

CHAPTER V * * * * *

The Drive to the Winter Line

BEFORE VI and 10 Corps had completed the occupation of territory considered adequate to secure the Volturno bridgehead, General Clark issued new orders for future operations. These orders, outlined in Fifth Army Operations Instruction No. 8 of 20 October, changed the phase lines next expected to be reached. The first phase line originally ran from Isernia through Venafro and Sessa to the Tyrrhenian Sea, while the second line stretched southwest from Terni to Civitavecchia on the sea above Rome. Fifth Army was now ordered to advance to a line running from Isernia through Mount Passero to the Garigliano River west of Mignano and then down the river to the sea. When this phase of operations was completed, Fifth Army was to drive on without delay to a line extending southwest from Opi to Fondi. (*See Map No. 3.*)

There was hardly a pause in the fighting by either VI or 10 Corps after they secured their bridgeheads across the Volturno. The 34th Division continued its thrust up the right side of the Volturno, while the 3d Division drove down out of the hills and plunged on across the valley toward the Mignano Gap. The 56 Division on the right flank of 10 Corps kept up pressure on the slowly retreating enemy and prepared to advance on Mount Santa Croce above Roccamonfina. The 46 Division and the 7 Armoured Division exchanged zones along the coast, but kept driving against the enemy rear guards.

A. 10 CORPS DRIVE TO THE GARIGLIANO

26 OCTOBER - 4 NOVEMBER

1. *Plans and Terrain.* (*See Map No. 6.*) The next immediate task of 10 Corps was the capture of Mount Santa Croce behind Roccamonfina, Mount Masico south of Sessa, and the steep ridges running southwest to the sea. This

advance was to be in preparation for an attack on the Mount Camino-Mount la Difensa-Mount Maggiore hill mass to the northwest. These five features are high points below the Mignano Gap in the chain of mountains that divides the valleys of the Volturno and Garigliano rivers. The problem that faced 10 Corps was not an easy one. In the first place Mount Santa Croce and Mount Massico, together with the precipitous ridges that end with Mount Crestagallo on the coast, completely dominate the lower ground to the south and east over which 10 Corps had to advance. Mount Santa Croce, towering above Roccamonfina, rises 1005 meters above sea level, while Mount Massico is 812 meters high and Mount Crestagallo is 437 meters above Mondragone. In the second place the roads on the axis of the advance were few, mostly in poor condition, and their bridges were numerous and easily demolished. One rock road branches off Highway 6 below Calvi Risorta, runs across the valley to Teano, and then winds through the mountains to join the Sessa-Mignano road below Roccamonfina. Highway 7, a hard-surfaced road, which forms a junction with Highway 6 northwest of Capua, runs along the plain below Sparanise and Francolise, gradually rises to pass through the mountain chain approximately 200 meters above sea level, and then descends below Sessa to the flat valley of the Garigliano River. A third road, with a gravel surface, leads northwest from Canello ed Arnone across the plain to Mondragone on the coast, skirts the end of the mountain chain near the sea, and then turns northeast through Carano to Sessa. It was therefore necessary to secure the Sessa road pass between Mount Santa Croce and Mount Massico for supply purposes.

The terrain in the center of the 10 Corps zone was not suitable for the employment of tanks. General McCreery accordingly issued Operations Instruction No. 11 on 24 October, directing the 7 Armoured and 46 Divisions to exchange areas along the coast. Operation Instruction No. 12 was also issued on 24 October designating the attack on Mount Massico and Mount Santa Croce as Operation Thruster. On 26 October Operation Instruction No. 13 outlined the 10 Corps plan of attack and set the date for the advance as 31 October, the day determined for the continuation of the VI Corps drive toward the upper Volturno and the Mignano Gap. The 56 Division, using the Teano-Roccamonfina road as the axis of its advance, was to make the main attack between that route and the road south of Teano which winds through the terraced hills to Highway 7 at Cascano. The 46 Division was to drive up Highway 7 through the Cascano defile and take the road junction below Sessa. The 7 Armoured Division's primary mission was to protect the left flank. If the two infantry divisions could penetrate the mountain chain and plunge into the valley of the Garigliano, any enemy troops left on the coastal plain before the 7 Armoured

Division would be in danger of being cut off as they attempted to withdraw through Mondragone.

During the first phase of the attack the 56 Division was to advance west through the Teano area to a line running southwest from Hill 507 west of Teano to the ridges above San Giuliano. The 46 Division was to move up Highway 7 in close contact with the 56 Division, while the 7 Armoured Division was to gain ground preparatory to opening the coast road through Mondragone. During the second phase the 56 Division was to continue on to a line running southwest through Hills 532 and 576 southeast and south of Torano. The 46 Division was to keep abreast by taking Hill 291 northwest of San Giuliano, another hill of the same height west of San Giuliano, and the village of Ventaroli south of Highway 7. The 56 Division was then to seize the line running from Mount Mattone southwest to Hill 202, while the 46 Division was to advance on the left to Mount Vallerovina and Hill 542 southeast of Sessa. The 7 Armoured Division, in cooperation with the Royal Navy, was to exert maximum pressure on the extreme left and simulate a dangerous threat to the coastal route through Mondragone. The successful completion of these drives, together with the attack of the 3d Division toward the Mignano Gap, would threaten the enemy on Mount Santa Croce and Mount Massico with encirclement and force his withdrawal.

Meanwhile all divisions were ordered to work their way forward in order to push in enemy outposts, to obtain all possible information about his dispositions, and to secure suitable positions from which to start the main attack. The Germans were believed to be holding strong defensive positions, named by them the Barbara Line. The interchange of the 7 Armoured and 46 Divisions was completed early on the morning of 28 October, and elements of the 7 Armoured Division had the day before secured a bridgehead across the Regia Agnena Nuova Canal. The 56 Division was regrouping in the Rocchetta e Croce-Francolise area. Contact with the enemy was maintained along the entire front.

2. *The Action.* On 28 October the 56 Division had the 201 Guards Brigade in line on the right and the 168 Brigade on the left. The 167 and 169 Brigades were in divisional reserve. The 46 Division had the 139 Brigade forward, while the 128 and 138 Brigades were in reserve. The 7 Armoured Division had the 1 Rifle Brigade and the 11 Hussars over the Regia Agnena Nuova Canal. The 131 Brigade had crossed the Volturno at Capua and was in the Grazzanise area. The 5 Royal Tanks and the City of London Yeomanry were near Villa Liturno.

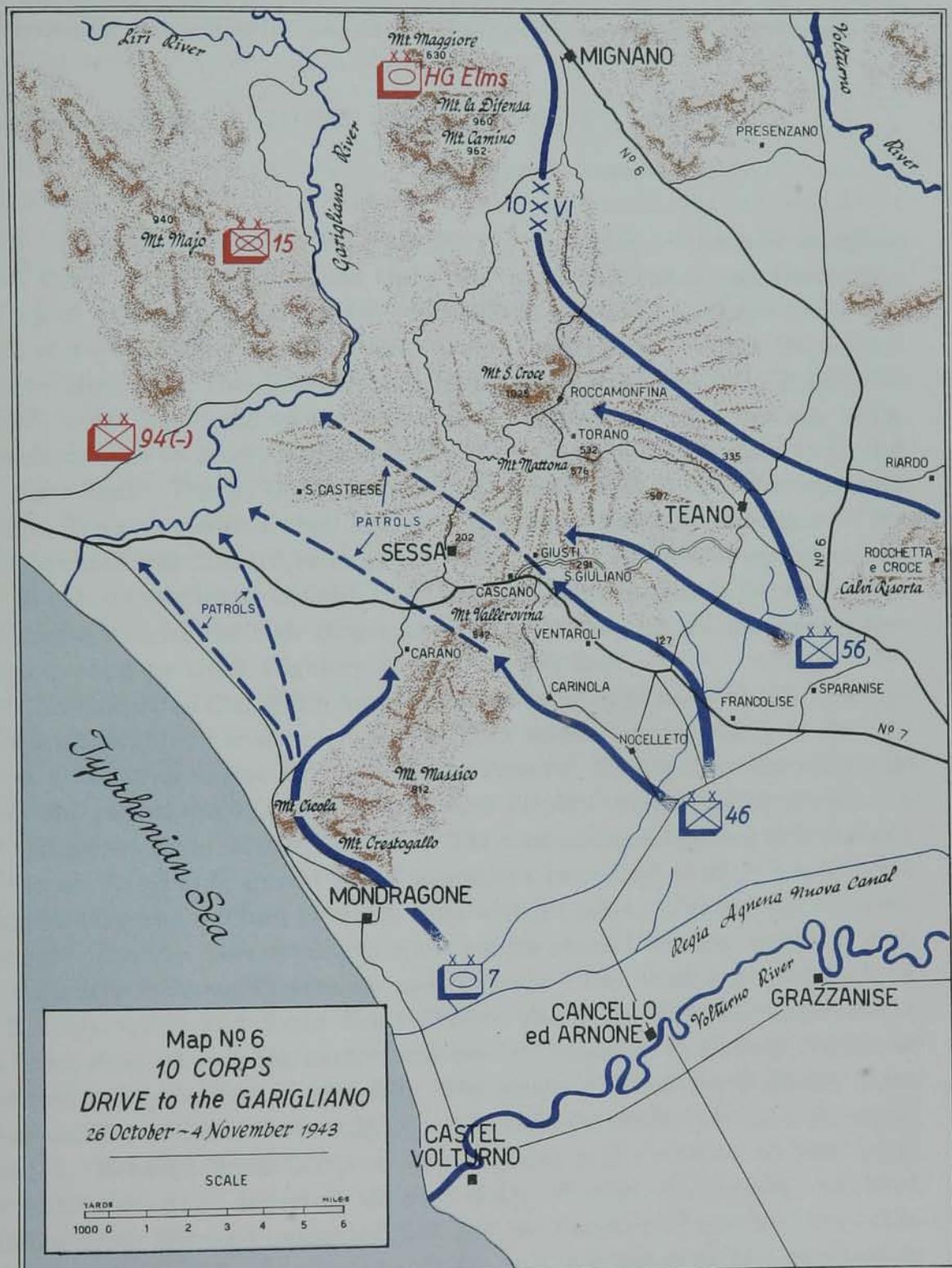
On 29 October it became apparent that the enemy was thinning out along the 10 Corps front. Advances of the 56 Division brought it within a mile of Teano, while the 46 Division established itself at Francolise, a weather-beaten village perched around the ruins of a castle on a hill southwest of Sparanise. Patrols

of the 7 Armoured Division found that the enemy was withdrawing in the coastal reaches. In view of this withdrawal of the German rear guards, 10 Corps pushed forward on 30 October. Although the co-ordinated attack of VI and 10 Corps was scheduled to begin on 31 October, it really began on the 10 Corps front one day early. It might be more accurate to say that 10 Corps never ceased advancing and attacking during this period.

On 30 October the 56 Division, with the 168 Brigade on the right and the 167 Brigade on the left, made local gains in the Teano area. The fresh troops of the 168 Brigade took Hill 333 northwest of Teano with considerable dash against determined enemy resistance. This advance cut the road leading into Teano from the northeast. The Teano railway station was then taken after a stiff fight. On the left the 167 Brigade met slight opposition in taking two small clusters of buildings a mile east of San Giuliano. The result was a partial encirclement of the town, and the enemy continued his retreat. In the center the 46 Division, with the 139 Brigade on the right and the 128 Brigade on the left, made good progress by occupying Nocelleto. The 139 Brigade then took Hill 127 and the road junction to the left, opening up the roads to the south. The 7 Armoured Division was meeting little opposition on the left, but was unable to exploit the situation. The 131 Brigade had not had time to complete its forward concentration, while the 22 Armoured Brigade was bogged down in low ground made unsuitable for movement by the recent rains.

On 31 October the 131 Brigade captured the badly damaged town of Mondragone and the dominating hill above it. On 1 November the 168 Brigade, still going strongly, occupied Roccamonfina, and the 139 Brigade took Giusti. The 7 Armoured Division drove the enemy from Mount Cicola, which completely freed the coastal route through Mondragone of enemy observation from the end of the mountain chain. The division then passed a tank battalion through and directed it northeast against Carano on the road to Sessa. The enemy gradually fell back, and the 56 Division continued on through the hills on the right. On 2 November patrols of the 7 Armoured and 46 Divisions reached the Garigliano River. The enemy was cleared from the low ground on the south side of the river except for some posts in a loop northwest of San Castrese. The Germans then began a series of demolitions along the sea north of the Garigliano, obviously fearing a seaborne landing on their flank and rear.

Operation Thruster was over and the battle for the Barbara Line was successfully concluded. Originally the line had been thought to be a belt of strongly defended positions from which the enemy would attempt to halt the advance of 10 Corps. Actually the struggle for it consisted of no more than the laborious wrinking out of small but determined enemy machine-gun posts and the over-



Map No 6
 10 CORPS
 DRIVE to the GARIGLIANO
 26 October ~ 4 November 1943
 SCALE
 YARDS 1000 0 1 2 3 4 5 6
 MILES

coming of delays caused by numerous demolitions. 10 Corps was later to learn that the enemy's main positions were farther back on the way to Rome, but it was now ready to make its assault on Mount Camino to help open that route.

B. *THE THIRD VOLTURNO CROSSING OF VI CORPS*

26 OCTOBER 4 NOVEMBER

1. *Plans and Terrain.* (See Map No. 7.) The plan of the next operation of VI Corps, as outlined in Field Order No. 12 of 29 October and Field Order No. 13 of 31 October, was for two divisions to cross the Volturno during the night of 3-4 November to seize a line running from Isernia through Mount Passero to Mignano. The 504th Parachute Infantry (82d Airborne Infantry Division), which had come up the valley through Ailano to Valle Agricola in the mountains, was to drive along the slopes of the Apennine Mountains to protect the right flank. The 3d Division on the left flank was to make a demonstration toward Terra Corpo and then seize the mountains west of Presenzano. The 34th Division was directed to cross the Volturno east of Venafro and drive into the mountains southwest of Colli, while the 45th Division crossed the river south of Venafro to seize the high ground east of San Pietro and the 4th Ranger Battalion crossed to block Highway 6 north of Mignano.

The phase line that Fifth Army was next directed to reach in the VI Corps zone starts high on the slopes at Isernia, runs across the headwaters of the Volturno, and crosses the mountains to Mount Passero. Then it turns sharply southwest and passes through tangled hills and desolate mountains to a point on the Garigliano River west of Mignano. The area enclosed between this line and the upper Volturno is a great arc of mountains extending 15 miles south to the Mignano Gap and varying in width from 6 to 10 miles. The arc starts on the east side with the Roccaravindola spur, curves around Venafro, and ends with the high hills between Presenzano and Mignano. The brush-covered hills back of Roccaravindola and Santa Maria Oliveto rise from 400 to 600 meters above sea level, drop off into the narrow and desolate valley of Ravindola Creek, and then rise to 1036 meters at Alto Hill. The great rocky barriers of Mount Santa Croce and Mount Corno tower 1025 and 1052 meters above the olive groves around Venafro. Between Sesto Campano and Mignano and northwest of Presenzano the peaks reach 1120 meters at Mount Cesima. Through this rugged mass from Montaquila to Mignano numerous hills and mountains rise between other hills and mountains until it is a series of rounded hills, precipitous cliffs, jagged peaks, rocky slopes, high tablelands, deep gorges, and innumerable ravines and valleys.

The intensively cultivated valley of the Volturno is less than two miles wide at Roccaravindola, widens to five miles at Venafro, and narrows down to less than two miles northeast of Presenzano. The river in this sector flows in numerous streams, varying in depth from 10 to 20 inches, through clumps of willows and over a gravel bed reaching a width of 800 feet. The valley on both sides is cut by numerous streams and sunken roads and is covered with grain fields, vineyards, orchards, and olive groves.

2. *Moving up for the Third Volturno Crossing.* Several days of fighting still faced VI Corps before it was in position to make its third crossing of the Volturno River. The 34th Division had to drive on up the valley, the 45th Division had to move forward from Piedimonte d'Alife, and the 3d Division had to cross the valley toward the Mignano Gap to secure the left flank. The 135th Infantry took up the chase for the 34th Division on the morning of 26 October, with the high ground around Ailano and Mount Cavuto across Lete Creek southwest of Pratella as its objectives. The enemy, however, chose to make one of his most stubborn stands on Hill 235, an insignificant little obstruction rising less than 25 meters above the broken valley west of Raviscanina, and held up the advance for two days. The 168th Infantry came up and drove on past Hill 235 to Lete Creek on 28 October. The 135th Infantry pushed through Pratella and Prata the next day. The 133d and 168th Infantry then advanced up the Lete Creek valley and down into the valley of the rapid little Sava Creek during 31 October and 1 November, occupying the area as far as Capriati a Volturno. Meanwhile the 504th Parachute Infantry had moved up the valley through Ailano and closed into positions at Valle Agricola on the right flank of VI Corps.

While the 34th Division was driving up the right side of the river, the 3d Division was clearing the mountains and valleys on the left. The 30th Infantry attacked Mount San Nicola on 26 October and occupied Pietravairano, stair-stepped below the ruins of an old castle in the saddle between Mount San Nicola and Mount Gaievola. The 15th Infantry pushed from Roccaromana through Pietramelara and occupied Hill 342 to the west and the San Felice hills to the northwest. The regiment moved on across the valley and drove the Germans from the rocky slopes of Mount Gaievola and Mount Sant'Angelo.

On 3 November the 34th Division was poised in the olive groves on the slopes overlooking the flat valley of the Volturno east of Venafro. The 45th Division had moved up the valley from Piedimonte d'Alife and was in position for its first crossing of the Volturno. The men of both divisions could look westward across Highway 85 and the railroad running up the valley and see the mountain masses stretching beyond and towering over Santa Maria Oliveto, Venafro, Sesto Campano, and Presenzano. Men who thought they had seen mountains

in Africa and Sicily were about to learn what real mountain fighting was. The enemy had withdrawn west of the river, destroying bridges and leaving behind him his infernal minefields, and was waiting in the bald and rugged mountains.

On the right of VI Corps the 504th Parachute Infantry, commanded by Col. Reuben H. Tucker, had plunged into the great gray Gallo bowl high in the mountains and was advancing northwest toward Isernia in contact with the British Eighth Army across the Apennine Mountains. On the left the 3d Division was following elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, retreating slowly over the valley and through the lower hills toward Mignano. The British 10 Corps had completed its laborious struggle through the Barbara Line south of VI Corps toward the sea.

3. *The Crossing of the 45th Division.* Since the 3d Division had made excellent progress on the left flank, VI Corps decided to send the 45th Division across the Volturno ahead of the 34th Division to direct its first efforts against Venafro and toward cutting Highway 6 north of Mignano. Company F, 180th Infantry, crossed the Volturno on the night of 2 November and went into position around Sesto Campano, a village high on the terraced hillside. The 4th Ranger Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Roy A. Murray, Jr., then went across the river in the 45th Division zone at 1800, 3 November, to drive across the mountains back of Sesto Campano and block Highway 6. The remainder of the 2d Battalion, 180th Infantry, crossed the river southeast of Presenzano at 2000, climbed up the steep ridges north of the town, and advanced northwest to occupy the ridge running northwest of Rocca Pipirozzi and east of Vallecupa and Ceppagna. The 6th Parachute Regiment (2d Parachute Division) had reinforced this area the day before and put up a determined defense of Rocca Pipirozzi, a little stone village clustered around an old castle on one of the peaks of the narrow ridge. The battalion drove the enemy off the ridge during the day and then made contact with the 4th Ranger Battalion, which had been stopped on Cannaville Hill to the southwest. ✓

The 179th Infantry was ordered to advance on Venafro and the surrounding slopes during the morning of 4 November. The 3d Battalion crossed the river after midnight and made good progress after dawn over the grain fields and through the vineyards of the valley. About the middle of the morning most of the battalion was pinned down a mile southeast of Venafro by machine-gun fire from the slopes below Mount Corno. Company K stubbornly fought its way forward through the town, but the remainder of the battalion was unable to reach the protection of the high ground until after dark. The 1st Battalion crossed the river during the morning of 4 November to pass through the 3d Bat-

talion the next day and drive on Pozzilli, a village scattered along a canal in the draw between Mount Santa Croce and Hill 540.

4. *The Crossing of the 34th Division.* The immediate objectives of the 34th Division across the wide Volturno were the villages of Santa Maria Oliveto and Roccaravindola on the hills to the northwest. The 168th Infantry was ordered to cross northeast of Venafro and seize Roccaravindola, a hamlet on a high spur jutting out into the valley. The 133d Infantry was to cross east of Venafro and drive northwest to take Santa Maria Oliveto and the ridges to the southwest. Shortly before midnight the 2d and 3d Battalions, 168th Infantry, and the 133d Infantry moved carefully down out of the hills and through the farms of the muddy valley to their positions along the low river banks. The division artillery opened up at 2330 with a terrific concentration on enemy positions across the river. Thirty minutes later the men of the 34th Division waded through the swift and icy waters of the Volturno for the third and last time.

The 2d and 3d Battalions, 168th Infantry, forded the Volturno abreast. Mortar and artillery fire from the hills was heavy, but the worst thing encountered in the valley was the extensive use of mines and booby traps. S-mines and Tellermines, separately and together, were planted thickly in the valley and along the embankment leading up to Highway 85. Trip wires were numerous and many were attached to grapevines, fruit trees, and haystacks. At the regimental command post high in the hills east of the river, the progress of both assault battalions could be followed by the explosions of the mines. The 3d Battalion, 133d Infantry, waded quickly through the wide and shallow water and advanced rapidly up into the hills. The 1st Battalion followed on the left, and the 100th Battalion splashed across to get astride of the road net in the valley and to protect the left rear of the division.

The 168th Infantry reached the hills early in the morning despite the minefields. The 3d Battalion climbed the slopes of Hill 400 and quickly mopped up its area. The 2d Battalion reached the rocky saddle between Hill 400 and its objective by the middle of the morning, but was held up by a mortar and machine gun in the draw north of Roccaravindola. This position was soon wiped out by a patrol, and the battalion was in the village by noon. The two assault battalions then reorganized, but their heavy losses from mines and booby traps prevented a renewal of the attack. The 1st Battalion came across the river after dark to pass between them and seize the ridge extending from Hill 518 to Hill 558 northwest of Roccaravindola.

All three battalions of the 133d Infantry were over the Volturno shortly after midnight and made good progress through minefields against small-arms, machine-gun, and artillery fire. Enemy delaying elements were disposed along

Highway 85 and the railroad, and resistance stiffened as the troops reached the hills. The 3d Battalion climbed the slopes into Santa Maria Oliveto after daylight; the 1st Battalion was on Hill 550 to the southwest by the middle of the morning. Casualties from mines and booby traps were particularly heavy in the 3d and 100th Battalions, and they made little progress after noon.

The 34th and 45th Divisions had completed the third Volturno crossing and had fought their way into the hills and up the mountain slopes on the other side. The 3d Division continued its advance on the left flank, while the 504th Parachute Infantry kept pace along the foothills of the Apennine Mountains on the right. Although the river was not strongly defended by an enemy in fixed positions, the artillery of the 34th Division expended 4122 rounds during the crossing to drive him back into the hills. The casualties in VI Corps were almost as heavy as they were in the first crossing, for 491 men were killed, wounded, and missing during 4 November. VI Corps had now hit the German Winter Line and was in position to start battering to break through it.

C. *SUMMARY OF THE DRIVE*

The tired men of Fifth Army continued to drive the Germans before them during the last week in October and the first in November. 10 Corps pushed across the divide between the lower valleys of the Volturno and Garigliano. Forward elements of the 7 Armoured Division and the 46 Division reached the Garigliano on 2 November and soon cleared most of the southeast side of the river. The 56 Division had driven through Teano and Roccamonfina and was now preparing for an assault on the towering and jagged mass of Mount Camino. VI Corps had sent the 3d Division across the valley toward Mignano, and it had fought its way up to the Mignano Gap and the hill masses on either side. The 34th and 45th Divisions had made the last crossing of the Volturno and had pushed their way into the mountains on the other side. The rains were increasing, the weather was becoming steadily colder, and the German resistance was stiffening as Fifth Army hit the German Winter Line.

CHAPTER VI * * * * *

Battering the Winter Line

FIFTH Army had now reached some of the most formidable obstacles that it was to face in Italy. 10 Corps had crossed the divide that separates the lower valleys of the Volturno and Garigliano rivers and was getting ready to attack the Mount Camino-Mount la Difensa-Mount Maggiore mass southwest of Mignano. VI Corps had one division driving on the Mignano Gap, while two divisions had crossed the upper Volturno successfully and were on the slopes of the mountain arc west of the river. The winter rains, which had started late in September, were increasing steadily, making roads and by-passes extremely difficult to maintain and turning the farm valleys into seas of mud. The enemy was reinforcing both of his flanks with fresh infantry divisions and was bringing a panzer division across the mountains from the Eighth Army front to oppose VI Corps. The men of all divisions of Fifth Army were tired and worn from long weeks in the line and suffered from the cold, wet weather.

The barriers that faced Fifth Army on its way to Rome were the mountains from Montaquila to Mount Camino below Mignano. The great arc through which the 34th and 45th Divisions were fighting extends from Montaquila to Mignano. The 3d Division was trying to drive the enemy from the slopes on either side of the Mignano Gap and cross into the valley south of Cassino. 10 Corps was moving up to make its main effort against Mount Camino in the great mass below the Mignano Gap. The chain of mountains immediately west of the Volturno ends above Mignano with Mount Cesina and Cannavinelle Hill which rise 1120 and 689 meters above sea level. The Mignano Gap, a wide pass from 100 to 150 meters high, separates this tangled mass from the Mount Camino (963 meters)-Mount la Difensa (960 meters)-Mount Maggiore (630 meters) obstacle to the southwest.

A. 10 CORPS AT MOUNT CAMINO

5-15 NOVEMBER

10 Corps was now in position to make an assault on Mount Camino, Mount la Difensa, and Mount Maggiore, which compose a huge dominating hill mass below the Mignano Gap overlooking the southern part of the Liri Valley. (See Map No. 8.) These mountains, some 3000 feet above the valley of the Garigliano River to the southwest, rise gauntly from the low ground around the villages of Galluccio and Cavelle. The slopes are steep and rocky; there is little cover and few feasible approaches. That part of Mount Camino, the highest of the mass, facing the 56 Division consists of two main spurs running approximately north and south. The westernmost of these spurs runs from Point 819 (Hill 819) southward through Point 727. The eastern spur runs parallel to it from Point 963. Both of these ridges are steep and razorbacked.

The 56 Division was assigned the difficult task of taking Mount Camino. This division, with the exception of the 168 Brigade, had been fighting continually since 9 September. It needed a pause for rest and reorganization as well as an opportunity to assimilate its numerous replacements. However, the enemy could be given no time for rehabilitation and strengthening his positions at this time. The attack began on 5 November, with the 201 Guards Brigade on the right and the 168 Brigade on the left. The Guards took Cavelle and the 168 Brigade occupied Sipicciano. On the right of the 56 Division the 3d Division was starting its assault on Mount la Difensa.

On 6 November the Guards attacked toward the north at 1600, with the 6 Grenadier Guards on the right and the 2 Scots Guards on the left. The 2 Scots Guards took the village of Calabritto, while the 6 Grenadiers made some progress on the right. After repulsing a counterattack on Calabritto the 2 Scots Guards tried to find a route up the mountain sides by which they could take the village of Cocuruzzo from the rear. When this effort failed, they withdrew and attacked the following night through the Grenadiers. This assault proved costly, for the battalion encountered formidable defenses consisting of weapons pits blasted out of solid rock and heavily wired. All usable approaches were carefully mined and booby-trapped.

On 8 November two fierce counterattacks on Calabritto were beaten off with considerable loss to the enemy. Over on the right the 3d Division was also up against the enemy main positions on Mount la Difensa, Mount Lungo, and the heights above San Pietro, and was being subjected to determined counterattacks. During the night of 8-9 November another counterattack on

Calabritto was repulsed, while the Grenadiers gained a footing on Mount Camino by driving the enemy from Point 727. Meanwhile the 168 Brigade on the left was incurring casualties from the infernal German S-mines, the enemy weapon most hated by the infantry.

The Guards began to show signs of exhaustion by the morning of 10 November. The weather was becoming colder and wetter, and small enemy counterattacks were a continual source of annoyance. The 7 Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry was brought up from the 167 Brigade to help the Guards, while the 10 Royal Berkshires of the 168 Brigade relieved the 3 Coldstream Guards at Calabritto. The 7 Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry then made a strong attack east through the Guards and fought their way to the top of Point 819. They were driven off the peak by an immediate counterattack, but the fact that they reached Point 819 at all was a magnificent achievement.

Losses and continued action had seriously reduced the combat efficiency of the 56 Division, so that it was doubtful if Mount Camino could be held if taken. The positions of the division on the mountain slopes were impractical to hold. On 12 November General Templer decided to assist the 201 Guards Brigade with an attack by the 167 Brigade on the right. The 23 Armoured Brigade and the 44 Reconnaissance Regiment therefore started taking over the 167 Brigade zone. Meanwhile the 201 Guards and 168 Brigades were fully occupied in trying to hold what they had won. Enemy artillery was very active, and frequent determined counterattacks were directed on Calabritto. Maintenance of troops on Mount Camino was becoming increasingly difficult. A battalion was required to manhandle supplies up to forward elements. Extreme difficulty was being experienced in getting the wounded down the steep mountain sides. On the right the 3d Division was everywhere held up and in a similar plight. The 7th Infantry was on the eastern slopes of Mount la Difensa. North of Mignano only the southern slopes of Mount Lungo were held, while toward the northeast Mount Rotondo and the high ground east of San Pietro was in the possession of the 3d Division.

In view of these facts it was decided on 12 November, with the approval of General Clark, to withdraw from Mount Camino. The plan for the attack by the 167 Brigade was canceled, and the 169 Brigade moved up on the afternoon of 14 November to occupy San Clemente and cover the withdrawal of the Guards. The 23 Armoured Brigade was to hold the Ponte area, the 168 Brigade was to hold the Sipicciano Gap, and the 167 Brigade was to occupy a position covering the Roccamonfina-Conca road. The Guards started withdrawing through the 169 Brigade during the night of 14-15 November, and

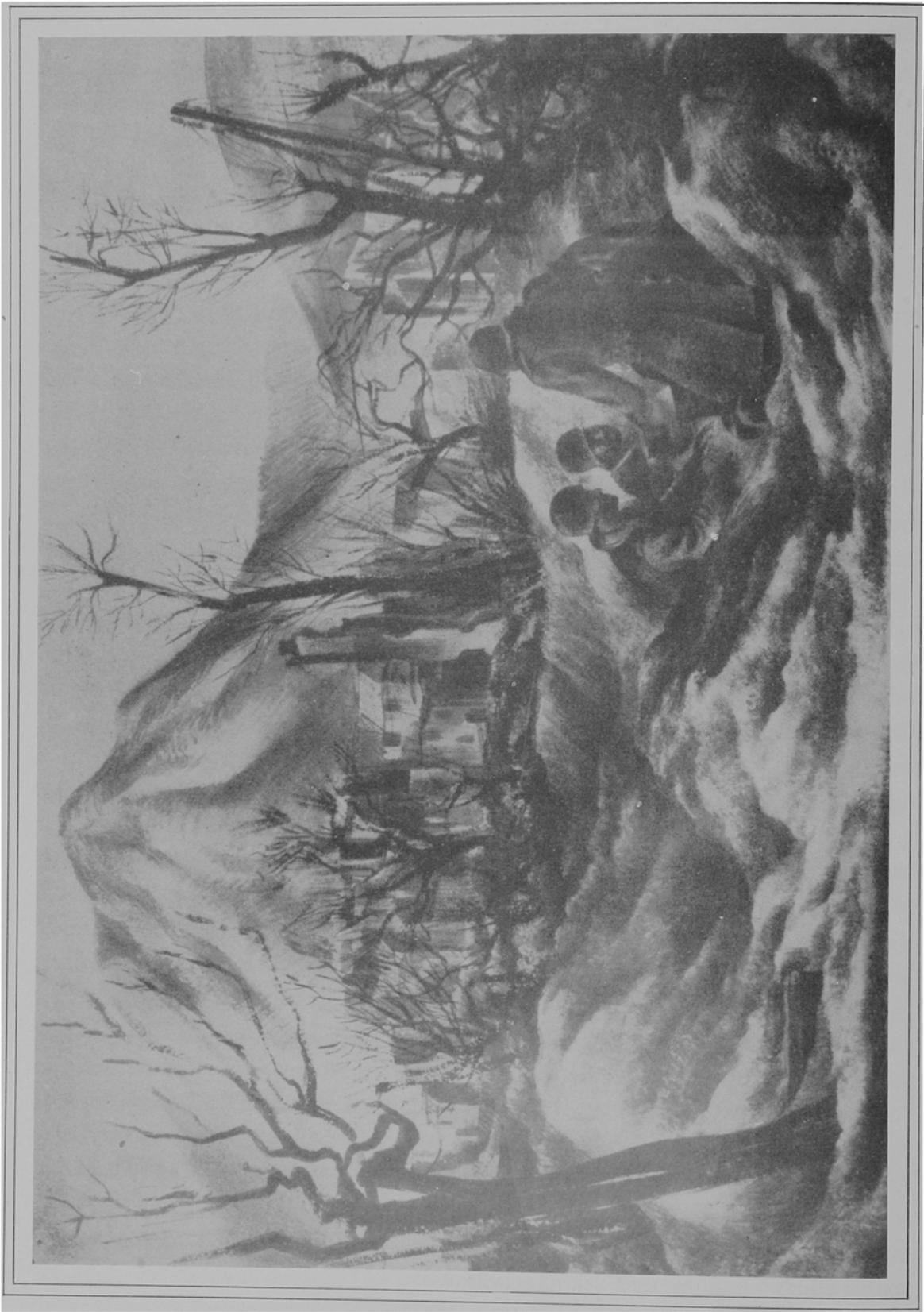
that somewhat hazardous operation, thanks to very bad weather, was accomplished without any enemy reaction. The indications were that it was not until 36 hours later that the enemy realized that the Guards were no longer on the slopes of Mount Camino.

B. THE ADVANCE OF VI CORPS

5-15 NOVEMBER

1. *The 3d Division at the Mignano Gap.* (See Map No. 8.) The 3d Division continued to make the main effort of VI Corps on the left flank to drive past Mignano and into the valley south of Cassino. Mignano is situated in a wide gap across the mountain chain which separates the valleys of the Volturno and Garigliano rivers. The brush-covered sides of Cannavinelle Hill and Mount Cesima rise to the northeast, and the huge mass of Mount Camino-Mount la Difensa-Mount Maggiore towers on the other side. The Mignano Gap itself contains two formidable barriers in the shape of Mount Rotondo and Mount Lungo. Mount Rotondo rises 357 meters just west of Cannavinelle Hill and is densely covered with brush. Mount Lungo is a long barren ridge with several peaks which thrusts itself up 351 meters almost in the middle of the gap. If the 3d Division was to break through the Mignano Gap and pour into the valley south of Cassino, the enemy had to be driven from the dominating heights to the northeast and southwest.

Patrols found that minefields, tank traps, and machine-gun positions on Mount Rotondo and Mount Lungo made an attack through the gap a hazardous operation. General Truscott then sent the 2d Battalion, 15th Infantry, over Mount Cesima to Cannavinelle Hill, while the 30th Infantry went around to Rocca Pipirozzi to launch an attack across Cannavinelle toward Mount Rotondo, which protected the gap from the north. The regiment passed through the 180th Infantry during the night of 5-6 November and made an unsuccessful attack the next afternoon on Mount Rotondo. At the same time the 3d Battalion, 15th Infantry, made an unsuccessful effort to seize the southeast nose (Hill 253) of Mount Lungo. Another co-ordinated attack was launched, under cover of the fire of eight battalions of artillery, on the foggy morning of 8 November. The 30th Infantry occupied the crest of Mount Rotondo, and the 3d Battalion, 15th Infantry, took Hill 253. The 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, then moved up and beat the enemy off Hill 193 in the horseshoe curve of Highway 6. Both regiments spent the next few days in repulsing almost continual German counter-attacks, in digging deeper for protection against mortar and artillery fire, and in trying to keep reasonably warm and dry.



Soldiers brew coffee before the ruins of Mignano..... painted by Lieutenant Edward A. Reep

On the left the 2d Battalion, 7th Infantry, attacked on 5 November through Casale and Caspoli toward the high ridge between the jagged peaks of Mount Camino and the perpendicular cliffs of Mount la Difensa. The resistance of the enemy there demanded that the remainder of the regiment be brought up to assist the 2d Battalion. During the next ten days these battalions tried in vain to scale the heights of Mount la Difensa. Their every effort was balked by a cliff from 50 to 60 feet high running north and south some 1500 yards along the top of the mountain. They were met at every turn by commanding observation, by rifle and machine-gun fire from holes blasted in the rocky slopes, and by accurate mortar and artillery fire. The enemy paid heavily for holding his ground and his counterattacks were often costly, but he was always able to shift his reserves to replace his losses. The difficulties of supply were tremendous in this terrain cut by deep gorges and precipitous ridges. Everything had to be brought up by carrying parties, and a man could carry only a small amount when he needed both hands for climbing. Unsuccessful efforts were made to drop supplies from planes to relieve the situation. Six hours were required to bring down the wounded. The men of all battalions suffered from exposure to rain and cold and from a lack of proper food and clothing.

2. *The 45th Division Batters at the Mountains.* The advance of the 45th Division to the northwest was continued on 6 November by the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, on its way between Mount Corno and Mount Santa Croce toward Concacasale. The jagged cliffs and peaks of these precipitous mountains had to be cleared before the battalion could drive across the high saddle between them. Enemy resistance was strong, and the mountainous terrain made progress almost impossible. Supplying the forward elements was an arduous task, for the 1st Battalion reached heights that could not be negotiated by the sure-footed Italian pack mules that had been acquired. Positions blasted and dug into the solid rock had to be taken one by one, and if they were not immediately occupied, the enemy infiltrated back at night. His positions on the forward slopes were lightly organized, but the reverse slopes were held in strength and his guns were sited to wipe out anything coming over the crests. On 10 November the 1st Ranger Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. William O. Darby, relieved the 180th Infantry on Mount Corno. On the following day the 2d Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. William P. Yarborough, came up and drove the enemy from the saddle on Mount Santa Croce between Peaks 970 and 1025 to the right of Venafro.

On the morning of 6 November the 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, moved through Pozzilli to seize the great dome-like mass of Hill 769 west of Filignano. Fighting over the slopes and through the valleys was fierce, for the enemy stub-

bornly defended every inch of ground in the mountains. During the next six days the battalion pushed steadily forward across mined ravines and valleys, over bullet-swept slopes, and through fog, rain, and bitterly cold nights. On 9 November the 1st Battalion occupied Hills 570 and 580 south of Filignano and east of Hill 769. Three days later it relieved the 2d Battalion, which was still fighting on the east slopes of Hill 769. The 3d Battalion then moved to Hill 873 northeast of Filignano and sent patrols to Hill 1036 to gain contact with the 168th Infantry on its right.

The 157th Infantry reached Venafro on 7 November and prepared to pass between the 179th and 180th Infantry and drive across the desolate hills toward Acquafondata. Threats of counterattacks on the 45th Division front delayed the committing of this reserve until 11 November, when the 1st Battalion jumped off to take Hill 759 southwest of Hill 769, which was being attacked by the 179th Infantry. The terrain was extremely difficult, but the battalion reached the crest of the hill the next day. Meanwhile the 3d Battalion pushed forward at daylight on 12 November to seize Hill 640, a massive knob on the southwest side of Hill 769. In order to reach Hill 640 the battalion had to pass over Hills 460 and 470, which are slight rises on a ridge running southeast from Hill 640, and then drive across the road running from Pozzilli to Acquafondata. The top of Hill 460 is flat and partly cultivated; its left side falls away steeply into the narrow valley of a rippling mountain stream.

The 3d Battalion made little progress during 12 November, for its line of advance was dominated by Hill 769. Elements of one company climbed the steep slopes of Hill 460 early in the following morning and drove a score of the enemy across the road toward Hill 640. The company then reorganized to push on, but soon began to receive intense mortar and artillery fire. The enemy counterattacked with about 50 men at noon, at 1330, and again during the middle of the afternoon, following his artillery concentrations closely and supported by small-arms fire from Hill 769. The top of Hill 460 was open to fire from three sides, and artillery fire finally forced a withdrawal late in the afternoon. Colonel Church, commander of the 157th Infantry, then decided that this was just another one of the hills in the area that was flanked by more hills. He advised Colonel Hutchins of the 179th Infantry that Hill 460 was untenable for both sides and that he could advance no farther until Hill 769 was cleared of the enemy.

3. *The 34th Division Breaks into the Winter Line.* The main efforts of the 34th Division to break into the upper end of the Winter Line were to be made by the 133d and 135th Infantry. The 133d Infantry continued its struggle northwest of Santa Maria Oliveto over the series of scrub-covered hills against an enemy that was no longer retreating and with problems of supply that could

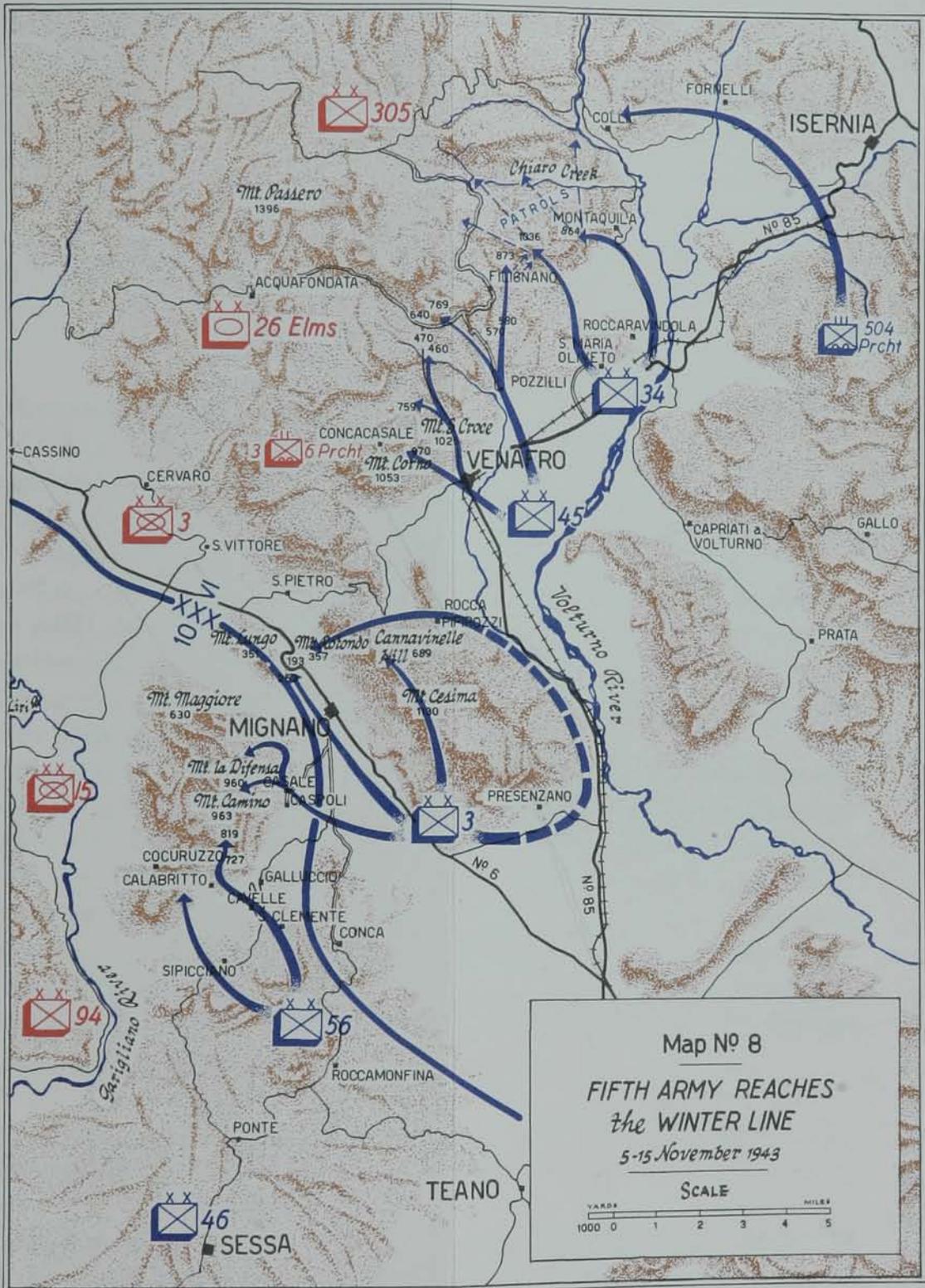
not be solved with Italian pack mules. The enemy continued to hold positions on the reverse slopes of hills and to infiltrate back through ravines and valleys. Fighting and patrolling went on steadily until the regiment was pinched out on 12 November by the 135th and 179th Infantry. The casualties of the 133d Infantry in the third crossing of the Volturno and the fighting around Santa Maria Oliveto were extremely heavy. Four officers and 81 enlisted men were killed, 24 officers and 216 men were wounded, and 6 men were missing. Exposure to rain and cold, however, struck down more men than did the enemy.

On 7 November General Ryder ordered the 135th Infantry; the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion; the 191st Tank Battalion; Company A, 3d Chemical Battalion; and Company B, 109th Engineer Battalion, to assemble in the vicinity of the highway-railway crossing in the valley southeast of Roccaravindola. This group, under the command of General Caffey, was to be known as Task Force A and was to drive up the road to secure Montaquila. The 3d Battalion, 135th Infantry, led the attack the next morning and took the town and Hill 864 to the west. The 1st Battalion drove across the hills back of Santa Maria Oliveto and occupied Hill 1036. The 135th Infantry spent the next few days patrolling north across Chiaro Creek and west over the terraced hills toward Mount Pantano. Routes through mined areas were located by driving sheep and goats through them, and extensive minefields were discovered north of Chiaro Creek. Contact was made with the 504th Parachute Infantry, which had pushed along the right flank of VI Corps to Colli.

C. *SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS*

Fifth Army was everywhere held up by bad weather, mountainous terrain, and stubborn enemy resistance. The 56 Division, which had been making the main effort for 10 Corps, had given up its attempt to drive the enemy from Mount Camino. The 34th and 45th Divisions had been stopped in the mountains west of the Volturno River. The 3d Division had been successful in clearing the right side of the Mignano Gap, but Mount Lungo in the center and Mount la Difensa on the left were proving to be difficult to capture. The enemy had strengthened his right flank along the sea with the 94th Grenadier Division and his left flank in the mountains with the 305th Grenadier Division and the 26th Panzer Division. The rains had increased since October and the nights were bitterly cold. Problems of supply were becoming increasingly difficult as the Volturno rose, as the mud got deeper, and as the hills became steeper.

Men suffered from the rain and cold and from a lack of hot meals and proper clothing. The divisions needed rest and replacements if they were to maintain efficiency and high morale. The enemy's main defensive line had been reached and more men and materiel were needed to break through it. The resistance in this area caused 15th Army Group to direct Fifth Army to stop its attack and regroup its forces. General Clark took these factors into consideration and stopped the advance on 15 November. Our exhausted men could now rest and prepare for another assault to smash through the German Winter Line.



Map No 8
 FIFTH ARMY REACHES
 the WINTER LINE
 5-15 November 1943

SCALE
 YARDS 0 1000
 MILES 0 1 2 3 4 5

CHAPTER VII * * * * *

Summary of the Campaign

A. *THE ADVANCE OF FIFTH ARMY*

7 OCTOBER - 15 NOVEMBER

FIFTH Army made rapid progress during October and the first part of November until the German Winter Line halted the advance. (See Map No. 9.) VI Corps gained approximately 45 miles on its right flank and about 25 on its left flank during the period 7 October - 15 November. 10 Corps moved from the Volturno River to the Garigliano River, a distance of some 17 miles, during the same time. Its advance from Capua to Mount Camino covered approximately 20 miles on its right flank. The Fifth Army front stretched some 50 miles from the vicinity of Benevento to the mouth of the Volturno at the beginning of this campaign, but eventually narrowed down to approximately 35 miles between the Colli area and the mouth of the Garigliano.

The troops of Fifth Army could well take pride in their achievements when they paused for rest and reinforcement in the middle of November. They had made a successful landing on the Salerno beaches on 9 September and had in the next month driven up to the Volturno-Calore river line, the next natural defensive positions of the enemy. On 13 October these indomitable infantrymen fought their way across the Volturno and continued to drive the enemy back toward Rome. During the month they drove across coastal plains and over mountains, twice more forced crossings of the Volturno, and finally hit the German Winter Line above Venafro and Mignano.

B. *FIFTH ARMY CASUALTIES*

The effective strength of Fifth Army rose from 130,246 on 7 October to 243,827 on 15 November. Most of these additional troops were in service units and were not available for combat duty. The total battle casualties in the Army

during this period were 9690. The American units had 6843 casualties, as follows: 1374 killed, 5183 wounded, and 286 missing in action. The 3d Division suffered 2699 casualties, the 34th Division 1660, and the 45th Division lost 1370 men. The heaviest losses in the American VI Corps occurred on 13 October and 4 November, the days during which the first and third crossings of the Volturno were made. The first crossing cost 544 men, while 491 casualties were suffered in the last. The British 10 Corps had a total of 2847 battle casualties, of which 443 were killed, 2007 wounded, and 397 missing in action. Non-battle casualties during the period were about equal to the number of the battle losses.

The German losses cannot be estimated with any degree of accuracy. A total of 1994 enemy prisoners fell into the hands of Fifth Army during the period 1 October - 15 November. VI Corps accounted for 1617 of these, while 10 Corps took 377. The enemy order of battle remained somewhat confused during the period, but practically all of the prisoners reported heavy casualties.

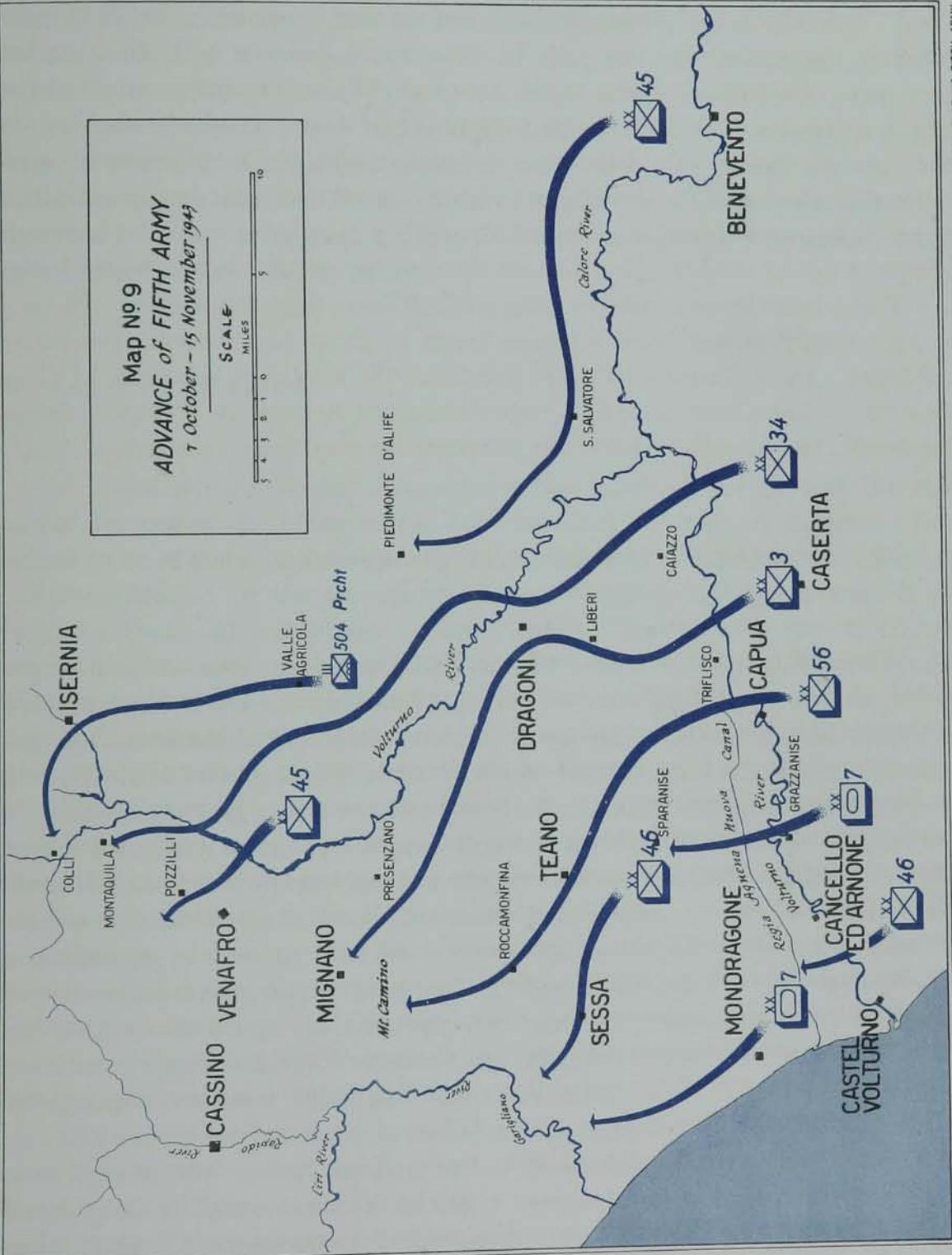
C. *THE ADVANCE OF THE BRITISH EIGHTH ARMY*

When Fifth Army had reached the Volturno-Calore river line at the end of the first week in October, the British Eighth Army, under the command of General Montgomery, had driven up on the right and had reached a line running generally south from Termoli on the Adriatic Sea to a point slightly north of Benevento. 5 Corps, with the 78 Division on the right and the 8 Indian Division on the left, was advancing along the coast. 13 Corps was pushing over extremely rugged mountain terrain between 5 Corps and the American VI Corps. The 5 Division was on the right, while the 1 Canadian Division was on the left and in contact with the American 45th Division across the Apennines.

Marshal Kesselring's Tenth Army was delaying the advance of Eighth Army with LXXVI Panzer Corps, composed of the 1st Parachute Division, the 16th and 26th Panzer Divisions, and the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. The 1st Parachute Division was fighting a delaying action along the coast in front of the 78 Division. The lines of the 16th Panzer Division and the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division stretched south into the 13 Corps zone. The 26th Panzer Division front ran over the mountains to the Volturno, but the division was withdrawing over the Apennines to throw its full strength against Eighth Army.

General Montgomery's forces continued their drive to the northwest, hampered by demolitions, mountains, numerous streams, and stiff enemy resistance. 5 Corps drove on along the coast, with the 78 Division making the main effort.

Map No 9
ADVANCE of FIFTH ARMY
 7 October - 15 November 1943



After 13 Corps advanced beyond Campobasso, the 1 Canadian Division and the 5 Division exchanged zones for a continuation of the pursuit of the enemy. By the middle of November nearly all of the area east of the Sangro River from Alfedena through Castel di Sangro to the sea was cleared of the Germans. In five weeks Eighth Army had advanced along a front averaging about 35 miles in width, with a gain of some 30 miles along the coast and approximately 55 miles on the left flank. LXXVI Panzer Corps fought a persistent and stubborn delaying action during this period and was now ready to make a determined stand before Eighth Army.

D. AIR OPERATIONS

1. *Allied Air Operations.* Throughout the month of October and the first half of November the Strategic Air Force and XII Air Support Command continued to be of material assistance to the advance of Fifth Army. The Strategic Air Force slowed up the movement of enemy supplies and troops toward the front by continually bombing communications. XII Air Support Command made direct attacks on enemy troop concentrations and installations immediately in front of Fifth Army, and hindered the shifting of forces and the bringing up of supplies in the battle areas by bombing bridges and road junctions. The efforts of both groups practically swept the enemy air forces from the skies.

During October and November the Strategic Air Force unceasingly pounded enemy rear areas from the Volturno River to northern Italy. The weather was often bad for aerial operations, but the attacks continued on airfields, bridges, viaducts, railroad yards, road junctions, gun positions, troop concentrations, and factories. In the five weeks 9 October-13 November, 9563½ tons of bombs were dropped during 493 attacks by Wellingtons, B-17's, B-24's, B-25's, B-26's, and P-38's. Although the Strategic Air Force gave some attention to enemy installations in Greece and Yugoslavia, its principal strength was directed toward aiding the advance of Fifth and Eighth Armies.

XII Air Support Command continued its tactical and reconnaissance missions during October and the first half of November. One of the main efforts of the tactical fighter-bombers in direct support of ground troops was made on 28 October. Twenty-four A-36's bombed Pratella and the bridge over Lete Creek south of the village in support of the 168th Infantry. During the same morning A-36's bombarded Mount Sant'Angelo for almost an hour and materially assisted the advance of the 30th Infantry. Throughout the period road

junctions, enemy transport, gun installations, and troop concentrations behind the lines felt the power of the fighter-bombers. Fifth Army troops were almost unmolested by enemy air power.

2. *Enemy Air Activity.* The German fighter-bomber effort on the Fifth Army front was small during the period of the drive from the Volturno River to the Winter Line. The power of the Allied air force available for Italian operations was too great for the enemy's air resources. The ground troops advanced during October almost without interference from the Luftwaffe, but during the first half of November began to receive sporadic raids from limited numbers of planes. Air cover of Fifth Army was sufficient to prevent continued and effective bombing, while ample antiaircraft artillery had been brought in to offer strong protection from raiders.

Only about 16 Messerschmitt 109's appeared over the Fifth Army front on 13 October, the day VI and 10 Corps crossed the Volturno River. At least 75 fighter-bombers attacked bridges and communications in the vicinity of Caiazzo 2 days later, when 7 planes were destroyed and 5 damaged. During the next 7 days not more than 100 fighter-bomber sorties were flown against the Fifth Army forces and installations. Fighter cover forced many of these planes to jettison their bombs or to turn back before reaching their objectives. Toward the end of the month a few small formations of fighter-bombers appeared over the battle areas, but did little damage.

The Germans attempted to raid Naples on 21 October and again on the 23d. During the first raid 15 twin-engined aircraft, probably Junkers 88's, dropped some 30 flares and more than 20 500-pound bombs on the water front at Bagnoli and in the Naples harbor. The planes came in low over the sea from the northwest and carried out their attack from low and medium altitudes. The only damage reported was a hit on a gun emplacement. An unsuccessful attack was made on one of the Volturno River bridges at the same time. About 20 Junkers 88's raided Naples again on the night of 23 October, but did little damage to our installations.

Enemy air activity during November was hampered by weather. Some days were completely unsuitable for air operations, while hardly one passed that did not have poor conditions for activity during at least a portion of the day. The Luftwaffe raided the front lines, artillery positions, command posts, and bridges at intervals. Formations of from 2 to 25 fighter-bombers were used to carry out bombing and strafing missions. These raids were usually made forward of the rear boundaries of the corps, but on at least one occasion during the first half of November fighter-bombers attacked the rear areas. Early on the morning of 12 November 9 Focke-Wulf 190's and Messerschmitt 109's bom-

bed and strafed the Pomigliano Airfield, causing six casualties and damaging six aircraft. Shipping in the Naples harbor was the primary target for three raids. On 1 November approximately 20 aircraft, some identified as Junkers 88's, were over Naples from 1850 to 1938. High level bombing, shallow dive-bombing, and aerial torpedo attacks were employed by the enemy. HMS *Linet*, a cable ship, was struck by a torpedo and had to be beached, but no military damage was suffered. Six enemy aircraft were destroyed by antiaircraft artillery and night fighters.

On the night of 5-6 November between 20 and 30 aircraft bombed the Naples harbor, dropping 40 bombs from altitudes of 4,000 to 16,000 feet. One LST containing ammunition was hit and exploded, one LCT was slightly damaged, a power station was damaged, the quartermaster warehouse on Pier K was hit, and a gasoline dump was hit and fired. The antiaircraft artillery claimed three planes destroyed and one probably destroyed. On 10 November 25 enemy aircraft were over Naples from 0322 to 0420, but no damage was done. Two aircraft were shot down by the antiaircraft artillery.

The enemy apparently was unable to put many fighters in the air to oppose either strategic or tactical bombers in Italy. His greatest effort during the period was on 14 October, when between 35 and 40 Messerschmitt 109's, Focke-Wulf 190's, Reggiane 2001's, and Macchi 202's attacked 34 B-17's in the vicinity of Terni. Few fighters were met during the remainder of October, and planes on bombing and strafing missions proceeded almost at will to any point in Italy. The principal defensive effort of the enemy during the first half of the next month occurred on 14 November, when 15 Messerschmitt 109's aggressively attacked 75 B-17's on their run over the Bolzano marshalling yards and for 25 minutes after they left the target.



Map No 10
 AREA of
 FIFTH ARMY CAMPAIGN
 7 October-15 November 1943

SCALE
 MILES
 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5