early afternoon of the 14th, and the 339th prepared to resume its attack that night.

Two hours before midnight the artillery concentrated fire on Hill 732 and the fortified houses that composed the chief enemy fortifications, but the enemy still held on. One company of the 3rd Battalion succeeded in reaching the saddle between Hill 732 and 724, but the 2nd Battalion could still make no headway in the draws leading on to Poggio Rotto and Signorini. When the 3rd Battalion, on the morning of the 15th, again attacked towards Hill 732, they were again repulsed.

By now it was clear that 2 regiments were not sufficient to effect the breakthrough of the enemy defenses in the desired time. The 337th Infantry was accordingly brought forward to add weight to the attack, taking positions on the right of the 339th. It was decided, in conjunction with the attacks to be continued on Altuzzo and Verruca, to send forces to the Signorini Mass, east of Verruca, and to Monte Pratone, the next high mountain to the northeast. The plan was for the 339th Infantry to continue the advance in its zone, but K Company would move east to seize Signorini. The 66th Infantry Brigade of the 1st British Division would meanwhile cut northwest into the zone of the 85th Division to seize Pratone. The advance of the 66th Infantry Brigade towards Pratone would be followed by the 337th Infantry, which would continue on from that mountain.

While the 337th Infantry was moving to for-

ward assembly areas the other 2 regiments continued their attacks and the British moved over the mountains towards Pratone. These attacks were again preceded by artillery barrages, but again each move by the attacking troops brought down heavy mortar, machine gun and small arms fire. Though the 1st Battalion of the 339th made some slight advances, the 3rd was repulsed each time in the 3 separate attempts it made to capture Hill 732.

Three days had passed, and the enemy still held the line and was still able to summon his strength to repel our slightest advances. It was nevertheless apparent from the handful of prisoners we had taken that the enemy was short of supplies and in need of replacements. Other elements of the 12th Parachute Regiment had been brought in to strengthen the defense, but more help than these could give was desperately needed.

On the 16th the fighting on the left continued to be fierce, but it became clearer that each small gain meant a definite deterioration of the enemy's strength. More and more of his positions were knocked out, and he could no longer spread his fire so effectively and widely, nor was he able to counterattack as consistently as at the beginning. Throughout the day our forces advanced slowly until by dark elements of the 338th were within a short distance of the peak of Altuzzo. For the final push the 3rd Battalion now came up to pass through the tired 1st.

Meanwhile, the 339th was continuing its attack on Hill 732 without success. K Company's advance towards Signorini was very slow, and during the night 2 additional companies, G and F, were sent to Hills 887 and 918, also part of the Signorini

Mass, to accelerate the attack in that area.

By mid-morning the British were still 1000 yards short of Pratone, and to accomplish the plan now in effect it was imperative that Pratone be seized as quickly as possible. To assure this, the 3rd Battalion of the 337th was sent ahead to pass through the 2nd Royal Scots, with orders to attack towards Pratone immediately.

Advance elements met heavy sniper and mortar fire, and in mid-afternoon were held down by heavy machine gun fire from high ground to their right. But in sending a platoon of K Company to the east of Hill 885 the route for a successful advance was discovered. Company L followed to exploit the advance, and continued to push ahead rapidly during the night.

Finally the breakthrough appeared imminent. The strength of the Altuzzo defenses was greatly diminished, the fortifications on Verruca had been largely reduced, and the way had been found to push on to Pratone. As the troops closed in for the kill the prisoners they took showed more and more the strain and exhaustion of the 4 days' fighting. Many of them had been without food or water for more than 2 days. As a result of our steady harassing of their supply lines our artillery effectively prevented their service units from supplying them. Among the prisoners, however, were newly arrived reinforcements from units of the 735th Grenadier Regiment and the 305th Reconnaissance Battalion. But there had not been enough of these to prevent the breakthrough, and many had come too late. Moreover, reinforcements coming down through

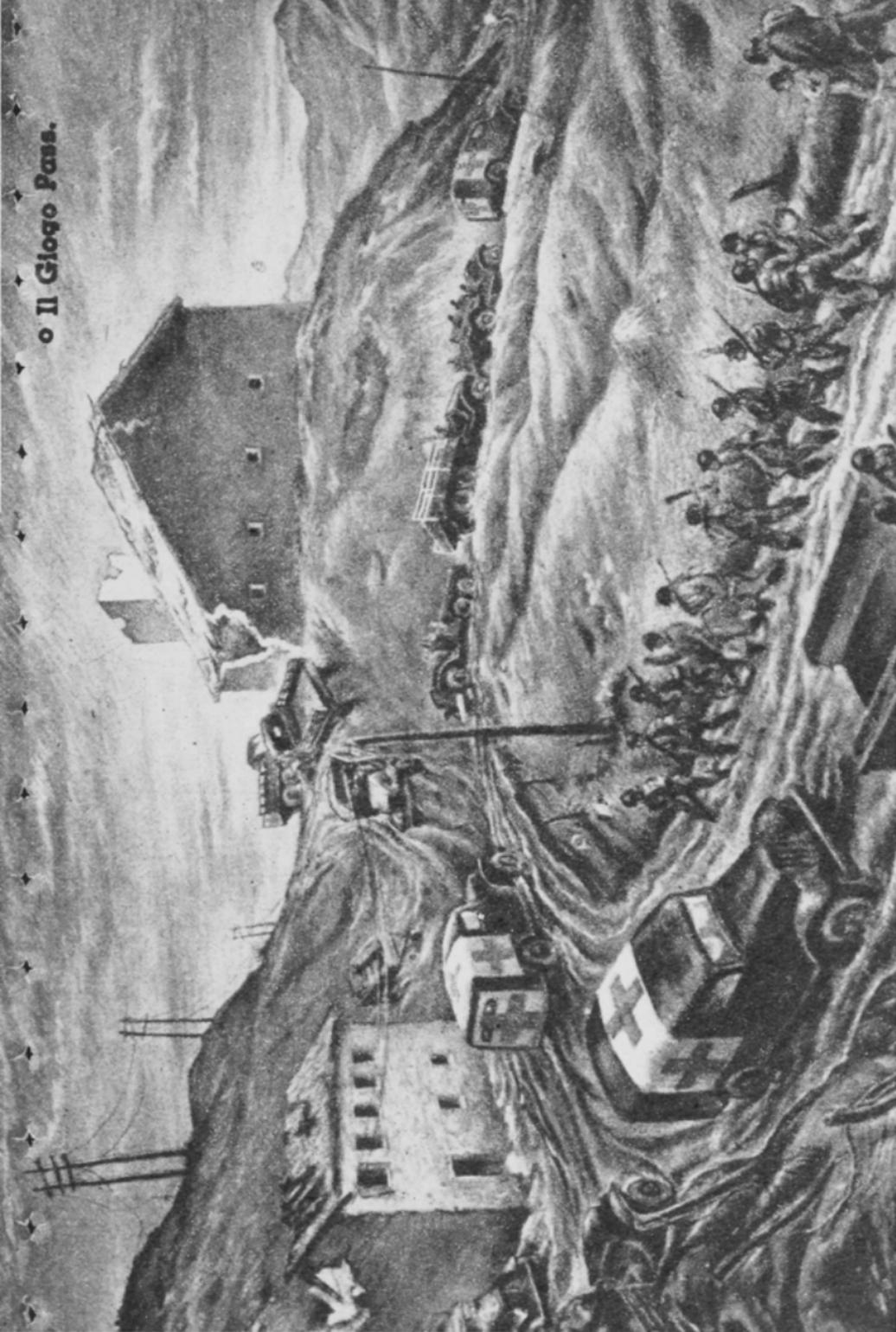
Firenzeuola had been shelled by our artillery. This had caused them a great number of casualties, and scattered most of the rest. Whole units were confused and lost, and many were taken prisoner before they could join their organizations.

One of the last efforts of the enemy in the 339th sector was the recapture of Hill 591. Information was at this time received of the relief of the 3rd Battalion, 12th Parachute Regiment by the Lehr Brigade the night of September 16th. Accordingly, the artillery increased its shelling of the sector. A pre-dawn attack by the 3rd Battalion was planned to catch the Lehr Brigade in as disorganized a state as possible, and by 8 o'clock the morning of the 17th the 3rd Battalion had seized Hills 724 and 732. Company A helped Company L retake Hill 591. The 1st Battalion seized Verruca, and by 5 o'clock in the afternoon the 2nd Battalion had seized Hills 918, 802, 1031 and 1036, and the 3rd Battalion had joined the 1st on Verruca. It was now apparent that the 339th had breached the Gothic Line in its zone.

Meanwhile, on the right, troops of the 337th Infantry had climbed along the ridges towards Pratone and through the Rampolli draw. In this sector the resistance was also weakening, but heavy mortar concentrations were still being laid down in the path of the advance, and a few bunkers were still being manned. But before midnight the entire 3rd Battalion had occupied Pratone and was organizing the mountain for defense.

The final attack on Altuzzo had been delayed briefly to allow the elements of the 91st Division on the left to seize Monticelli. In the early morning of the 17th the positions on the crest of Altuzzo

o Il Gioogo Pass.



were consolidated. Fonte Freddo, a high point across the road and northwest of Altuzzo, was still holding out and fire from this area was harassing our troops, but during the night the remaining high points were seized. The Gothic Line had now been conquered along the entire Division front.

Towards the end more and more of the enemy gave themselves up—some because they knew they were surrounded and cut off from help; some because they had run out of ammunition and food; still others because they were confused by defeat. By noon of the 18th 231 prisoners had been taken, and in the next 2 days as many more were captured. The number of casualties was even greater. The enemy dead were scattered over the mountains.

After fighting 5 days against a wall of defenses, it was with a solid sense of accomplishment that the troops prepared to continue the attack. For weeks they had heard about the Gothic Line, and their thoughts and feelings had been intent on breaching it. They now had satisfaction in the knowledge that they had taken part in the conquest of another of the enemy's most carefully planned defensive systems.

MORE MOUNTAINS

Beyond the Gothic Line the Germans had no line of prepared defenses to fall back on before the Po Valley. But between Il Giogo and the Valley were nearly 40 miles of mountains, including a ridge in itself as formidable as the watershed. As time went on and the Appennines began to appear endless, it seemed that the entire mountain range to the north might be called the Gothic Line. Whatever the name, it blocked the way to the Po Valley, and it was towards that region that the Allies were now attacking.

In pleasing contrast with the first days, the advance was now progressing with what seemed remarkable speed; the gains were measured in thousands instead of single yards, and as much as 2 miles were covered in one day. The enemy was at first disorganized, but he soon began to make use of nearly every advantage the terrain offered, and reinforcements were coming down. Elements of the 362nd "Greiner" Division now made their appearance on our front, as well as miscellaneous units of the 715th Infantry Division. During the rest of the month the chief resistance was to be offered by the 362nd Division and the Lehr Brigade. The Parachute unit that had first opposed us was not now encountered in this sector.

As the 338th moved towards Firenzuola 6 miles to the north, they were subjected to more and more artillery and mortar fire, but they pushed steadily ahead across the hills and down into the Santerno Valley. Firenzuola was captured on the 21st after

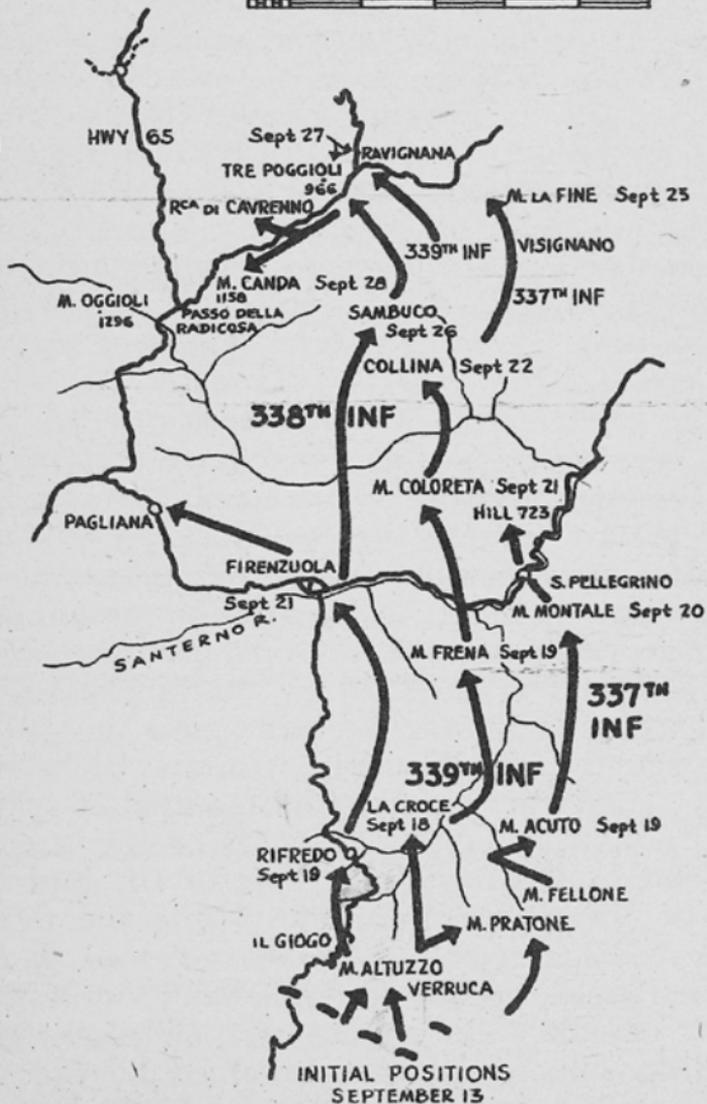
the Santerno River had been crossed to the east. When our troops entered it, Firenzuola was already a badly shelled and bombed town. For several days further it was to receive heavy shelling from the enemy, and when it was finally left by the war the once attractive town was almost uninhabitable. Beyond Firenzuola there were no other towns of any size in the Division sector south of the Po Valley.

Beyond the Santerno the first severe resistance was encountered on Monte Coloreta, on the right. This mountain, more than 3000 feet high, sprawled over a large area. The 339th Infantry advanced towards this objective on September 20th, supported by tanks and tank destroyers. Elements of the 1st Battalion were the first to reach its slopes, digging in on the night of the 21st, but the enemy was not cleared from the mountain till the next day. On the left the 338th was meeting small, persistent attacking groups, and it was in an engagement in this region that First Lieutenant Orville E. Bloch performed actions that earned for him the Congressional Medal of Honor. On September 22nd E Company of the 338th Infantry was held up by heavy machine gun fire from the crest of Hill 733, northeast of Firenzuola. Lieutenant Bloch asked for 3 volunteers from his platoon to provide him covering fire while he went forward to engage the enemy singlehanded. In and near several houses beyond the crest of the hill the enemy had placed machine guns. Advancing from behind a rock near the crest Lieutenant Bloch engaged one enemy position after another, killing and capturing several Germans. The prisoners he sent back by the men

THE ADVANCE ON TRE POGGIOLI AND M. CANDA SEPTEMBER 13-28, 1944

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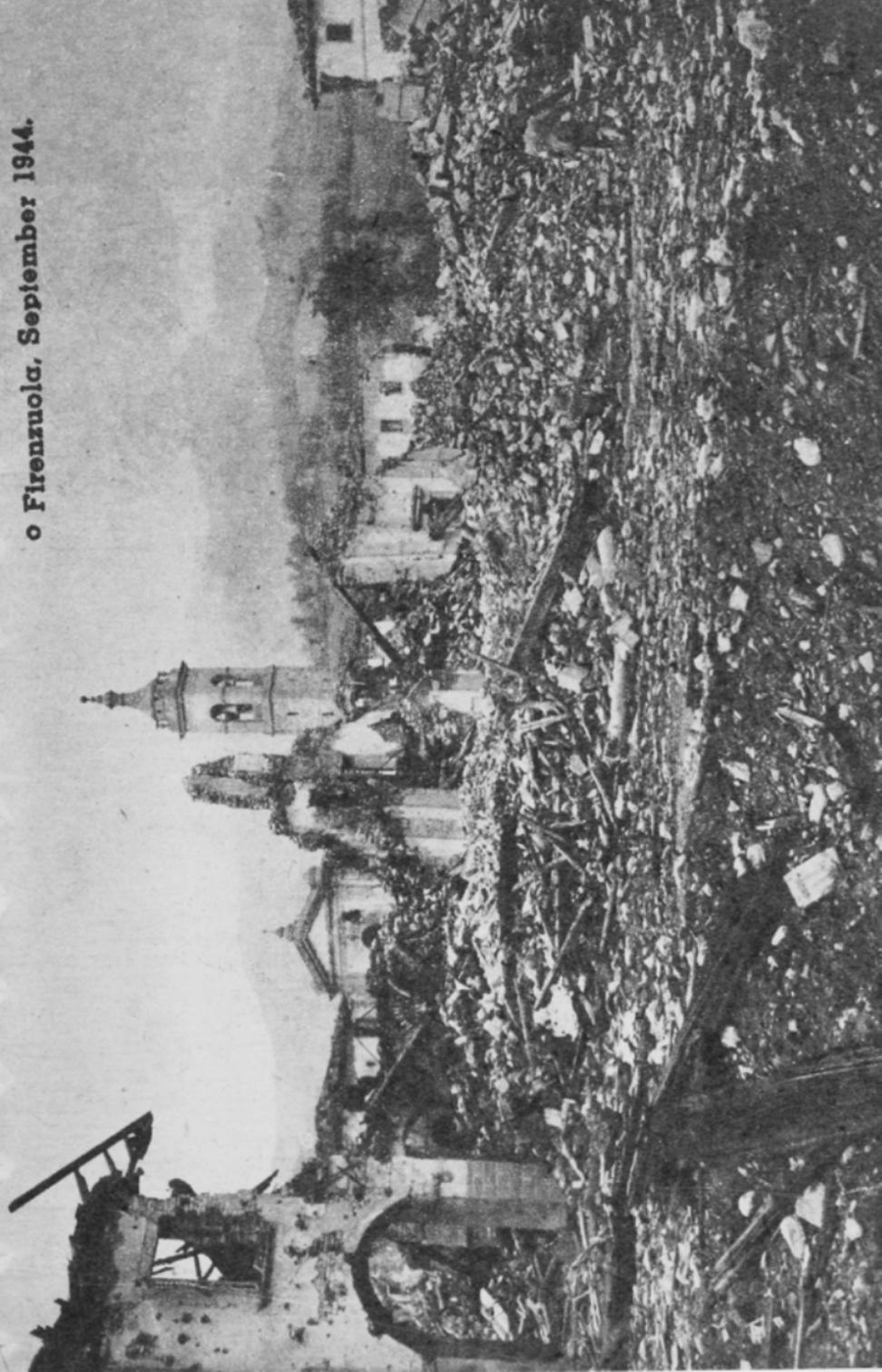


covering his assault. In all he silenced 5 machine guns, killed an unknown number of the enemy, wounded 6, and took 19 as prisoners. When this had been accomplished, his company was able to continue its advance, and without the losses that might otherwise have been suffered.

The Division now moved steadily ahead over the increasingly rugged hills towards Monte La Fine, on the right, and Monte Canda, about 4 miles to the northwest of Coloreta. Instead of attacking towards the steep, south slopes of Canda, the drive was to be made to the north, past the eastern slopes of the mass, to seize the mountain to the north, Tre Poggioli (Hill 966), including the Zanobi rock. From here forces would be sent southwest to clear the by-passed Canda.

The enemy had prepared positions to thwart such a move. The small village of Sambuco and the Ravignana Heights to the north had been chosen as the center of resistance to block an advance on Tre Poggioli. Sambuco, a cluster of small, thick-walled stone houses, lay in a pocket among several hills and gullies, reached by only the poorest roads. The village was encircled by machine guns which were well dug in, and machine guns in the town were placed to fire from the windows of barricaded houses. Only after 2 days of repeated attacks, and close-in fighting supported by tanks, was the village captured by reinforced elements of the 2nd Battalion of the 338th Infantry. While the fight for Sambuco was raging, other forces were gathering for an attack on the Ravignana Heights to the north and on Tre Poggioli. From the vicinity of La Fine, which had been occupied by the 337th, the advance towards these objectives began on the

o Firenzuola, September 1944.



25th. After the 3rd Battalion of the 338th had run into difficulties, the 1st Battalion of that regiment joined with the 1st Battalion of the 339th to continue the attack.

The enemy was resisting from Tre Poggioli and from high ground to the west and south. His 75mm and 105mm self-propelled guns were concentrated against our supporting tanks. But after climbing over the barren, shelterless terrain the tanks moved across the path of the advancing infantry and cut the road leading southwest to Canda. This move compelled the enemy on Canda to begin withdrawing to the north immediately. Meanwhile, the 3rd Battalion of the 339th had seized the Ravignana Heights, and the way was clear for the final attack on Tre Poggioli.

The tanks moved up behind an artillery barrage, and the infantry came abreast of them, fired on by the enemy artillery still remaining on Canda. On Tre Poggioli machine guns and snipers commanded unobstructed fields of fire over the bare slopes. But by noon our first troops had reached the crest, and shortly afterwards the enemy was cleared from the entire mass.

The mud had recently been hampering operations considerably, and conditions were no better in the area between Tre Poggioli and Canda. As the 3rd Battalion of the 338th moved up from Casa Buraccia to attack Canda from the northeast, the march through the dark and mud and chilling rain was dreary and difficult. It turned out that the greatest resistance was offered by the terrain. As the battalion moved towards Canda on the morning of the 28th, it met only light resistance on the beginning slopes. The enemy had left a few

o Looking South from Sambuco.



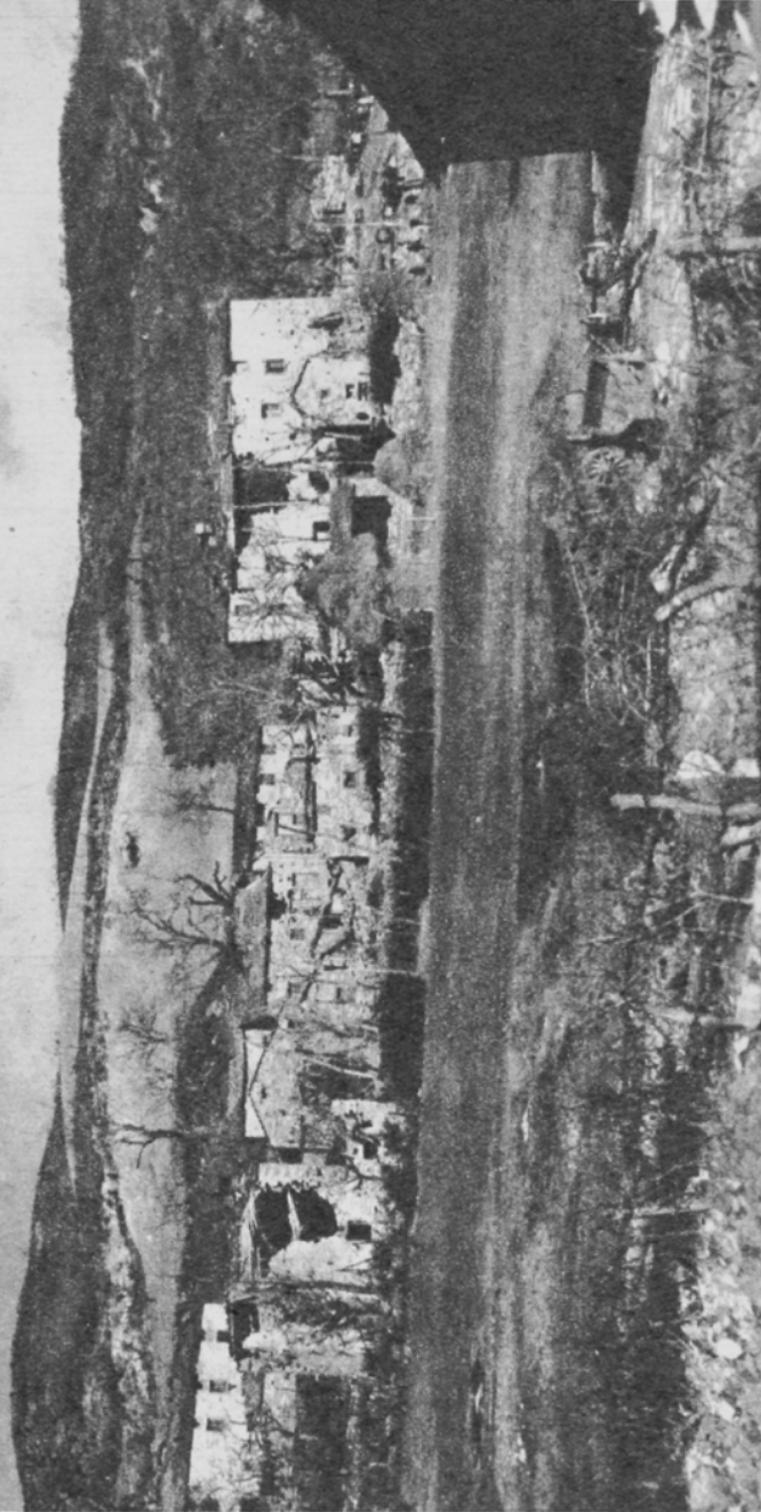
troops on the northeast of the mountain, but these were quickly cleaned out. The crest, which our troops reached at noon, was deserted.

The last great ridge of the Appennines had been conquered, and the Division now began the advance across the range of lower hills eventually descending to the Po Valley 20 miles to the north. The Division sector included the ridge of hills between 2 mountain streams, the Torrente Sillaro on the east and the Torrente Idice on the west. For a considerable distance it also included the slopes rising from the east bank of the Sillaro and a somewhat wider section of the ridge sloping down to the Idice from the west. The streams were now rivers rushing with water drained from the barren hills.

In the operations to come the infantry was to attack across hills and ridges overlooking these valleys, slowly clearing the enemy from the villages on hill crests or in pockets in the hills. In a few miles they would reach several mountain masses — Bibeles, Formiche, and Monterenzio — which dominated the smaller, nearby hills and the valleys. About 5 miles beyond these the last range of dominating hills before the Po Valley stretched across the Division sector — Monte Fano, Castelvechio and Monte Castellaro. Later, when the direction of the attack shifted northeast, other masses of this range would be included among the Division's objectives.

Valley roads followed the Idice and Sillaro Torrents, winding back and forth. These were normally good roads, but in this season they were deep in the mud that was sliding down from the hills.

o Sambuco.



The bridges crossing the rivers were usually demolished by the time we reached them, and the engineers were constantly called on to construct new bridges. In one stretch of less than 7 miles it was necessary to throw 9 Bailey Bridges across the Idice. The valley roads were served by a few connecting roads and trails, but in the greatest part of these hills there were no roads of any use to the troops. Mules, usually with American leaders and Italian skimmers, made the advance possible. As it was, in many places it proved necessary to bring up supplies on the backs of men.

The enemy continued his delaying tactic, fortifying houses and villages, digging in machine gun positions on dominating points. From concealed positions his self-propelled guns and tanks fired against our advancing troops and against positions we had recently won, ready to join in the counter-attacks which he continued to make regularly. At the end of September the German forces opposing the Division included elements of the 44th Infantry Division on the east, and elements of the 362nd Infantry Division and the Lehr Brigade to the west. Later on these units were replaced by other, fresher troops.

After the capture of Canda on September 28th rain in downpours temporarily delayed the advance. Patrols were sent out ahead to maintain contact with the withdrawing enemy, and on September 30th orders were issued for the continuance of the attack at 6 o'clock on the morning of October 1st, the 337th Infantry on the right, the 339th on the left. The 338th was temporarily in reserve. At this time the 85th Reconnaissance Troop was attached to the 337th Infantry, and from now until October

o Looking towards Monte Canda from Tre Poggiolo.



14th it held positions protecting that regiment's right flank.

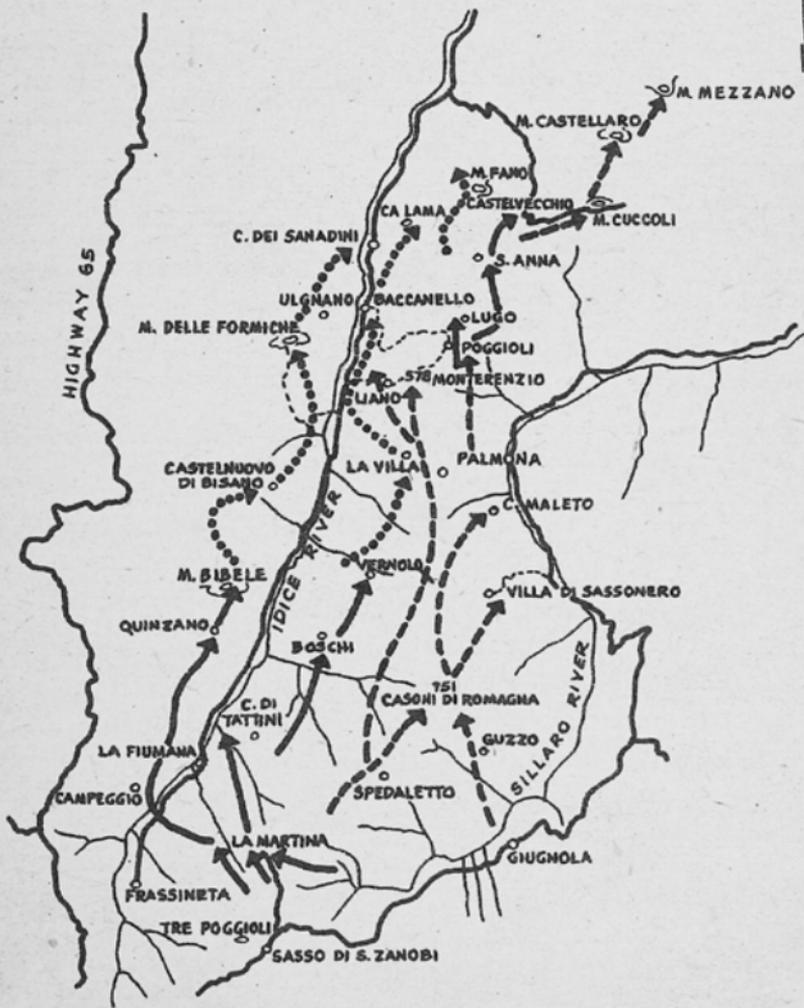
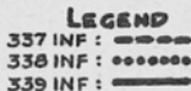
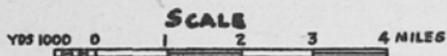
The 337th's first objectives were Casoni di Romagna near the summit of Hill 751 and the hill itself, about 2½ miles to the northeast, and the Villa di Sassonero, a mile farther north and just west of the Sillaro. The 339th was to cut northwest to advance along both sides of the Idice Torrent towards Monte Bibele, rising from the west bank of that river 4 miles to the north. Both regiments soon ran into stiff resistance. Tanks could not climb through the mud and up the steep, cliff-like slopes on the extreme right, and on the left the enemy had fortified a succession of small villages to block our way to the Idice Valley road.

Moving to another sector our tanks made their way to engage the enemy's armor, and the Spedaletto Ridge was captured by F Company, 337th Infantry after infantry riding a platoon of tanks had gone ahead to clear the way. Some of the heaviest fighting in the 339th sector centered about the village of La Martina. The enemy was already sending down more troops and tanks to reinforce his garrisons in the fortified villages. The 3rd Battalion was attacking on the right of the 2nd, supported by 6 tanks and 8 tank-destroyers. This action pierced an enemy defense line which included La Martina, and whose existence was learned from a captured enemy document.

In the mud and rain the advance went slowly ahead. Casoni di Romagna fell to a surprise attack by the 337th on October 2nd, and once the Idice Valley road was gained the 339th progressed steadily along both sides of the river until by October

FROM TRE POGGIOLI TO M. MEZZANO

OCTOBER 1-26, 1944

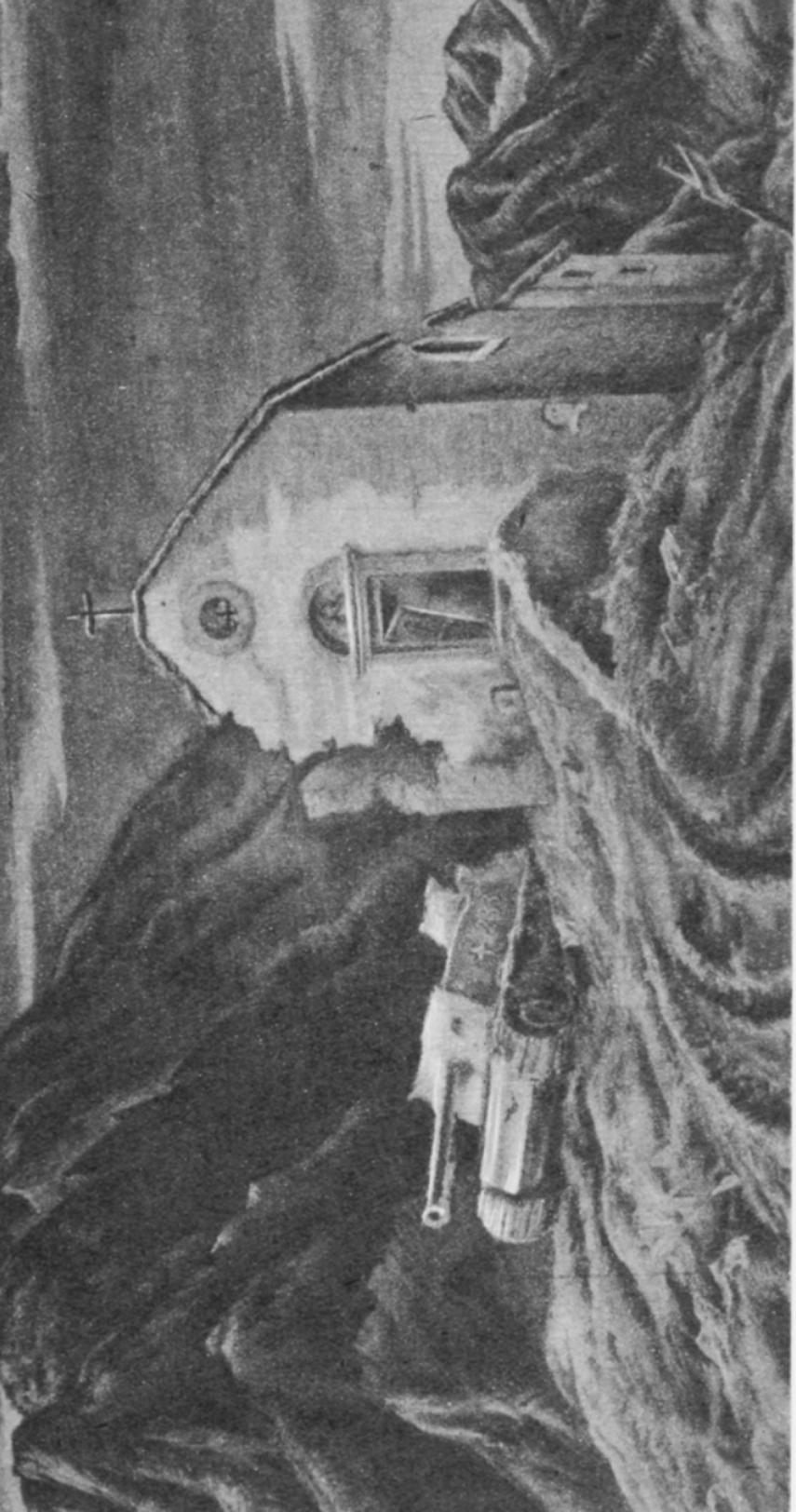


4th it had reached positions from which it could begin the attack on Monte Bibebe.

From the southwest a ridge led from the village of Quinzano to the summit of Bibebe, and this offered the most suitable approach. From Quinzano, whose row of houses stretched along high ground, the enemy dominated the village of San Benedetto di Querceto to the southeast, as well as the junction of a network of cart roads and trails leading to the valley road. A half-mile northwest of Quinzano another village, San Martino, facing the western slopes of the mountain, dominated the ridge ascending to the crest. In preparation for the attack the artillery had been softening up the enemy's fortifications, and on October 3rd 5 TOT's had been laid down on Bibebe in less than an hour. On the 4th the 2nd Battalion moved up for the assault.

The plan of attack was first to reduce the enemy positions in the villages. E Company attacked Quinzano while G Company moved over to the northwest to attack San Martino. Quinzano fell by early afternoon, but San Martino held out. Tanks in San Benedetto were meanwhile firing against the enemy on the mountain, F Company was moving up to climb through the ravines on the east, and E Company started up the ridge to the summit. The fighting went on throughout the night against resistance that gave no signs of slackening. The fight for San Martino was still raging in the morning, but E Company began to make steady progress up the ridge, slowly forcing the enemy back, and by midafternoon of October 5th it had occupied the crest. F Company too was making progress clearing the enemy from the northern reaches. San Martino was finally subdued by dark.

o Sasso di San Zanobi, near Tre Poggiolo. Abandoned Italian tank was one of several used by Germans in this area.



and the mountain was entirely cleared of the enemy by midnight. The first of the important hill masses dominating the Idice Valley had been captured.

On the right, the 337th Infantry had gone on from Casoni di Romagna, along the steep ridges, on the 3rd and 4th forcing the enemy back beyond the Villa di Sassonero to within 2 miles of Monterenzio. By now the regiment had advanced well beyond the units on both flanks, and as a result was receiving fire from self-propelled guns on the east and west as well as to the north. An intense counter-battery program was now undertaken by the Division Artillery, and plans were made to continue the attack.

From Monterenzio, 1800 feet high, the enemy commanded the entire intermediate area between the Sillaro and Idice Torrents. A narrow ridge led from Hill 528, nearly a mile south of the crest, through the village of Scaruglio to the summit. A church, a cemetery, and 2 or 3 small buildings occupied a level space at the foot of a large mound. The sides of the ridge fell off in steep, rocky ravines to mountain streams winding through tangled brush 400 feet below. The eastern side of the mountain fell off in cliffs, and the western side formed the wall of a ravine.

To the south and southeast the enemy held 2 mountain villages, Palmona and Zello, from which he was attempting to block any advance towards Monterenzio. Scaruglio was at the apex of defenses extending along the east of the mountain to Poggiolo, and along the west to the Liano Ridge. A single road led northwest to Baccanello, and the enemy now sent down numerous reinforcements to

o Baccanello.



man his positions here as our attack became imminent.

For 4 days the regiment made local advances, sent out patrols to feel out the enemy's outpost line, and constructed trails to enable tanks to come up to join in the attack. The cold rain came down intermittently, and the fields were almost quagmires. But the final preparations were completed and meanwhile the units on both flanks were gradually straightening out the line. To strengthen the assault, the 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry was now attached to the 337th.

At 6 o'clock on the morning of October 9th the attack jumped off. The 1st Battalion was making the main effort in the center, the 3rd Battalion was on the right, and the 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry was on the left. The 2nd Battalion remained in reserve. Artillery was firing against the strong points, and now as earlier planes were bombing and strafing Monterenzio.

At the very beginning the attacking forces met bitter resistance. The 1st Battalion alone made good progress, advancing 400 yards. Elsewhere the attacking forces were held down during the day and in the fighting that continued into the night, but finally the 1st Battalion of the 338th began to make headway. It seemed that the enemy was weakest on our left. He was apparently depending too much on the ruggedness of the terrain to discourage a strong effort in that direction. Accordingly, the 2nd Battalion moved up to the left of the 1st Battalion of the 338th in order to exploit the enemy's weakness.

At 8 o'clock on the morning of the 10th the attack was renewed with 4 battalions. The mud

o View of Monterenzio from the East.



was now so heavy that no tanks could move up to give direct support, and the attack continued without their help. The 2nd Battalion's advance had been unobserved for some time, and before 10 o'clock it had captured an important hill southwest of Monterenzio. Company A of the 1st Battalion of the 337th had meanwhile by-passed the strongpoint of Palmona and succeeded in taking Hill 528, leading to the Monterenzio crest, so surprising the Germans manning the defenses that the position was taken before the enemy could fire a shot. The first important successes had been won, and as if to acknowledge this the enemy's artillery fire was intensified.

The other attacking units were making steady progress now, though throughout that night and the 11th the enemy was fighting bitterly. But in the Zello area 50 prisoners had been taken, and next day more were to be captured. On the 12th troops reached the church below the Monterenzio mound only to be trapped, but meanwhile tanks had come up through the mud to add their support, and the attacking forces began to close in from all sides.

Troops of the 1st Battalion now advanced directly against the strongpoints on the crest, while others moved to the right and left. On the night of the 12th troops of the 3rd Battalion moved north to seize Poggiolo, and cut off the enemy's only route of withdrawal and reinforcement. Now against the last bitter resistance our troops began to converge on the remaining defenders. Three companies had been defending the hill—the 3rd Company, 117th Grenadier Regiment and the 1st and 3rd Companies, 147th Grenadier Regiment. On the 13th 23 Germans gave themselves up. Most of the rest were dead.

Early in the morning of October 14th the 339th Infantry relieved the 337th, passing through the forward elements to continue the attack north. As long and bitter and sustained as the battle for Monterenzio had been, there was more to come.

† While the attack on Monterenzio was getting under way, the forces advancing along the Idice were meeting comparable resistance. After our capture of Monte Bibeles on the 5th the enemy fell back to ridges extending west of the Idice. Here he planned other delaying engagements before another major stand on Monte delle Formiche, a 2000-foot mountain rising from the west bank of the Idice, about 2 miles northwest of Monterenzio. As long as he held these 2 features he effectively blocked our passage through the Idice Valley and denied us the use of the valley road to the north.

After the capture of Bibeles the 338th completed the relief of the 339th and continued along both sides of the Idice. Several small villages were captured in the advance that went on slowly day by day. Castelnuovo di Bisano was taken after a sharp fight, and on the 10th the regiment had reached positions from which to begin the attack on Formiche. The objective was especially formidable because of the steep cliffs which fell from all sides except the south. † It was doubly important to the Germans to hold Formiche since it commanded Highway 65, in the sector of the Division on the left, as well as the Idice Valley road.

The 2nd Battalion moved up for the final assault on the mountain. Two villages at the foot, Casa del Monte and Maceratoio, were cleared only after a day's heavy fighting. G Company worked its way to the crest on the afternoon of the 14th. Company

F came up to reinforce the first troops, and strong enemy counterattacks were repulsed. One other village to the east of the mountain still stubbornly resisted elements of the 3rd Battalion, but when the enemy had been cleared from the cellars of houses he had fortified, and when the northern approaches to Formiche were cut off, it remained only to reduce several fortified positions west of the mountain.

Tanks were now supporting the attack when conditions permitted, and on both sides of the river the regiment pushed ahead. It proved necessary to clear some villages in house to house fighting, and one village, Baragazza, was attacked under cover of a smoke screen since the approaches afforded no concealment whatever.

In this phase of the advance elements of the 34th Infantry Division began to relieve elements of the 338th Infantry, and by October 15th the part of the regimental sector west of the Idice River had passed to that division. The 338th then moved along the east of the river to areas near Fiumetta and Savazza, south of Baccanello, prepared to continue the attack northwest of Monterenzio.

The capture of Formiche and Monterenzio had thrown large groups of the enemy into confusion. Among the prisoners now captured were many who came into our lines when they were separated from their units. In the month since the initial attack on the Gothic Line the Division had captured more than 2000 prisoners, and this in itself had strained the enemy's organization. But severe as his losses had been, replacements were still arriving and in enough strength to meet the demands of constant counterattacks.

The 339th Infantry captured Hill 622, just east of Santa Anna, and held it against counterattacks. The enemy was defending stubbornly, but the regiment pushed through the fog to capture several important objectives—Hill 602, and Castelvechio which overlooked the area to the north for many miles. Hill 532, the Vignale ridge, was taken only after strongly fortified positions were reduced.

The 338th Infantry was gradually advancing through rough country towards Monte Fano which it captured on the 20th. The 337th had been recommitted that day, taking up positions on Monte Cuccoli, and the 339th was moving along the ridge east of Castelvechio, in a move coordinated with the advance of the 88th Division on the right towards Monte Grande. On the 22nd further orders were received for the coordinated attack. Other elements of the 337th moved up to Farneto on the ridge east of Cuccoli, the 339th went on to attack Hill 459, north of the Parrocchia di Vignale, and the 338th prepared to move forward from Fano towards the strongpoints of Pizzano and Orbega to the northwest. We were now attacking towards the last dominating range of hills in front of the Po Valley.

The fighting on 459 was fierce. The enemy had just brought into this sector the fresh troops of the 42nd Light Infantry Division, and these fiercely counterattacked our first forces to reach the hill, overrunning their positions, and killing or capturing most of the advance elements of two platoons, but the 339th continued to hold Hill 532, north of Castelvechio. On the 22nd and 23rd the 337th Infantry seized Monte Castellaro, and in doing so

occupied positions well in the lead of the Fifth Army push towards Highway 9 and the Po Valley.

On the 24th they pushed ahead again to attack Monte Mezzano. The first attack, made from the south, was met half-way up by a strong counter-attacking force which was repulsed, but heavy artillery and mortar concentrations falling on the exposed ridge forced the advance elements to withdraw. The next night the attack was resumed from the draws southwest of the mountain, and this was more successful. By dawn of the 25th there was a heavy fog, and the enemy counterattacked behind an intense barrage. Two or perhaps three companies overran our outpost positions, but the defenders held out against heavy odds until reinforcements drove the enemy off and brought the situation under control.

Holding positions on Mezzano, the Casetta di Vignale (north of Castelvechio) and Monte Fano the Division was within striking distance of the Po Valley. The artillery was already firing on objectives north of Highway 9. But it was now evident that the final push into the Valley and beyond would require time for the recuperation of losses and the building up of supplies. Accordingly, on October 26th the Division received orders to establish a defensive line in this sector while preparations were completed for a resumption of the offensive.

Somewhat later the Division was ordered to withdraw from Mezzano and certain other forward positions in order to make the line more even with the positions held by adjacent units. The general line of defense extended west from Castellaro to Casetta di Vignale and on to localities near Piz-

o Looking from Monterenzio towards the Sillaro Valley.



o Truck moving through Borgo di Bisano.



zano. Other adjustments were made in the weeks that followed, and defensive positions were held until November 22nd when the Division, relieved from the line, moved to a rest area.

When it passed to reserve the Division had completed 70 consecutive days of fighting since on September 13th it first attacked the Gothic Line. The advances of October represented an achievement equal to any the Division had to its credit. Less spectacular than the attacks on well-publicized Defense Lines, the incessant drive over the mountains in the heavy, chilling rain demanded the most in endurance and resourcefulness. Since Canada the Division had advanced to within 8 miles of the Po Valley, driving a salient in the enemy's territory as the spearhead of the Fifth Army attack.

Since May the Division had taken an important part in two great drives against the strongest defensive positions the enemy could construct and had driven the enemy back through the harsh and barren mountains of the northern Apennines. It had defeated several German divisions—the 94th, the Hermann Goering, the 362nd—and had cut up the Lehr Brigade and elements of the 4th Parachute and 42nd Light Infantry Divisions. In the course of its progress it had taken 4937 prisoners. After less than a year of combat the 85th Division had established itself as one of the best.

As time passed the men of the Division became more conscious of the reputation they were establishing, they had a longer history to look back on, and more and more memories to recall. It is fully realized that this story is almost entirely a chronicle

of the infantry-artillery elements of the Division. Throughout this period the 310th Medical Battalion, the 310th Engineer Battalion, the 85th Quartermaster Company, the 785th Ordnance Company, the 85th Signal Company, and the 85th Military Police Platoon have quietly and most efficiently performed their duties, which have aided the infantry's advance immeasurably. This brief account of some of the Division's accomplishments, and of some of the places we have seen in our fighting in Italy, may serve to strengthen memories and be a record of achievements we will not wish to forget.



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