

N ~~8723-D~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL - MODIFIED HANDLING AUTHORIZED~~

DECLASSIFIED

FIFTH ARMY HISTORY

DECLASSIFIED

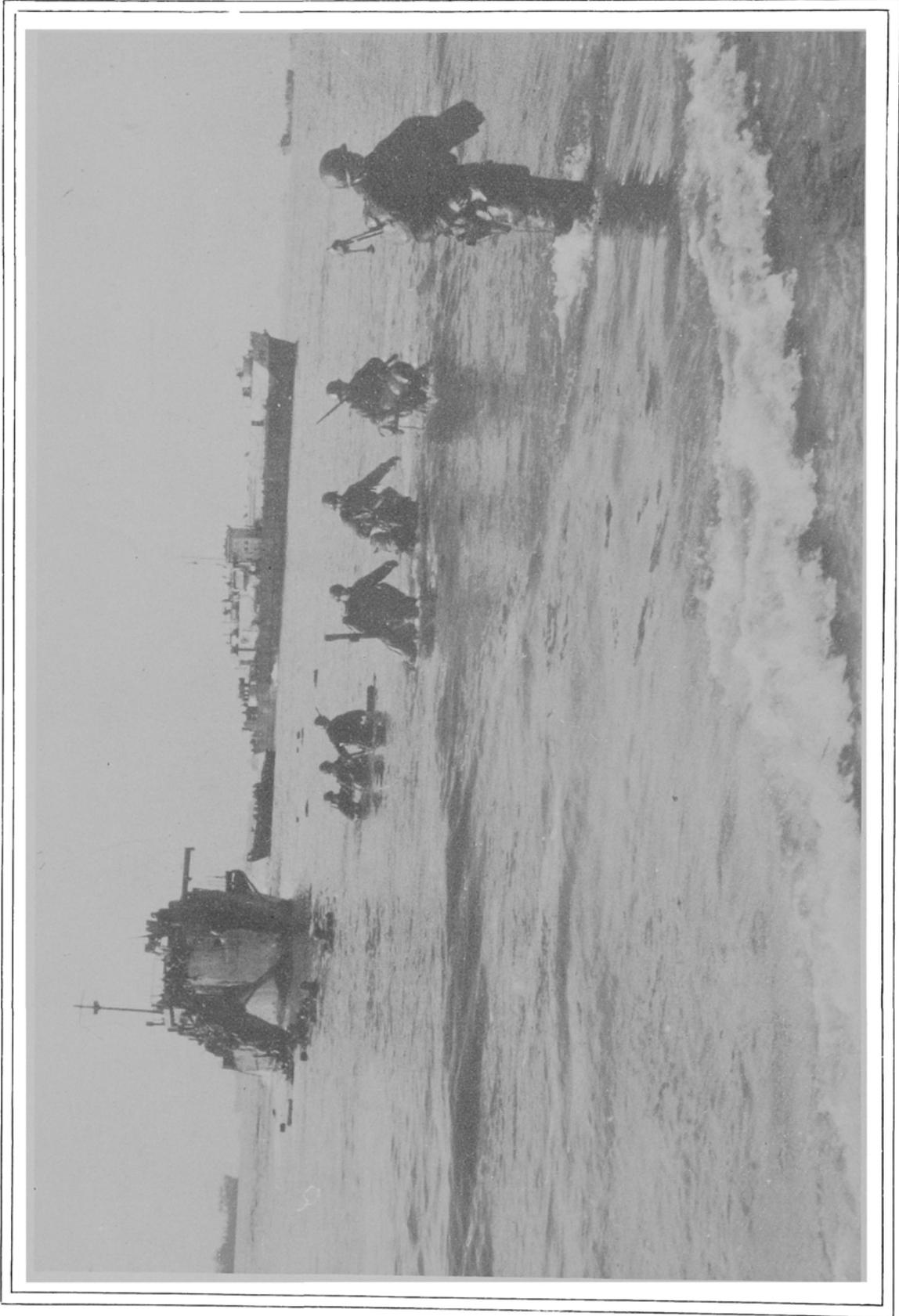
~~CONFIDENTIAL - MODIFIED HANDLING AUTHORIZED~~

DECLASSIFIED

FIFTH ARMY HISTORY

16 JANUARY 1944 - 31 MARCH 1944

DECLASSIFIED



D Day at Anzio—soldiers of the 3d Division wade ashore from an LCI in an unopposed landing.

DECLASSIFIED

FIFTH ARMY HISTORY



PART IV

Classification changed to
CONFIDENTIAL - MODIFIED HANDLING AUTHORIZED

Authority

By DA Civ 310-20
may 55.

Cassino and Anzio

REGRADED UNCLASSIFIED
BY AUTHORITY OF AR 380-6 W/C 1,2
BY [Signature] 10 Oct 62
ON 16 Mar 70

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED

Lieutenant General MARK W. CLARK

* * * *commanding*

CONTENTS

* * * * *

	<i>page</i>
CHAPTER I. <i>BACKGROUND OF THE ATTACK</i>	I
A. The Opposing Forces	2
1. Enemy Troops and Positions	2
2. Allied Troops and Positions	4
B. Terrain and Enemy Defenses	5
1. Terrain of the Garigliano-Rapido Area	5
2. The Gustav Line	7
CHAPTER II. <i>PLANS FOR THE DRIVE</i>	9
A. Allied Strategy in Italy	9
B. Plans for Operation Shingle (Anzio)	10
1. Amphibious Operations in Fifth Army Strategy	10
2. Early Planning and Postponement	12
3. The New Decision to Launch Shingle	15
4. Development of the Second Shingle Plan	15
5. The Cover Plan	18
6. The G-4 Plan	19
7. Air and Naval Plans	20
8. Final Assault Plan	21
C. Fifth Army Plans to Break the Gustav Line	24
CHAPTER III. <i>ATTACK ACROSS THE GARIGLIANO</i>	27
A. Plans for Operation Panther	27
B. Preparation for the Attack	29
C. Establishing the Bridgehead, 17-20 January	30
1. Attack of the 5 Division	30

	<i>page</i>
2. Attack of the 56 Division	31
3. Attempt of the 46 Division to Cross the Garigliano	32
4. Air Support for 10 Corps	33
D. Consolidating the Bridgehead, 21 January-19 February	34
1. Enemy Reinforcements and Counterattacks	34
2. Resumption of the Offensive by 10 Corps	35
E. Summary of 10 Corps Action	37
CHAPTER IV. <i>ATTACKS ACROSS THE RAPIDO</i>	39
A. The Battle of Sant'Angelo, 21-22 January	39
1. II Corps Plan of Attack	40
2. Plans of the 36th Division	41
3. Regimental Plans to Capture Sant'Angelo	42
4. The First Effort	44
5. The Second Effort	45
6. Summary of the Battle of Sant'Angelo	47
B. Breaching the North Flank of the Gustav Line, 21-31 January	48
1. The Battle of Mount Santa Croce	48
2. The Plan to Envelop Cassino from the North	49
3. The 34th Division Crosses the Rapido	51
4. Capture of Hills 56 and 213	53
5. The Belvedere Bridgehead	55
6. Artillery and Air Support	56
C. Summary of the Rapido Operation	57
CHAPTER V. <i>THE ANZIO BEACHHEAD</i>	59
A. Final Preparations for Operation Shingle	59
1. Troop Movements and Training	59
2. Preliminary Air Program	60
3. Mounting the Operation	61
B. Seizing the Beachhead, 22-24 January	62
1. The Landing	62
2. Air Support on D Day	64
3. At the Beaches	64
4. Terrain of the Beachhead Area	65
5. Advance to the Beachhead Line	67

	<i>page</i>
C. Preparing to Expand the Beachhead, 25-29 January	68
1. The 3d Division Advance on Cisterna	69
2. The 1 Division Seizes the Factory	70
3. Building up the Beachhead	71
4. Situation on the Eve of the Attack	72
D. Attack for Cisterna and Campoleone, 30 January-1 February . . .	73
1. Plan of Attack	73
2. The 3d Division Attack for Cisterna: The Loss of the Rangers.	74
3. Attack up the Albano Road	78
4. Attack for Campoleone	80
5. Summary	82
E. VI Corps Assumes the Defensive	83
F. Summary of Action, 22 January-3 February	85

CHAPTER VI. *THE FEBRUARY DRIVE ON CASSINO* 87

A. The Enemy and the Terrain	87
B. The 34th Division Drive on Cassino, 1-14 February	88
1. Plan of Maneuver	88
2. The Action of 1-3 February	89
3. The Action of 4-7 February	92
4. Shifts and Plans	93
5. The Action of 8-10 February	94
6. The Final Effort by II Corps	95
7. Summary of the Action	96
C. The New Zealand Corps in the Battle of Cassino, 15-29 February . .	97
1. Plans for the Employment of the New Zealand Corps . .	97
2. The Action	98
D. Summary of the February Drive on Cassino	100

CHAPTER VII. *THE FIRST COUNTERATTACK AT ANZIO* . . 101

A. The Battle of the Campoleone Salient, 3-5 February	101
1. Enemy Intentions and Our Positions	101
2. The Enemy Attacks	103
3. The 1 Division Withdraws	104
B. VI Corps Plan of Defense	105
1. The Outline Plan	105
2. Preparation of Defenses	106

	<i>page</i>
C. Interlude Between Attacks, 5-7 February	108
1. The Enemy Tests the 3d Division Line	108
2. The Build-up of Enemy Artillery	109
3. Enemy Air Attacks	110
D. The Battle for the Factory, 7-12 February	111
1. Tactical Importance of the Factory Area	112
2. The Enemy Plan of Attack	112
3. First Phase of the Attack	113
4. The Enemy Takes the Factory	116
5. The Loss of Carroceto	119
6. The 1st Special Service Force Raids Sessano, 9-10 February.	120
7. The 45th Division Attempts to Retake the Factory . . .	120
8. Results of the Enemy's First Drive	123
 CHAPTER VIII. <i>HOLDING THE BEACHHEAD</i>	 125
A. Before the Attack	125
1. VI Corps Prepares for the Attack	125
2. Enemy Build-up	127
3. Enemy Plan of Attack	128
B. The All-out Drive to Destroy the Beachhead, 16-19 February	129
1. The First Day	129
2. The Second Day	133
3. Shifts and a Counterattack	135
4. The Day of Crisis	136
5. The Tide Turns	139
6. VI Corps Counterattacks	140
7. The Battle Is Won	142
8. Reasons for the Enemy Failure	143
9. The Losses	145
C. The Final Enemy Drive, 20 February-4 March	146
1. VI Corps Improves its Defenses	146
2. A Period of Local Attacks	148
3. The Enemy Prepares to Attack	150
4. Action on the British Front on 28 February	151
5. The Attack Against the 3d Division on 29 February . . .	151
6. Continuation of the Attack	154
D. The Enemy Attack Fails	156

	<i>page</i>
CHAPTER IX. <i>STALEMATE AT ANZIO</i>	159
A. Stabilization of the Beachhead	159
B. Special Features of the Anzio Operation.	161
1. Development of the Beachhead Defenses	161
2. Problems of Replacements and Morale	163
3. Medical Problems	164
4. Artillery Action	167
5. Supplying the Beachhead	168
6. Antiaircraft Protection	171
 CHAPTER X. <i>STALEMATE AT CASSINO</i>	 175
A. The Lull in the Battle of Cassino	175
B. Plans for the Assault of 15 March	176
C. Second New Zealand Attack on Cassino, 15-23 March	178
1. Air and Artillery Preparation	178
2. The Action	180
3. Summary	183
D. Regrouping of the Allied Armies	183
 CHAPTER XI. <i>THE CASSINO-ANZIO OPERATION</i>	 187
A. Gains of the Cassino-Anzio Campaign	187
B. The Action of Supporting Arms	188
C. Eighth Army Activities	190

Annexes

	<i>page</i>
* * * * *	
Number One. <i>Operations Instructions of 15th Army Group</i>	191
A. Operations Instruction No. 32, 2 January 1944.	193
B. Operations Instruction No. 34, 12 January 1944	195
C. Operations Instruction No. 37 (ACMF), 2 February 1944	199
D. Operations Instruction No. 42 (ACMF), 11 February 1944.	201
 Number Two. <i>Orders and Instructions of Fifth Army</i>	 203
A. Operations Instruction No. 13, 10 January 1944	205
B. Field Order No. 5, 12 January 1944	207

	<i>page</i>
C. Operations Instruction No. 14, 5 February 1944	209
D. Operations Instruction No. 15, 7 February 1944	211
E. Operations Instruction No. 16, 24 February 1944	212
Number Three. <i>Statistics</i>	215
A. Casualties, U. S. Forces, 16 January-31 March 1944	217
B. Total Casualties and Strength	220
C. Major Ordnance Losses, 20 January-29 March 1944	221
D. Artillery Expenditures, 20 January-30 March 1944	224
E. Prisoners of War, 16 January-31 March 1944	225
F. Quartermaster Supply, January-March 1944	230
G. Almanac, 16 January-31 March 1944	232
Number Four. <i>Fifth Army Staff</i>	235
Number Five. <i>Troop List of Fifth Army</i> , 14 February 1944	239

Maps * * * * *

	<i>opposite page</i>
1. Fifth Army Front, 15 January 1944	8
2. Allied Strategy in Italy, January 1944	26
3. 10 Corps Attack across the Garigliano, 17 January-8 February 1944.	38
4. Crossing the Rapido, 20-22 January 1944	48
— 5. The Attack North of Cassino, 21-31 January 1944	58
6. The Anzio Landing and the Initial Expansion of the Beachhead, 22-28 January 1944	72
7. The Expansion of the Anzio Beachhead, 30 January-1 February 1944.	82
8. The Battle of Cassino, 1-3 February 1944	90
9. The Battle of Cassino, 4-12 February 1944	100
10. Attack on the Campoleone Salient, 3-5 February 1944	104
11. VI Corps Plan for Organization of the Beachhead Defenses, 5 Fe- bruary 1944	106
12. The Enemy Captures the Factory and Carroceto, 8-10 February 1944.	124
13. First Day of the Enemy's All-Out Drive, 16 February 1944	132
14. Second Day of the Enemy's All-Out Drive, 17 February 1944	136
15. Third Day of the Enemy's All-Out Drive, 18 February 1944	140

opposite page

16. The Final Enemy Drive to Destroy the Beachhead, 28 February-3 March 1944 158

17. The New Zealand Corps at Cassino, 15-21 March 1944 182

18A. Disposition of Allied and Enemy Forces on the Southern Front, 31 March 1944 190

18B. Disposition of Allied and Enemy Forces at the Beachhead, 31 March 1944 190

Photographs * * * * *

opposite page

D Day at Anzio—Soldiers of the 3d Division wade ashore from an LCI in an unopposed landing *Frontispiece*

Snow-capped Mount Cairo looms high above the hills where the 34th Division fought in February 6

An Italian pack train struggles through the snow on the extreme north flank of Fifth Army 7

A ferry on the lower Garigliano, 20 January 1944. Bridges were knocked out as soon as built 31

An 81-mm mortar of the 141st Infantry fires at the Germans across the Rapido River 42

Soldiers move up toward the Rapido with smoke pots, to be used in screening the crossings 43

Wounded men of the 142nd Infantry, from the Castellone battlefield, cross the Rapido Valley 54

French antiaircraft artillery guarding the FEC supply route to the Belvedere sector 55

D Day at Anzio—the invasion fleet sends ashore its Dukws and trucks on X-Ray Beach 64

Men of the 540th Engineers lay matting for a temporary road on the beach near Nettuno 65

Machine-gun position of the 504th Parachute Infantry, built in a farm house near Cisterna 86

The Cassino “headland,” looking west across the Rapido Valley to Cassino and Monastery Hill 87

The bombing of the Abbey, 15 February. Castle Hill in the foreground . 98

A camouflaged 155-mm gun (36th Field Artillery) has just fired on the Abbey, 15 February 1944 99

	<i>opposite page</i>
Enemy bombs score a hit on an ammunition convoy on the main street of Nettuno, 7 February 1944	110
After an enemy air raid: two landing craft burn in the sea off Anzio, 30 January 1944	111
German prisoners pass our infantry on a small road near Carroceto, 19 February 1944	142
LST's disgorge vehicles and men in Anzio harbor, later pulverized by shelling and bombing	143
German prisoners, taken in March at the Anzio beachhead, are evacuated to the rear	160
Lineman of the Signal Corps straighten out their wires at an Anzio road junction	161
Two wire repairmen of the 3d Infantry Division restore the lines leading toward Cisterna	164
The wounded are placed aboard ship at Anzio, to be transported to hospitals at Naples	165
This quadruple-mounted gun waits for its fifth German victim	172
The 90-mm gun (antiaircraft) was also used for ground fire at the Anzio beachhead	173
Cassino as it appeared before our attack, looking toward Castle Hill	178
Dust and smoke eddy upward from the ruins of Cassino during the bombing, 15 March 1944	179
A 57-mm antitank gun in position just north of Cassino. In the background, Mount Trocchio	186
Its superstructure in ruins, the Abbey of Montecassino still commands every approach	187
A Long Tom of the 36th Field Artillery fires a mission at night on the Cassino front	188
Fifth Army artillery was greatly strengthened by the arrival of the 240-mm howitzers	189

CHAPTER I * * * * *

Background of the Attack

THE Italian campaign had been in progress for slightly more than four months when Fifth Army reached the Gustav Line about 15 January 1944. During the preceding period Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark's forces had driven the Germans from the beaches of the Gulf of Salerno, past Naples, across the Volturno River, and through the Winter Line barrier of mountains. By the middle of January the enemy had withdrawn into the formidable Gustav Line behind the Garigliano and Rapido rivers.

Throughout the advance of Fifth Army from 9 September 1943, when the American VI Corps and the British 10 Corps made their initial landings, the enemy fought a series of delaying actions. After his attempt to defeat the invasion failed, he withdrew up the Italian peninsula to the Volturno River. Naples fell to Fifth Army on 1 October; on the night of 12-13 October our victorious divisions began to cross the Volturno River. This barrier having been lost, the Germans continued their orderly withdrawal to the Winter Line. On 15 November Fifth Army came to a temporary halt before this line to rest its weary troops, to reorganize, and to build up supply levels.

The pursuit of the enemy from Salerno had been long and difficult. German ingenuity made the most of demolitions, minefields, and rearguard actions to impede our advance. At the same time the enemy was rushing work on the Winter and Gustav Lines, where he intended to make an all-out effort to hold Fifth Army. Fresh enemy units were appearing in the line, and reinforcements were coming up from reserves in north Italy. Fifth Army on the other hand had few reserves at its disposal. The 3d, 45th, and 34th Infantry Divisions had been in combat almost without relief since September. The 1st Armored and 36th Infantry Divisions were in reserve; the 82d Airborne Division was garrisoning Naples and preparing to leave the theater. Armor could be of little use until the infantry broke through to the Liri Valley. British troops

of 10 Corps included the 46 Infantry, 56 Infantry, and 7 Armoured Divisions and the 23 Armoured Brigade. These units had fought with little respite since 9 September; when the Garigliano River was reached, the 7 Armoured Division was withdrawn to be sent to England. The American II Corps, with the 3d Division, 36th Division, and the 1st Special Service Force under its command, took over the center of the line near Mignano. Other reliefs were carried out, and at the beginning of December the attack on the Winter Line was under way.

During the next six weeks our troops drove the enemy from strong positions in the most difficult type of mountain fighting. The Camino hills were cleared by 9 December; Mount Lungo and San Pietro were captured by 17 December; and on the north VI Corps had gained nearly three miles in its advance toward Sant'Elia and Atina. The French Expeditionary Corps (FEC) relieved VI Corps early in January and continued the drive on Sant'Elia, while II Corps went on to capture the hills to the south as far as Cervaro and Mount Trocchio. All of these victories occurred in the first fortnight of January and crushed the Winter Line. Ahead lay the Garigliano and Rapido rivers barring the way to the Liri Valley. There was to be no appreciable lull in the activities of Fifth Army. The assault on the Gustav Line followed almost at once.

A. THE OPPOSING FORCES

See Map No. 1

1. *Enemy Troops and Positions.* Field Marshal Albert Kesselring's High Command Southwest had an estimated 24 divisions in Italy in mid-January. The German Fourteenth Army under General Eberhard von Mackensen occupied north Italy above the line Grosseto-Ancona with 11½ divisions. Four of these divisions were forming and four were in defensive roles. The German Tenth Army, commanded by General Hans von Vietinghoff genannt Scheel, opposed the Allied advance up the peninsula with 2 corps totalling 13 divisions. On the Eighth Army front LXXVI Panzer (Armored) Corps held its defensive line with four divisions. From the coast inland were the 1st Parachute, 26th Panzer, 334th Grenadier (Infantry), and 305th Grenadier Divisions. The 90th Panzer Grenadier (Armored Infantry) Division was in reserve. On the Fifth Army front there were four divisions in the line held by XIV Panzer Corps, from the mouth of the Garigliano River north to the Apennines (1).

(1) For the major units in the divisions opposing Fifth Army at Cassino and Anzio, see Annex No. 3E.

The 94th Grenadier Division had one regiment guarding the coast near Gaeta, with the rest of the division spread out rather thinly on the lower Garigliano along a front more than 12 miles wide. The adjacent 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, reinforced by elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, held a front of more than eight miles on the upper Garigliano River to its confluence with the Liri River, and then along the Rapido River nearly to Highway 6 just south of Cassino. The 44th Grenadier Division, which had shifted south in December to relieve the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, extended north from Highway 6 for about four miles to the village of Cairo. This division, which had suffered heavy losses during the last phase of the Winter Line drive, was strengthened with the 2d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and the 2d Battalion, 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, both of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. Replacements from the 305th Marsch Battalion, originally intended for the 305th Grenadier Division on the Eighth Army front, had also been shunted to the 44th Grenadier Division. The 5th Mountain Division (reinforced) held along the front of the FEC for about 11 miles northeast from Cairo. This division, considerably weakened by the drive of the French during 12-15 January, had been reinforced by the 1st Battalion, 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiment; the 3d Independent Mountain Battalion; and possibly by at least part of the 1st Battalion, 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. For reserves XIV Panzer Corps could draw upon the 3d Panzer Grenadier, the Hermann Goering Panzer, and the 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions. A new division, the 4th Parachute, was being formed near Rome.

At the opening of the Fifth Army attack against the Gustav Line the enemy was still in the process of regrouping his forces. This regrouping had been going on during the closing phases of the Winter Line drive, which may be considered as having ended with the capture of Mount Trocchio on 15 January. The enemy had fallen back slowly; he had shifted units frantically to reinforce the sectors most seriously threatened by our advance. While many vicious counterattacks had delayed Fifth Army, they had also seriously impaired the combat efficiency of several enemy units. In the course of readjusting his order of battle the enemy moved the 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment from the Rome area to the left flank of the 5th Mountain Division facing the French; the 71st Grenadier Division came from Trieste to the 44th Grenadier Division sector in the center, arriving on 17 January; the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was moving to the right from the Eighth Army front to bolster the Garigliano River line. Our offensives on the southern front and at Anzio caught the enemy by surprise and considerably off balance because of the shifts then under way.

2. *Allied Troops and Positions.* When Fifth Army began its offensive against the Gustav Line, its forces were extended north for more than 35 miles from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Abruzzi National Park. The British 10 Corps, commanded by Lt. Gen. Sir Richard L. McCreery, was on the left; the American II Corps under Maj. Gen. Geoffrey T. Keyes held the center; and the FEC, commanded by General Alphonse Juin, was on the right. Along most of this front our troops were in position a short distance east of the Garigliano–Rapido river line. On their extreme right the French had crossed the Rapido near its source to establish outposts on Mount Santa Croce and L’Arena Hill. For the most part a narrow no-man’s land lay between our main lines of resistance and the rivers. Patrols from each of the opposing armies operated in this area and frequently crossed the rivers to probe the enemy’s positions, to capture prisoners for interrogation, or to create a nuisance by laying mines.

On 16 January the left of the Fifth Army line was held by 10 Corps from the coast near the mouth of the Garigliano River north to a short distance above the junction of the Liri and Gari rivers. On the 10 Corps left flank the Hicks Force, formed from elements of the 56 Division, had relieved the 169 Brigade (56 Division) on 9 January and defended a five-mile front. The 23 Armoured Brigade had taken over a part of the 46 Division sector on 5 January and held a four-mile front along the Garigliano River. The 46 Division on the right of 10 Corps defended a sector of about six miles north to the boundary with II Corps. The center of Fifth Army, along the Rapido River north to the vicinity of Sant’Elia, was the responsibility of II Corps. The 36th Division was on the left south of Highway 6; the 34th Division was on the right north of the highway. The 1st Special Service Force held a narrow sector on the Corps right flank until it went out of the line on 17 January. The FEC, which had relieved VI Corps on 3 January, guarded the north flank of the Army for 12 miles from Sant’Elia to the boundary with Eighth Army. On the left of this sector was the 3d Algerian Infantry Division (3^e Division d’Infanterie Algérienne); on the right was the 2d Moroccan Infantry Division (2^e Division d’Infanterie Marocaine). Accordingly, at the beginning of its operations against the Gustav Line Fifth Army had the equivalent of about seven divisions in position for the attack.

The Gustav Line and Anzio operations were destined to be carried out for the most part by troops already in the theater. Reinforcements received by Eighth Army permitted the shifting of the British 5 Infantry Division to 10 Corps on 6-9 January. This division assumed command over the south flank of 10 Corps, relieving the 169 Brigade and permitting the 56 Division to narrow its front. Very little of the 5 Division was committed until 17 January.

Until that time the Hicks Force, approximately equivalent to a battalion combat team, served as a screen on the lower Garigliano plain.

There were few reserves available for II Corps. A large portion of the 1st Armored Division, as well as the 3d and 45th Divisions, the 504th Parachute Infantry, and the Ranger Force, were to serve under VI Corps at Anzio. Combat Command B of the 1st Armored Division closed near Mignano on 21 January. The 88th Infantry Division landed in Italy early in February but was not yet ready for combat. Relieved from its long tour of guard duty in Algiers, the 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry, arrived on 15 March. The 339th Infantry Regiment, first element of the 85th Infantry Division to reach Italy, also came in on 15 March. Thus Fifth Army could expect neither substantial American reinforcements nor reserves to be available to support the attack on the Gustav Line.

The weakness of Fifth Army, largely the result of maintaining two fronts, was met by moving the 2 New Zealand, the 4 Indian, and the British 78 Infantry Divisions from the Eighth Army front early in February. These three divisions, with Combat Command B in reserve, were to form the New Zealand Corps. The FEC was strengthened by the 4th Moroccan Mountain Division (4^e Division de Montagne Marocaine), which arrived in Italy by way of Corsica and began to assemble at Caivano on 12 February. On the next day the French were further reinforced by a combat team of the 1st Italian Motorized Group (I. Raggruppamento Italiano Motorizzato), which took over a narrow sector in a defensive role; the rest of this group was used primarily on supply and guard duties.

B. *TERRAIN AND ENEMY DEFENSES*

See Map No. 1

1. *Terrain of the Garigliano-Rapido Area.* Rivers and mountain masses make the terrain of the Gustav Line one of the most favorable areas for defense and one of the most difficult for offense in all Italy. The Rapido, Gari, and Garigliano form a continuous curving line from Mount Santa Croce on the north to the Tyrrhenian Sea on the south. Rising near Mount Santa Croce, the Rapido River flows southwest for about ten miles, joins with Secco Creek, and then turns south toward Cassino. At the north edge of Cassino the Rapido turns to the east and then south to cross Highway 6. About four miles south of the highway Cesa Martino Creek flows into the Rapido from the

northeast to form the Gari River. This stream meanders to the southeast for about two and one-half miles to flow into the Liri River. The combined rivers make up the Garigliano, which continues south and southwest more than 15 miles to the sea.

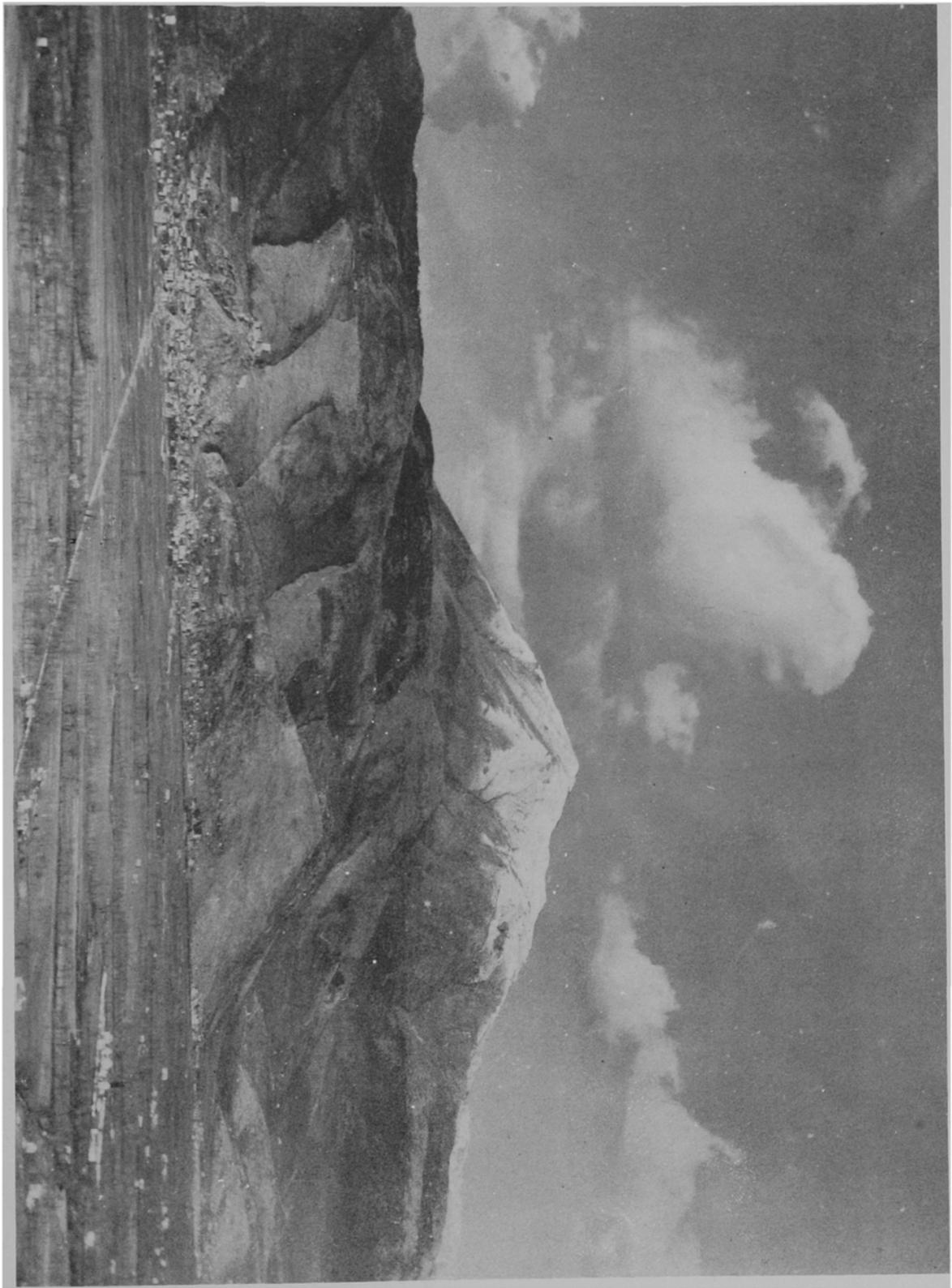
The Rapido flows swiftly through mountains to Sant'Elia where it crosses the upper valley and skirts the Cassino headland. This valley varies in width from two to three miles and is cut by numerous streams and canals. South of Highway 6 Mount Trocchio is the largest interruption in the valley floor, which broadens out to the west into the Liri Valley. Smaller hills accentuate the rolling terrain, spotted with brush and small trees. The valley of the Garigliano is about two miles wide between Sant'Ambrogio on the west side of the river and the Camino hills on the east, then practically disappears as the river flows past a shoulder of the mountain mass. Here the lower Garigliano plain begins; fanning out quickly, this plain is some 12 miles wide at the mouth of the river from Mount Scauri on the west side to the Mount Mas-sico ridge on the east.

The Liri Valley at its eastern end lies between Sant'Ambrogio and Cassino. The Liri River itself marks the south side of the valley, which extends north some seven miles. Just west of the Rapido and Gari rivers this valley is rolling in character with numerous patches of brush and timber. At Sant'Angelo in Teodice (Sant'Angelo) there are bluffs some 40 to 50 feet above the west bank of the Rapido. South of the Liri River, from east to west, are the towns of Sant'Ambrogio, Sant'Apollinare, and San Giorgio. North of the Liri is Pignataro, with Piedimonte, Aquino, and Pontecorvo lying to the north and northwest.

Mountain masses flank the Liri Valley on both north and south. Mount Juga (650 meters), Mount Faito (825 meters), Mount Majo (940 meters), and other peaks south of the Liri are both rough and steep. From positions in these mountains the enemy could defend not only the Garigliano River but also the south part of the Liri Valley. Mount Cairo, 1669 meters in height, dominates the mountains on the north flank of the valley. Lesser peaks extend southeast to form the Cassino headland, which terminates in Monastery Hill (516 meters). To the northeast of Mount Cairo are such peaks as Abate Hill (915 meters), Belvedere Hill (721 meters), Mount Cifalco (947 meters), Mount Marrone (1069 meters), and Mount Santa Croce (1184 meters).

The two principal routes leading into the area of the Gustav Line are Highway 7 along the coast and Highway 6 on the north side of the Liri Valley. A north-south road from Atina to Highway 7 follows the Secco and Rapido streams, passes through Cassino, and then follows along the west side of the

Snow-capped Mount Caire looms high above the hills where the 34th Division fought in February.





An Italian pack train struggles through the snow on the extreme north flank of Fifth Army.

Rapido and Garigliano rivers. All of this road south of Cassino was under German control, although subject to our artillery fire. North of Cassino the road was under enemy observation and artillery fire; most of it, from Atina to the Rapido, ran through enemy territory.

2. *The Gustav Line.* Throughout the Winter Line battle the enemy had been working feverishly on his positions behind the Rapido and Garigliano rivers. The Todt Organization, supplemented by civilians and prisoners of war pressed into service, constructed a belt of defenses in depth which extended from Mount Marrone southwest to Belvedere Hill, then south to Cassino, Sant'Angelo, Sant'Ambrogio, and west of the Garigliano to Mount Scauri.

There were in general fewer and less carefully prepared defensive works at each end of the line than in the center. On the north the mountains were themselves tremendous obstacles. Here the enemy followed his customary practice of siting many mortars and machine guns on the reverse slopes, while automatic weapons in well camouflaged emplacements covered the forward slopes. Minefields blocked natural avenues of approach and every trail was swept by machine guns. The strongest portion of the line was known to extend from the village of Cairo south to Sant'Ambrogio. Above Cassino the water of the Rapido had been diverted onto flat ground east of the river, making the area too soft for armor. The approaches to the river were extensively mined. Lavish use was made of the box mine, which contains almost no metal and is hard to detect. Bands of wire were stretched along the west bank, and more minefields were laid between the river and the mountains. Very carefully constructed emplacements were blasted and dug into the steep, barren slopes west of the river. Large enough to contain living quarters for troops, these concrete and steel fortifications could withstand direct hits by artillery shells. Concealed communication trenches led to machine-gun emplacements. Fields of fire were cleared and so interlocked as to command all approaches from the east. Steep slopes, seamed with deep ravines, were numerous in the mountains north and northwest of Cassino. This terrain was thoroughly organized with wire, felled trees, concrete bunkers, and steel-turreted machine-gun emplacements. Observation posts on the mountains and in the Abbey of Montecassino perched on Monastery Hill gave the enemy a perfect view of the approaches to the Rapido.

Cassino was more strongly fortified than any other city thus far encountered by Fifth Army in Italy. Its stone buildings and narrow streets were admirably suited for defense. Snipers and troops with automatic weapons were garrisoned in strategically located buildings. Machine-gun emplacements, reinforced with concrete and steel and railroad ties, were concealed within the buildings. Self-

propelled guns and tanks guarded every approach to the town. A series of hills and ridges provided close-in defenses behind the town. On the slopes of these hills were numerous machine-gun emplacements blasted out of the rock. The north-south roads from Cairo and Sant'Elia and Highway 6 from the southeast were mined and covered by artillery, mortar, and Nebelwerfer fire. The muddy plains to the east were thick with mines and wire.

Though lacking the advantages of Cassino, the Rapido line south to the Liri River was also thoroughly organized. Mines and wire guarded the approaches from the east. Other minefields and more wire lay west of the river. Pillboxes and machine-gun emplacements in stone buildings covered the fortifications. Artillery and Nebelwerfers farther up the valley and defiladed in high ground on either side could cover nearly every foot of the river. South of the Liri River the Gustav Line was less strongly fortified than in the Rapido sector. Here too there were extensive minefields and wire barriers, steel pillboxes, and concrete bunkers, but the enemy depended upon the mountains, which he considered to be practically impassable, to turn the scale against the Allied troops. Again the reverse slopes were strongly organized, with automatic weapons on forward slopes to cover possible approaches. The enemy, quick to shift reserves where most needed, could operate behind a mask of hills; nearly every daylight move by Allied forces toward the Garigliano could be observed by the enemy west of the river. The area of the Gustav Line had long provided the Italian General Staff with ideal terrain for field exercises. In these problems forces representing the enemy had never been able to penetrate the defense. The Italians considered the area as an impregnable obstacle to any army attempting to capture Rome from the south. The Germans were determined to prove the validity of that assumption.

