

The progress made on the right and center of the division zone on the 15th was in sharp contrast to the action on the left. There the 85th Mountain Infantry jumped off at 0700, with the intention of driving north to Mount Righetti, then swinging southwest onto the hills dominating the western part of the Pra del Bianco basin and overlooking the Panaro River to the northwest. Heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire together with infantry resistance stopped the 85th Mountain Infantry almost on its line of departure. Counterbattery fire laid down on the enemy artillery installations and emplacements seemed to have no effect on the German ability to resist. The men inched forward slowly until 1200, by which time the attacks farther east by the other two regiments were meeting with considerable success. General Hays finally ordered the 85th Mountain Infantry to discontinue the advance and organize for defense. The 10th Antitank Battalion was sent up from reserve to tie the left flank in with the BEF, and plans were made to shift the entire weight of the division to the northeast.

Early on the 14th the BEF, under Maj. Gen. Joao Baptista Mascarenhas de Moraes, had sent patrols into Montese without gaining contact. The 2d Battalion, 11th Infantry, then moved on the village, only to run into resistance a short distance east of the town; but the Brazilians pushed on and took Montese after a sharp fire fight. On the following day positions were consolidated in the area, and on the 16th the 1st Battalion, 1st Infantry, relieved the 10th Antitank Battalion and other left flank elements of the 10th Mountain Division. Similar reliefs were carried out in the succeeding 2 days to permit the shift northeast of that division. Throughout the period of the main IV Corps push on the right very heavy artillery concentrations from enemy guns on the upper Panaro fell in the BEF zone, especially about Montese; during the first 24 hours of the IV Corps attack this area received over 1,800 of the 2,800 rounds of enemy shell fire reported in the entire Corps zone.

In the zone of the main attack the enemy laid a smoke screen at 0900, 16 April, along the road from the village of Tole south over the notch in an effort to conceal the withdrawal of artillery and other elements from the Mount Mantino—Mount Mosca area. The 756th Grenadier Regiment had cracked, and the rear areas of the entire 94th Grenadier Division were in imminent danger of being overrun. With his supply lines cut and American troops slashing into his rear areas the enemy began a fierce delaying action to cover a mass withdrawal to his positions along the Panaro River.

The hills just north of Mount Mantino were occupied after a fight by the 2d Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry, at 1305, and the more rested 3d Battalion was passed through quickly to continue the drive to Mount Mosca, the last high point along the eastern ridge line. The enemy carried out a stubborn defense in front of

the 3d Battalion all the way. Enemy mortar and artillery fire constantly pounded the advancing troops, and after a successful assault of Mount Mosca itself at 1415 almost 2 hours were needed to mop up the crest of the hill. Early in the evening the Germans launched 10 separate counterattacks against the newly won positions, but the gain was securely held. Even before Mount Mosca was firmly in our possession, the 2d Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry, launched another attack north from the ridge down into the village of Tole. The place was a shambles from bombing and heavy artillery fire and was occupied quickly against light opposition.

On the left flank on 16 April the 85th Mountain Infantry, relieved by the BEF, began to maneuver to the northeast, relieving in its turn elements of the 87th Mountain Infantry as fast as possible. On the right the 3d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry, jumped off at 1115 to cross the ridge and advance north of Tole. By mid-afternoon, with the fall of Tole, the battalion moved northward along the road for almost a mile. Finally heavy artillery fire stopped the advance, but the 1st Battalion came up onto the right flank and together the two battalions forged ahead. By 1750 they had advanced another 2 miles to the northeast and were within a few hundred yards of the hamlet of Monzuno. The tanks of the 751st Tank Battalion assisted in the final thrust by giving direct fire support, and the cluster of houses was seized by 1800. A hasty defense was set up on the bare, rolling hills, and the advance halted for the night.

With the enemy reeling backwards, the 10th Mountain Division smashed northward on the 17th to open the way into the Samoggia Valley. In the morning the 2d Battalion, 87th Mountain Infantry, pushed forward on the left flank of the ground gained by the 86th Mountain Infantry the preceding day in order to attack Mount Ferra, about 2 miles north of Tole. The advance progressed against light opposition until 1555, when the leading elements were stopped by exceptionally heavy direct artillery fire coming from the northwest. The 1st Battalion was sent around the east side of the hill to attack San Prospero, overlooking the Samoggia about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile beyond Mount Ferra. The 1st Battalion gained its objective at 2105 after a cautious advance over the open, rolling hillsides. Mount Ferra was finally cleared at 1905 after counterbattery fire was placed on the enemy guns west of the Panaro River.

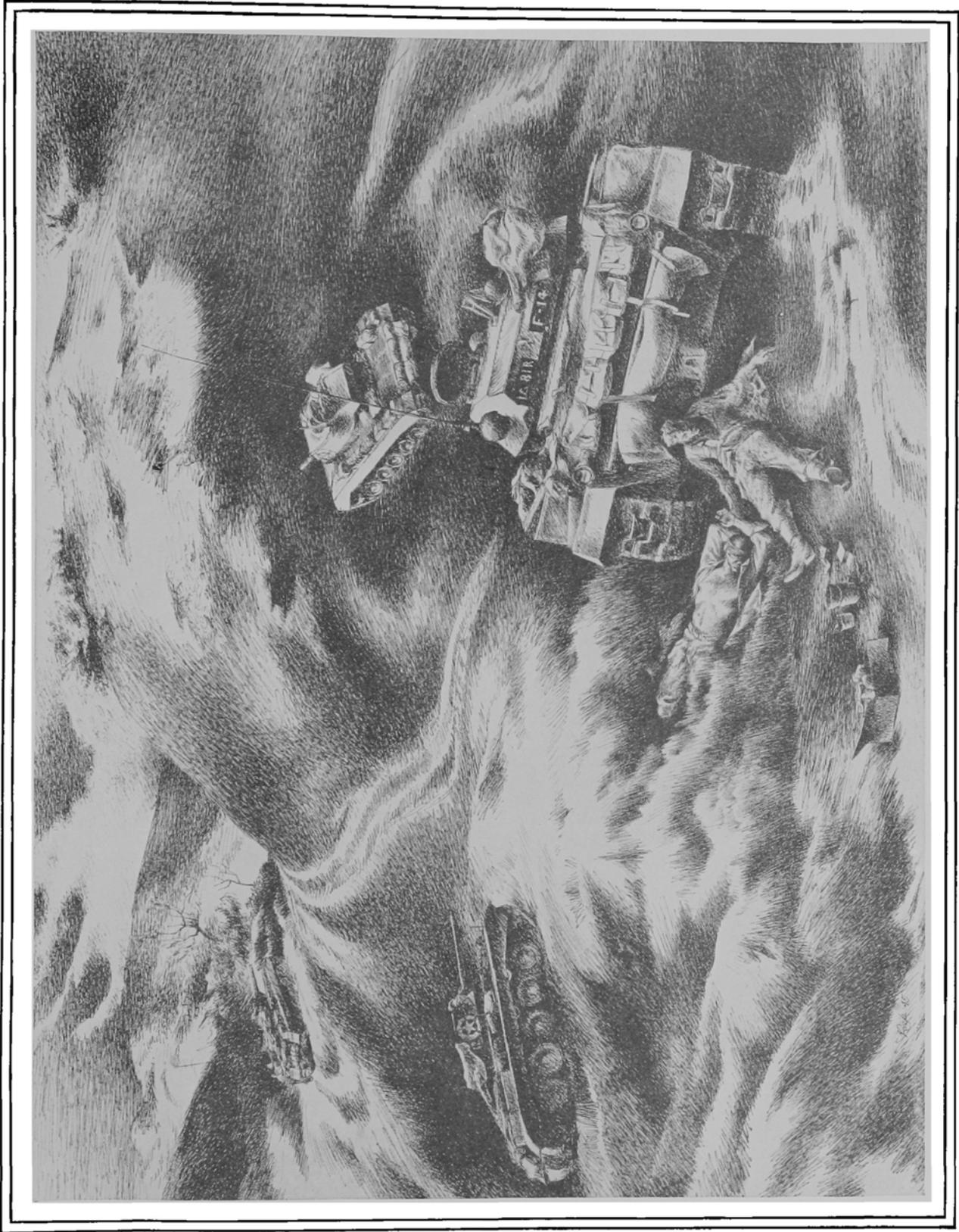
The 3d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry, renewed its drive straight north on the morning of 17 April and by 0845 was on Mount Moscoso,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles east of San Prospero. The 2d Battalion jumped off at 0730 and advanced on the right of the 3d Battalion into the village of Montepastore, east of Mount Moscoso, clearing the hamlet by 0945. Though mortar fire began to fall on the outskirts from the northeast, the 2d Battalion pushed on due north, at the same time dispatching one company eastward to clear Mount Vignola and the other hills which dominated the

low ridge line along which the advance was proceeding. These hill points were finally cleared at 1800 after sporadic but vigorous resistance was overcome.

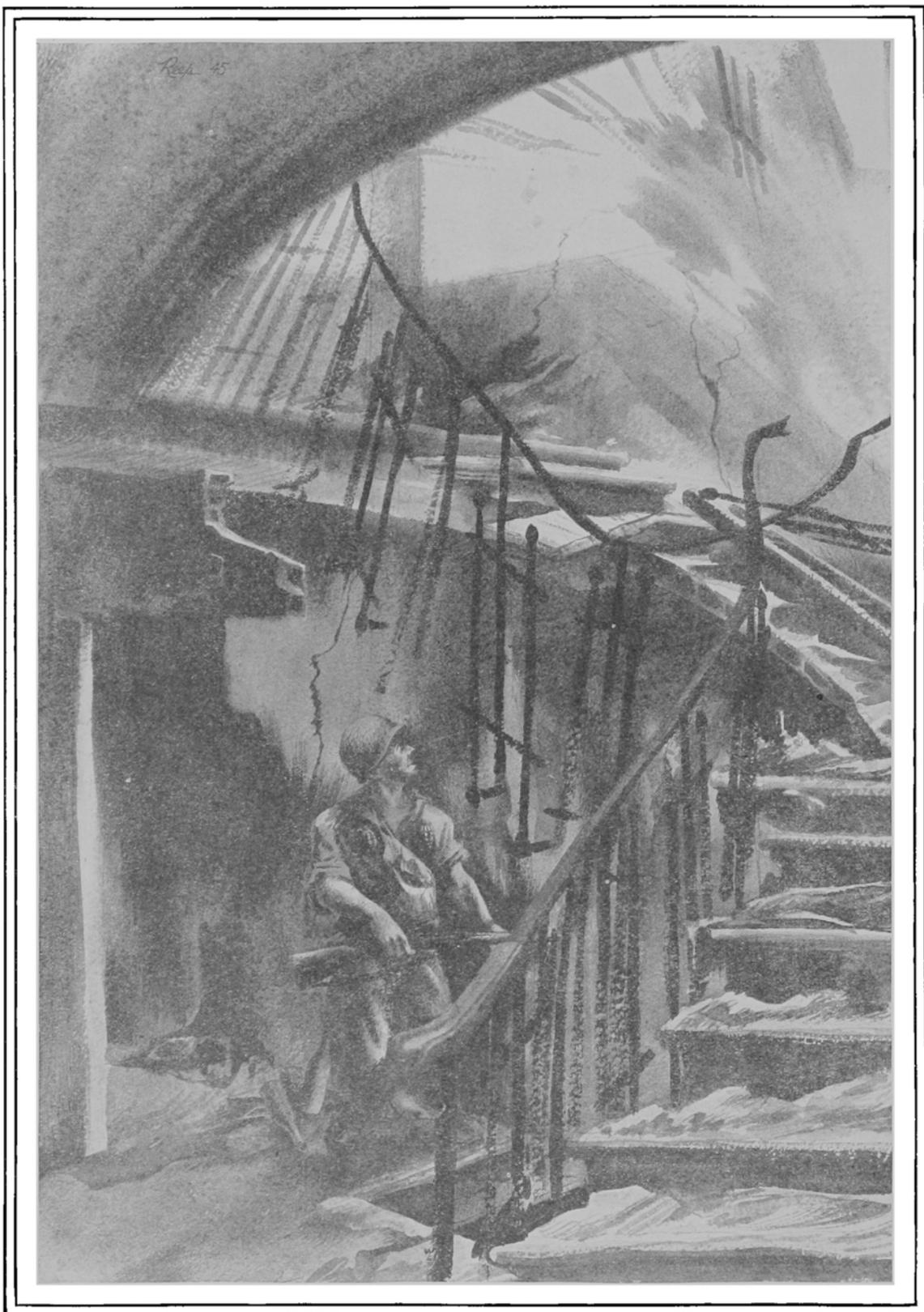
The speed of the advance of the two leading regiments was made possible in large part on 17 April by the shifting of the 85th Mountain Infantry and the displacement forward of the artillery. The 85th Mountain Infantry continued its movement to the northeast, relieving elements of the 87th Mountain Infantry as rapidly as it in turn was freed from the left rear flank by the BEF. The main avenue of counterattacks was from the Panaro Valley to the west of the advancing spearhead, and it was this threat which the BEF and the 85th Mountain Infantry covered as fast as the advancing regiments moved northward. The artillery units had to displace in order to support the rapidly advancing troops, and new positions were occupied just south of the Mount Mosca ridge during the day without incident. The main support could now be supplied by the armored units, for the terrain was rolling rather than rugged and the roads were in good condition north of Tole. The 10th Mountain Division now held its Black Line objectives after 4 days of swift, slashing attacks driving to the northeast across the enemy lines of communication.

3. *The 1st Armored Division Opens up Highway 64.* Although the attack by the 10th Mountain Division on 14 April constituted the main IV Corps action, units on both the right and the left flanks were all playing their assigned parts. The BEF occupied Montese; on the right the 1st Armored Division, under Maj. Gen. Vernon E. Prichard, moved on Vergato. During the morning of the 14th the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion sent out small feeler elements, but its attack was not launched in force until the afternoon. At 1700 the infantry, supported by tanks of the 13th Tank Battalion, pushed off in strength through the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion, holding defensive positions along Finocchia ridge, and began moving north toward positions from which to attack the hilltop village of Suzzano the following morning. The approach march was covered on the left by the 10th Mountain Division's capture of the commanding Rocca di Roffeno. Meeting no opposition, advance units took up positions for the night on the lower slopes of the rising ground 1 mile south of the village; the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion, which was following, halted in positions 1,000 yards to the southwest.

On the division right along Highway 64 the dismounted cavalymen of Troop A, 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, supported by the 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, attacked toward the rubble town of Vergato at 1750 with the aim of reaching the objective at last light. The jump-off was preceded first by a TOT; thereafter the supporting artillery fired one round per gun per minute upon Vergato until 1845, when the forward observer lifted the fire as the troops prepared to assault the town. By 2000 Troop A had penetrated into the southern outskirts and the railroad station, but determined resistance with small-arms and mortar fire



*Tanks in defilade before the attack down Highway 64 . . . painted by Captain Edward A. Reep*



*Cleaning out a sniper's den in a Vergato house . . . painted by Captain Edward A. Reep*

stopped further advance. Mines prevented the approach of tanks for close support the first night, during which Americans and Germans at times occupied adjoining rooms or alternate floors in the same buildings. Troop C, sent up to reinforce Troop A, had taken up positions by 0230, 15 April. On the 15th the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was occupied all day in the dangerous and ticklish task of fighting from house to house while the Germans poured mortar fire into the southern part of the town from positions outside it. After midnight 15-16 April three tanks and a bulldozer were able to move up; the objective, with the exception of one house, was reported clear after daylight on the 16th.

Pushing on from Vergato during the day, the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron found the village of Africa and the road junction 1 mile west of Vergato clear of enemy. Troop D and a platoon of tanks from Company F advanced throughout the 16th and 17th along Highway 64, in conjunction with Troop C and a platoon of tanks from the 13th Tank Battalion, followed by Troop B (mounted), on the east side of the Reno. By the end of the 17th the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had advanced against light and scattered opposition nearly 5 miles from Vergato northeast down the winding Reno Valley.

While Vergato was being cleared and Highway 64 opened, the division main effort was concentrated on its left in a drive along the hills above the highway. The plan of action for the 15th was to seize positions on the transverse ridge across the front and then to swing east along that ridge to clear the strongpoint of Mount Pero, 1 mile northwest of and dominating Vergato. The 6th Armored Infantry Battalion continued to hold its defensive positions; the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion pushed toward Suzzano in a column of companies. By 1445 Company C and a platoon of tanks from the 13th Tank Battalion reached Suzzano. Opposition encountered was at first that of scattered artillery fire and mines; then increasingly heavy mortar fire was added in the afternoon. The infantry turned east toward Mount Pero from Suzzano and by 2200 had elements on a saddle in the ridge just west of the objective. The push continued the next morning, hindered only by scattered snipers and rough terrain, and by 0900, 16 April, Mount Pero was occupied.

At 0615 on the 16th the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion moved off from positions immediately south of Suzzano, continued 2 miles northeast, passed through elements of the 10th Mountain Division on Mount Mosca, which had just fallen, and at 1635 attacked toward high ground 1 mile to the east. Initially opposition was determined, but by the end of the day the battalion objective was taken. The 6th Armored Infantry Battalion, which had assembled at Suzzano during the morning, followed the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion to Mount Mosca and occupied positions on that ridge from which to launch the next day an attack parallel on the left to the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion drive. The 14th Ar-

mored Infantry Battalion, which had held on Mount Pero since the morning, moved northwest during the evening in order to support the attack of the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion if necessary.

At 0730, 17 April, the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion began moving from Mount Mosca toward the next objective, Mount d'Avigo, 3 miles to the northeast across a valley. The approach march covered ground previously taken by the 10th Mountain Division, so the actual attack started in the early afternoon. The first attempts were thrown back, but after a 30-minute artillery barrage Company B had taken the hill and 250 prisoners by 1900. Company C continued eastward 1 mile to seize hills overlooking the Reno 1 mile north of the positions reached by the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron in the valley below. At dawn on the same day the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion, pushing eastward about 1 mile south of the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion, continued its drive and advanced 2 miles against no opposition to reach Mount Milano by 0930, likewise overlooking the Reno.

By the end of 17 April the infantry and the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron of the 1st Armored Division had advanced as much as 8 miles from their original front-line positions and held objectives astride the Brown Phase Line. Two infantry battalions occupied the high ground of Mounts d'Avigo and Milano dominating the Reno Valley from the west, and the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had advanced up Highway 64 to a point east of Mount Milano. The attack of the 1st Armored Division had moved northeast, paralleling the Reno, against light to moderate opposition, consisting largely of mortar and artillery fire and minefields. Sharp infantry actions, however, such as the laborious clearing of Vergato, had not been infrequent.

### C. *BROADENING THE PENETRATION*

18-20 APRIL

1. *Shifting Our Troops.* By the end of the 17th the enemy situation on the Fifth Army front had become critical. The divisions facing II Corps had given ground very slowly and had thus far yielded only Mount Sole and Monterumici, but their strength was diminishing under the constant pounding by our infantry and artillery. Any possibilities for an extended stand on Highway 65, however, were made slight by our break-through in the IV Corps zone. The 10th Mountain Division was, by 17 April, moving into the last foothills before the Po plain, with almost no enemy troops before it.

The crushing weight of the assault had split the 94th Grenadier Division, the

major portion of which fell to the east of the 10th Mountain Division spearhead while the remainder of the division lay to the west with the 334th Grenadier Division. By the end of 18 April the 334th and 94th Grenadier Divisions had each lost over 1,000 combat infantrymen as prisoners alone. Since the reserves of both divisions had for the most part been committed as early as the 15th, the only major enemy force available south of Bologna to throw into the breach was the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division. Even this unit was no longer at full strength, for elements had already been dispatched to the 92d Division front.

The enemy attempt to hold his extended front lines with the forces at his disposal was proving hopeless everywhere by 17 April; but even to fall back in good order to the Po it was necessary to plug the gap west of Bologna. Here, accordingly, the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was committed, and on 17 April elements of the 2d Battalion, 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, the 190th Reconnaissance Battalion, and the 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment were identified on the IV Corps front. The division was not thrown in directly before the 10th Mountain Division but more to its left flank between the 334th and 94th Grenadier Divisions, the intention probably being to hold the west side of the gap and slow the central thrust by stiff counterattacks. Further reinforcement was gained by shifting the 754th Grenadier Regiment from the west to the east flank of the 334th Grenadier Division, west of the Samoggia.

As enemy defenses crumbled between the Reno and Samoggia and the enemy, forced from the comparative safety of his prepared positions, sought to fall back in orderly retreat to other lines, Fifth Army conducted the first of a series of relocations of major units in order to strengthen the penetration and press home the attack before the enemy could again get set. In accordance with previous plans the first move was the commitment of the 85th Division in the zone of the 1st Armored Division, which had reached its Brown Line objectives. After Fifth Army had released the 85th Division to IV Corps, General Crittenger on 17 April ordered that division to relieve without delay the 1st Armored Division and the eastern elements of the 10th Mountain Division. It would attack north on the morning of the 18th, clearing Highway 64 and assisting the advance of II Corps on its right. The 339th Infantry, to be used only on the approval of the Army commander, was in IV Corps reserve.

This employment of the 85th Division under IV Corps was a change from the plan in the Army attack order, Operations Instruction No. 7, according to which the 85th Division would operate under II Corps and the Corps boundary would be shifted westward accordingly. The change was due primarily to the fact that the momentum of the IV Corps advance could best be maintained by a unified command in that zone and also to the fact that II Corps was fully occupied in the stiff fight

abreast Highway 65. On the 18th lessened enemy resistance in front of II Corps was to permit a general shift of its divisions to the west, and the 88th Division at that time took over a good part of the zone originally planned for the 85th Division.

The broadened attack of IV Corps, as envisaged on the 17th, was to continue to the north, generally between the Reno and Samoggia rivers to secure an exit into the Po Valley and to assist II Corps to its Black Phase Line objectives. In addition to the 85th Division on the right and the 10th Mountain Division in the center, the 1st Armored Division was also to be employed, this time on the left between the 10th Mountain Division and the BEF. The 1st Armored Division was ordered on the 17th to move one combat command to Tole immediately, to move the rest of the division after its relief by the 85th Division, and upon Corps order to attack in its new zone east of the Panaro River. This shift would place the armor in better tank terrain and would strengthen the exposed left flank of the 10th Mountain Division. Preliminary moves began as early as 16 April, when one regiment of the 85th Division was ordered forward to the village of Africa behind the 1st Armored Division, but the relief was not accomplished until the night of 17-18 April and the morning of the 18th. The IV Corps attack, however, was hardly slowed while a new division was committed and another shifted its entire axis of attack from the right to the left flank.

2. *The 10th Mountain Division Cuts Highway 9.* At midnight on the 17th the 87th Mountain Infantry held Mount Ferra and San Prospero, overlooking the Samoggia. On its right the 86th Mountain Infantry had reached positions  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile north of Montepastore; on its left the 85th Mountain Infantry was still guarding the left flank of the division and maintaining contact with the BEF. Eleven miles ahead of our most advanced elements lay Highway 9, the main east-west artery behind the German lines.

At 0930, 18 April, the 3d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry, began a swift northward advance which led at 1230 to the capture of the hamlet of Sulmonte,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of Montepastore. Light resistance, composed mainly of small-arms and machine-gun fire, was encountered along the way but did not slow the advance. Thereafter, however, the battalion ran into heavy going about 1300 as the men attempted to move northwest about 1,000 yards from Sulmonte to Mongiorgio. A heavy battle developed, and by 1900 the enemy was resisting with artillery, mortar, machine-gun, and small-arms fire. The leading elements of the battalion pulled back toward Sulmonte and held for the night. On the right the 2d Battalion moved to the northeast from Montepastore toward the village of San Chierlo against considerable machine-gun and small-arms fire. Even with armored support the battalion was held back and at 1300 was still 900 yards west of San Chierlo. Despite this resistance the enemy was withdrawing as rapidly as possible. Many air missions were flown on the 18th against the horse-drawn columns of withdrawing Germans.



*A battalion of the 10th Mountain Division advances toward the town of Tole*



*In the IV Corps zone traffic jams up as the pursuit into the valley begins*



*The Brazilians move up in their guard of the left flank of IV Corps*



*In the Po Valley on 20 April: men of the 337th Infantry flush out a sniper*

By evening the 10th Mountain Division had captured 2,917 prisoners, and small, scattered groups all along the front were still surrendering.

During the day the BEF completed the relief of the 85th Mountain Infantry, which moved on orders into an assembly area at San Chierlo. The next morning found the regiment passing through the 86th Mountain Infantry and into the lead of the attack, which was now directed toward Mount San Michele, about 3 miles north of San Chierlo. At 1135, after overcoming several pockets of resistance with the aid of tanks and tank destroyers, the 1st Battalion occupied Mount San Michele and prepared to continue the advance toward the northeast. Before long the enemy withdrawal broke into a rout. A request was sent back for all available armor, for the enemy was beginning to flee in complete disorganization before the advancing column. By 1630 the 1st Battalion held a road junction fully 3 miles northeast of Mount San Michele and stopped there only to allow the supporting elements and reserves to catch up with it.

To the left the 87th Mountain Infantry took up the battle at Mongiorgio on the morning of 19 April and after bitter house-to-house fighting finally controlled the village at 1015. The advance was quickly resumed with all three battalions abreast and moving to the northeast parallel to the Samoggia River. Enemy delaying actions necessitated flanking operations on two occasions, but by nightfall the regiment held a line extending from Mongiorgio through Monte San Pietro for 4 miles almost to Mount Avezzano.

The 86th Mountain Infantry started forward at 0700 and advanced along the right flank of the division zone without meeting any organized opposition. By nightfall the regiment had crossed into the center of the zone and taken up defensive positions just north of Mount San Michele. From the final forward line on the evening of 19 April all three regiments of the division could look northward over the last few rolling hills into the Po Valley. The enemy was completely disorganized everywhere east of the Samoggia and was in no position to offer any further defense before our forces debouched onto the Po plain. West of the Samoggia, however, the enemy was still resisting the efforts of the 1st Armored Division, which had passed across the rear of the 10th Mountain Division; the successful advance of the mountain troops was due largely to this protection of their left flank.

The three regiments of the division descended abreast from the hills and swept out onto the floor of the Po Valley on 20 April, their objective set at Ponte Samoggia where Highway 9 crosses the Samoggia River. The 86th Mountain Infantry in the center moved out at 0700. Enemy infantry resistance had been almost entirely bypassed, and only occasional mortar or artillery fire interdicting the roads delayed the advance. At 1500 the 1st Battalion crossed Highway 9, and by 1900 the entire regiment was astride that road. The 3d Battalion pushed on to the northwest about 1 mile and at 2000 seized Ponte Samoggia.

The 87th Mountain Infantry continued its advance along the left flank during the 20th, with the intention of covering and guarding the advance of the 86th Mountain Infantry. Enemy resistance supported by artillery fire from the northwest slowed the advance during the morning, and at 1535 a bitter house-to-house assault of the village of Pradalbino, 1 mile north of Mount Avezzano, was begun. The 3d Battalion finally cleared the hamlet at 1711. The 1st Battalion moved forward on its right through numerous pockets of resistance and by 2310 reached the valley floor. The regiment set up a defense for the night with all three battalions on line facing north toward Highway 9 about 3 miles away. The 85th Mountain Infantry gained its final positions for 20 April after a steady advance against light opposition on the right flank of the 86th Mountain Infantry. In 7 days the 10th Mountain Division had broken through the main enemy defense line in the Apennines and had advanced 16 miles from Castel d'Aiano to Ponte Samoggia on Highway 9.

3. *The 85th Division Is Committed.* On 16 April the first regiment of the 85th Division moved up from the Arno Valley along the twisting curves of Highway 64 to the vicinity of Africa. The remainder of the division, commanded by Maj. Gen. John B. Coulter, came forward the following day; by 1830, 17 April, movement to the forward assembly areas at Vergato and south of Castel d'Aiano was complete. Relief of the 1st Armored Division by the 338th Infantry under Col. William H. Mikkelsen on the right and the 337th Infantry under Col. Oliver W. Hughes on the left began at once. During the night the 3d Battalion, 338th Infantry, relieved the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and other right flank elements of the 1st Armored Division and at 0610, 18 April, took over a line extending 2 miles from the town of Piano di Venola in the Reno Valley to the southwest of Mount Milano. By 1415 the 2d Battalion, 338th Infantry, after a dusty march across the hills from 4 miles southwest of Vergato, had relieved the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion 1 mile northwest of Mount Milano. The 1st Battalion, 338th Infantry, followed along Highway 64 as regimental reserve; reliefs of the regiment were screened by the 85th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, which during the subsequent attack proceeded along the highway abreast of the infantry. In the meantime the 337th Infantry moved up on the west. The 1st Battalion, on the left, relieved the 1st Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry, shortly after the capture of Mount Vignola and took command of the area at 0900, 18 April; on the right the 2d Battalion advanced during the night 17-18 April to positions south of Mount Luminasio, its first objective.

General Coulter's plan of maneuver was to seize Mount Luminasio and the hills immediately to the north from the southwest and to continue north therefrom to the Po Valley 10 miles away. Enemy defenses in this region proved to be limited and consisted of hastily thrown up strongpoints centering about farms and small villages. The first and also highest range of hills to be attacked dropped off to the

east in barren, steep walls to the valley of the Reno; in the western part of the division zone the hills were less rugged, presenting a gentler character of woods and pasture. The terrain steadily improved with each mile to the north to become an area of rolling fields, single farm houses, and tiny villages.

At 0930 on the 18th, following a 15-minute artillery preparation, the 85th Division attacked 2 regiments abreast. The enemy before IV Corps had been considerably disorganized and was finding it difficult to reestablish a defense line; as a result this first attack by the 85th Division found practically no opposition at the outset. On the division right along the Reno the 338th Infantry pushed forward steadily. Before nightfall the 2d Battalion on the left and the 3d Battalion on the right reached positions on the banks of the Reno and the hills above 2 miles north of Piano di Venola after some delay caused by mines. On the left the 337th Infantry also had no difficulty at first; at the end of the day the 1st Battalion on the left consolidated for the night north and northeast of Mount Bonsara, prepared to seize the Rasiglio ridge the next day. The 2d Battalion took Mount Luminasio 2 miles north of Mount Milano without a shot. Although slowed by rough ground the battalion had advanced another  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles by late afternoon. From that point on resistance stiffened, and the battalion began to run into increasingly heavy fire from its next objective, the Lagune ridge 1 mile to the northeast. Similar spotty resistance was being met by the 10th Mountain Division on the left, especially about San Chierlo.

In view of the enemy stand the 3d Battalion, 337th Infantry, was ordered to move up to assist in clearing the ridge and then to continue to the north while the 2d Battalion continued eastward to clear an adjacent ridge. At 0200, 19 April, Companies I and G, assisted by Company E, made a coordinated attack which was stopped by grenades and intense rifle and machine-gun fire. At 0340, before the objective was taken, orders were received changing boundaries and shifting the 85th Division farther west to make room for the 88th Division, which was moving to the left in the general westward shift of II Corps. All troops outside the new boundaries were to be moved out by daylight. The 338th Infantry along Highway 64 was ordered to go into reserve upon relief by the 6 South African Armoured Division. Actually the regiment was more pinched out than relieved, for the South Africans, crossing the Reno to get on Highway 64, encountered 88th Division elements north of the 85th Division and moved on from there.

The only 85th Division unit unaffected by the change was the 1st Battalion, 337th Infantry, on the extreme left flank, which was ordered to push on north. At 0600 on the 19th the battalion started in column of companies down a ridge road leading to Rasiglio. By 0735 the lead company, still 1 mile short of the objective, was hit by heavy flanking fire from the wide open right. One company was sent over to quiet this opposition while two companies pushed on north. When the ad-

vance was halted for the night, leading elements were not quite 1 mile north of Rasiglio, slightly to the right rear of the 10th Mountain Division.

At 0600, 20 April, the attack was resumed. The 1st and 3d Battalions, 337th Infantry, supported by a company of tanks and tank destroyers, moved out to clear two parallel ridges east of Lavina Creek down to the road junction of Gesso, 6 miles west of Bologna; the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, bypassing the enemy resistance, made a quick thrust around the left along the Lavina Creek road to seize the town itself and head off any enemy trying to escape into the Po Valley. The division left flank was secured by the advance of the 10th Mountain Division, which crossed Highway 9 at 1500; the right, though open, was not considered too dangerous in view of the confusion existing in enemy ranks west of the Reno. The 85th Division, assigned only a very narrow zone which was narrowed even more on the left by the fact that the 10th Mountain Division had not shifted completely over toward Mount Avezzano on the 19th, operated with part of its forces in the zone of the 88th Division, which was somewhat behind on the right; the latter was to relieve these forces when it caught up.

The Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, 337th Infantry, moving on the easier route of the road, pushed along and was in Gesso, out into the plain of the Po, by 0825 on the 20th. The two battalions in the hills on the right came up more slowly as they each knocked out knots of resistance which fought violently before capitulating. At noon, while the fight was still going on in the hills, General Truscott ordered the 85th Division to send forces to the right in a wide sweep across the front of the 88th Division and the 6 South African Armoured Division to the Bologna suburb and road center of Casalecchio, outposting the road northwest from Casalecchio in order to cut off the path of retreat of the disorganized enemy up Highway 64. The 2d Battalion, assisted by the Antitank Company, Company C, the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, and the attached tanks and tank destroyers, was assigned to the job.

The leading company of the battalion, after a sharp clash with enemy infantry, took a village on the outpost line 1 mile west of Casalecchio at 1800. Before darkness the battalion held positions all along the projected outpost line between Casalecchio and the Lavina Creek bridge. Reaching that objective had not been unopposed. A strong fire fight occurred 1 mile west of Casalecchio, and the town itself was not entered by the 6 South African Armoured Division until late in the day, after both II and IV Corps units had heavily shelled it. Many Germans were cut off by the quick thrust around from the left, and fighting and movement continued throughout the evening. Early in the night the 2d Battalion beat off three counterattacks, and not until midnight was the 3d Battalion able to clear the last high ground south of Gesso. That night many men of the 337th Infantry received their first rest since

entering the line on the 18th. After midnight the 351st Infantry (88th Division) on the right and the 338th Infantry on the left passed through to continue without let-up the drive to smash the German forces before us. Casualties in the division for the period 18–20 April had been very light, totalling only 88 in all.

4. *The 1st Armored Division Blocks off the Left.* The IV Corps plan on 17 April called for the 1st Armored Division to be completely relieved by the 85th Division on the Corps right and then to move over to the better tank terrain near the Panaro River. Elements of the armor began to assemble on the 17th, and at 1600 General Prichard ordered changes in attachments as well as movement of the division units to the area around Tole, behind the 10th Mountain Division and 6 miles due west of Mount Milano. The first units to shift westward were the elements of Combat Command A: the 14th Armored Infantry Battalion, the 1st Tank Battalion, the 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalion, the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (less three troops), and Company A, 16th Armored Engineer Battalion. Combat Command B, composed of the 4th Tank Battalion, the 11th Armored Infantry Battalion, the 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, and two troops of the 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, continued movement to the Tole area on the 18th.

The transfer to the new attack zone was not made without considerable difficulty. Only one road runs east and west between Tole and Highway 64 at Vergato; that road, although in passable condition, was overloaded with traffic and deep in dust. The secondary roads in the vicinity were in no condition for immediate use. Traffic conditions along Highway 64 were not improved by the fact that while the 1st Armored Division was shifting to the rear and then westward the 85th Division was moving forward with infantry and artillery. Problems were complicated further on the afternoon of the 17th by steady shell fire on the assembly areas south of Tole.

Shifting the division westward continued on the 18th as the 85th Division accomplished its final reliefs of the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion. While units of Combat Command B, under Brig. Gen. Maurice W. Daniel, were still moving into position at Tole on the 18th, Combat Command A, under Col. Hamilton H. Howze, operating in three columns of armor and infantry moving abreast, attacked north at 1220 astride the Samoggia Valley. At first progress was slow because of road conditions and intense artillery fire on forward elements, but steady advance was being made by the end of the day. The right column, consisting of a platoon of medium tanks, a platoon of infantry, and a squad of engineers, was opposed chiefly by artillery and small groups of infantry. The two columns on the left, however — one going down the valley and one west thereof — struck much harder going. The center force, with the same composition as the right column, reached the valley town of Savigno, 5 miles north of Tole, took the town by 1830, and attained a point

on the west side of the Samoggia nearly 4 miles beyond by dark. Three counter-attacks during the night, which knocked out five tanks with armor-piercing shells and bazooka fire, forced a withdrawal of 2 miles. The westernmost column of the three, composed of a company of medium tanks and a company of infantry, pushed north 2 miles from Tole and then swung west. Although delayed by demolitions and mines the force continued northwest until stopped 1,000 yards east of Monte Ombrara, a hilltop road junction and strongpoint  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles west and a little south of Savigno. The garrison there, some 80 men supported by a few tanks and antitank weapons, beat off repeated efforts to dislodge them during the night.

Substantial progress had been made during the day; the 1st Armored Division thrust down the left was bearing the brunt of enemy efforts to strike into the flank of the 10th Mountain Division spearhead probing for the Po Valley. On the 18th the chief source of opposition had been infantry and antitank weapons. Late in the day the Germans brought up the armor of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, and on the 19th tank fought tank as the enemy made desperate efforts to stop or slow the break-through, which was assuming by then disastrous proportions.

At 0630, 19 April, the 1st Armored Division attacked in five columns of armor and infantry. Combat Command B, freshly committed on the new front, was using two columns on the left of Combat Command A, which concentrated nearer the Samoggia. These two columns found strong resistance and made little progress. The left column, replacing Combat Command A elements just east of Monte Ombrara, was unable to take the stronghold in the face of heavy antitank and small-arms fire. The right column reached a small village about 1,000 yards due west of Savigno. On the division right Combat Command A continued its three-column push on a narrower front astride the Samoggia Valley. Heavy resistance from enemy tanks and self-propelled artillery fell chiefly on the central column, which regained only about one-half the ground lost in the German counterattack of the night before. While it reached a point in the valley nearly 3 miles north of Savigno, the flanking columns made much smaller gains to attain positions about 2 miles to the rear and flanks of the leading elements in the center.

On the 20th stubborn resistance was encountered all day. A surprise attack against Monte Ombrara in the morning made no headway, but the point finally fell to infantry of Combat Command B in the evening. The armor of the combat command fought forward to the vicinity of Castello, which was found to be held by the enemy. At 1300 the 13th Tank Battalion, the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion, and Company C, 16th Armored Engineer Battalion, were added to Combat Command A, still moving in three columns down the valley. Advances were continued while forces were regrouped during the afternoon. The 81st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron relieved and passed through the central column at 1615. At 1900

a coordinated attack was launched by the 6th and 14th Armored Infantry Battalions and the 13th Tank Battalion. Three tanks were lost to self-propelled gunfire, but at 0330, 21 April, the 13th Tank Battalion had reached Crespellano. This put the leading elements of the 1st Armored Division out into the Po plain, due south of Ponte Samoggia.

At dark on the 20th IV Corps had three divisions coming out of the hills and onto the plain, the 85th Division just west of Bologna, the 10th Mountain Division about Ponte Samoggia, and the 1st Armored Division south thereof. The advance so far had been speedy for hill fighting; ahead lay possibilities of even swifter maneuver. Through the gap which had been opened up by the 10th Mountain Division and kept open by the units on its flanks, our troops might dash to the Po. The fact that II Corps had smashed through the defenses south of Bologna meant that the pursuit of the retreating enemy would take place on a large scale with all the major forces of Fifth Army involved in the coordinated but flexible push.

