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THE CAMPAIGN IN ITALY

CHAPTERS XII - XIV

THE FOURTEENTH ARMY IN ACTION

AT ANZIO - NETTUNO UP TO 11 MAY, 1944

BY

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COMMENTARY ON GENERAL HAUSER'S ACCOUNT

BY

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ARMY GROUP'S COMMENTS

BY

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THE AIR SITUATION IN SPRING, 1944

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THE CAMPAIGN IN ITALY

Chapter 12:

The Fourteenth Army in Action at
Anzio-Nettuno up to 11 May 1944.

By Major General Wolf Hauser

Since the end of 1943 the German Command had been aware of the growing possibility of an enemy landing aimed at forcing a decision in the Italian theatre of operations. The forces at the enemy's disposal - above all, his naval power - and his supremacy in the air meant that the possibilities to be reckoned with covered a very wide field. Accordingly, preparations were instigated by the Commander-in-Chief, South West, in consultation with OKW, to meet all these possibilities. The steps they took are noted briefly and diagrammatically on Map 2 of my contribution to Part I of Chapter 9, dealing with the task and Operations of H.Q. Fourteenth Army in North Italy.

Beginning 12 January, the enemy (American Fifth Army) made strong and systematic local attacks on the front of the German Tenth Army. Then the Free French Expeditionary Force attacked, followed by offensives by the 2 U.S. Infantry Corps and on 17 January by the 10 British Infantry Corps. As a result of these attacks - especially of those made by 10 Infantry Corps - serious crises developed on the southern flank of the Tenth Army. These battles not only prevented the intended regrouping of German forces from being made - the "Hermann Goering" Panzer division, 26th Panzer division and 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier divisions were to have been made available as reserves, 29th Panzer Grenadier division being earmarked for the Rome area - but also caused a further appreciable weakening of the already depleted forces available in the Rome area. C. in C. South West believed he could overcome the crisis on the southern flank of the Tenth Army most quickly if he brought all forces available there into action under command of the Staff of 1 Paratroop Corps, if he attacked and hit the enemy, thereby preventing a landing from being made. C. in C. South West thought a landing would not be made before the enemy had achieved a success on the Tenth Army front. He also believed that by attacking the enemy on the Tenth Army front as described he would most quickly obtain strong forces again for coastal defence in the Rome area. All available forces of 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier divisions in the Rome area, with the exception of the obviously weak defences shown on Map 1, were removed from 19 January. The remaining two mobile divisions, the "Hermann Goering" and 26th Panzer divisions, which were to have been made available as reserves before the beginning of the Allied offensive against the Tenth Army, were now tied up in the battle in which the Tenth Army was engaged.

This removal of forces from the Rome area took place in spite of the reports that had been coming in since 13 January of increased shipping movements in the Naples area. In connection with the decisions made by the Germans it must, of course, be borne in mind that the German Command had for some time been obliged to take extraordinary risks with the forces at their disposal, and by it, in contrast to the Allied Command, so often methodical and always playing for safety, also achieved some success. In this case, however, they played right into the enemy's hands, whose aim was to tie down all available German forces on the Tenth Army front, and then to make a landing at Anzio against relatively weak resistance. By advancing on Valmontone the southern flank of the Tenth Army would crumble and simultaneously the entire front would again become mobile. Thus the decision taken by C. in C. South West was a mistake and it could very easily have led to a decisive defeat on the entire front.

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- 2 -

Although the German Command had counted on a large-scale allied landing since the end of 1943, the enemy was nevertheless able to spring a tactical surprise on the Germans by the landing on the morning of 22 January 1944. The weak forces remaining in the Rome area (see Map 1) were, generally speaking, battle-weary and numerically inconsiderable; they were hardly sufficient to maintain adequate observation of the stretch of coast from Tarquinia to Terracina - a distance of 160 km.

Two reinforced divisions (the British 1st and the American 3rd) of 6 Infantry Corps were landed against these weak German defence units shortly after midnight on 22 January.

The following landed:

3rd U.S. division, including 75th Tank Battalion east of Nettuno
1st Ranger Battalion in Nettuno harbour
Units of 1st British Division west of Nettuno.

The balance of 1st British Division remained for the time being on ships as floating reserves. The strength of the first wave amounted to 50,000 men and 5,200 vehicles. 36,000 men and 3,000 vehicles (i.e. 90% of the total) had been disembarked by midnight of 22 January.

Naturally, German resistance was only very slight and so it remained throughout 23 January; it was not until 24 January that opposition gradually became noticeable round the bridgehead.

What was happening meanwhile on the German side ?

C. in C. South West received the first report of the landing at 0500 hours on 22 January. It was immediately apparent that a rapid exploitation of the landing would place the overall strategy of the Germans' conduct of the war in Italy in jeopardy. But emergency and counter measures were put into operation with such speed and energy that to a large extent, they counterbalanced the recent mistake of the C. in C.

The Tenth Army was nearest at hand and it therefore had to supply the first forces required, in spite of the heavy battles that were being fought on its own front.

The following formations were concerned:

- (a) 71st Division being transferred from Istria; so far, only individual units of this division had reached the Tenth Army front, while the remainder was being brought up on foot or by transport, and
- (b) the bulk of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division which had just been withdrawn from the Rome area for operations with the Tenth Army but which had so far provided only units for that Army. Units of both these divisions arrived at the bridgehead on the morning of 23 January.
- (c) The following further units of the Tenth Army were despatched to the bridgehead: 2 artillery batteries, 1 heavy anti-tank battalion, 1 battery of heavy artillery, 2 battalions of 1st Paratroop Division and the reconnaissance unit of 26th Panzer Division.

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RESTRICTED

- 3 -

- (d) The following forces arrived in the evening of 23 January; 1 reinforced regiment of the "Hermann Goering" Panzer division, 1 reinforced regiment of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, 1 motorised engineer battalion and one anti-aircraft battery (Flakabteilung).
- (e) Already on 22 January C. in C. South West ordered Tenth Army to withdraw 26th Panzer Division from the front opposite the British Eighth Army and to send it to the bridgehead.

In the second place, the forces from the area north of Rome had to be considered. Accordingly, 4th Paratroop Division which was being formed in the Terni - Spoleto area was immediately alerted. The first units of this division arrived south of Rome in the evening of 22 January.

Thirdly, forces had to be brought down from Northern Italy. Consequently, at 0700 hours on 22 January the Fourteenth Army received an order to send all forces earmarked for Operation "Richard" to Rome (see Map 2 of the section dealing with the Mission and Operations of the Fourteenth Army in North Italy). As 90th Panzer Grenadier division which had been with the Fourteenth Army at one time, had already gone into action under command Tenth Army, there were two infantry divisions, namely:

- (a) 65th Division (less 1 reinforced regiment) from the Genoa area,
- (b) 362nd Division (less 1 reinforced regiment) from the Rimini area,
- and (c) two reinforced battalions of 16th SS-Panzer Grenadier Division from the Leghorn area.

All these groups were despatched in the evening of 22 January and H.Q. Fourteenth Army was informed that it must expect to be transferred to the Rome area to take over command of the forces at the bridgehead.

Fourthly, OKW had promised to provide forces from other theatres of war and from Germany in the event of an enemy landing in Italy.

OKW ordered the release of the following forces for Italy:

- (a) from C. in C., West: 715th Infantry Division (motorised)
1 artillery battery (Abteilung): 1 tank battalion equipped with Panthers: 1 tank battalion equipped with remote-control demolition vehicles.
- (b) From C. in C. South East: 114th Rifle Division:
2 artillery batteries (Abteilungen)

Since neither the Commander-in-Chief, West, nor the Commander-in-Chief, South East, had been able to carry out the planned formation of two infantry divisions from each of their commands on account of the intervening necessity of releasing forces for the Eastern Front, OKW ordered the immediate and speedy formation of 92nd Infantry Division in the Italian theatre of war. This division could be used even while it was being formed for providing limited defence along a section of the coast. The basis for the division was to be 1026th Grenadier Regiment which was in the Viterbo area nearby. It was to comprise two Regiments (1059th and 1060th), its formation should be completed by 1 March and it should be ready to go into action by 15 May.

- (c) The following were sent to Italy from the reserve army in Germany:

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RESTRICTED

- 4 -

The Staff of LXXI Infantry Corps (this was attached to the von Zangen Army Group for the time being)
The infantry Lehr-Regiment
1027th and 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiments.
The artillery Lehr-Regiment
1 heavy tank battalion (Tigers)

C. in C. South West, ordered General Schlemmer, Commandant of Rome, the only general officer then available, to take over with an improvised staff, command of operations against the enemy forces which had been landed. The command was transferred to the staff of Paratroop Corps during the night of 22/23 January and in the evening of 25 January it was finally taken over by H.Q. Fourteenth Army.

As the operations of the enemy air force - which had achieved almost complete mastery in the air - were directed almost exclusively against roads and railways in order to prevent the bringing up of reserves, German forces could be moved only at night. However, thanks to strict regulation of traffic and good organisation, and to the fact that infantry was transported in columns of Italian lorries, it was possible to bring up all units in much less time than the enemy had expected. (For details, see Lieutenant-Colonel Duensing's account entitled "The transfer of 362nd Infantry Division to the Ligurian Sea and the taking over of coastal defence duties north of the Tiber to the Cecina".) The enemy believed it would take at least 16 days to bring two divisions down from Northern Italy. In fact, 65th Division arrived in the area south of Rome on 26 January. 362nd Division also arrived on that day from the Rimini area and was assigned to the Piombino - Tiber estuary section of the coast, while 715th Division arrived in the area south of Rome from the South of France as early as 30 January.

Nevertheless, in spite of the energy and resolution of all concerned, it was necessarily several days before even scanty German forces could be put into action against the strong enemy forces landed. Every minute was precious for the Germans and Allies alike. What would have happened if the enemy had advanced boldly immediately after landing, if he had occupied the Alban Mountains and thrust on to Valmontone, thereby cutting off the vital supply roads of the southern flank of the Tenth Army? But the enemy did not make this advance, he did not feel strong enough; Thus he threw away his great chance. This neglect was an error which to a very large extent counter-balanced the original mistake of C. in C. South West in removing all available forces from the Rome area before the enemy landing was made. The enemy's methodical, playing-for-safety manner of waging war was revealed again in the first days of the fighting for the bridgehead. He felt his way forward cautiously to the north east towards Cisterna, and northwards in the direction of Aprilia - Campoleone. When at last on 30 January the enemy advanced on a broad front towards the Alban Mountains, it was already too late (see Map 2).

Before I deal with these battles I must describe briefly the development of the situation on the German side. When 1 Paratroop Corps assumed command, it arranged the front into three sectors for the time being (see Map 2):

- (a) The western sector under the command of 4th Paratroop Division. It comprised six battalions and two artillery batteries of 4th Paratroop Division which was then in process of formation. As it was not yet completely ready for battle it was assigned to coastal defence between the Tiber and the bridgehead.

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RESTRICTED

- 5 -

- (b) The central sector under the command of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division which comprised the one operational regiment of 4th Paratroop Division, one regiment of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division and one regiment of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division (of the Tenth Army). It lay astride the important Anzio - Albano road.
- (c) The eastern sector under the Command of the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division which comprised units of this division and two battalions of 1st Paratroop Division and the reconnaissance unit of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division which were taken from the Tenth Army. This sector was also responsible for the defence of the coastal sector as far as Terracina.

The obvious immediate task for the Germans was, of course, to strengthen their defence against the forces landed by the enemy. At first there was a jumble of multifarious troops which streamed in from all directions. As a general rule, it is undesirable and unprofitable to break up established formations as, apart from other disadvantages, the fighting spirit and value of the troops suffers in the process; but in this case it was unavoidable. Yet these oddly assorted groups succeeded in combining together to organise the first significant defence against the enemy landing. The restoration of the normal chain of command had to be postponed to some later date for some quiet phase of the battle. As no attack aimed at gaining possession of the Alban Mountains had been launched by the enemy on 23 or 24 January, by which time the defence had already been considerably strengthened, the first and greatest crisis had been overcome.

The German command immediately applied itself to the next task - that of attacking and liquidating the bridgehead. Thereupon a race began between the Germans and the Allies to determine who would be the first to accumulate forces sufficient to mount an offensive. The enemy could have attacked on 22 or 23 January; but on 25 January both sides were still busy making preparations.

For the time being the enemy still held the initiative and in the afternoon of 25 January he took Aprilia. He won ground also in the direction of Cisterna. (See Map 2 for the line reached by the enemy on 28 January). The Allies had received the following reinforcements by 30 January:

45th Division,
1st Armoured Division (less 1 combat command),
further corps artillery.

After the arrival of these forces the enemy felt strong enough to resume the offensive. His objective was now the Alban Mountains and he hoped that this attack in co-ordination with others against the southern flank of the Tenth Army would result in the entire front again becoming fluid.

It was at this juncture that the German Command also planned its first major counter-offensive. Within the limitations imposed by its greatly reduced strength, the German air force began to be more active from 23 January. Several successful attacks were made against disembarkation operations and concentrations of ships and troops at the bridgehead. German artillery also came more and more into the picture every day, and by hits on ammunition dumps, etc., made the enemy aware of its presence in no uncertain manner. In order to clear up the confusion in the chain of command which had resulted from the first emergency measures which had been taken, after the arrival of the Staff and the first units of the 71st Division, 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division returned to its division (with the Tenth Army).

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There was no large-scale fighting between 25 January and the evening of 29 January, apart from local attacks made by the enemy and the preparations for offensives being made by both sides, as already mentioned. The Germans still bore in mind the possibility of a further enemy landing, perhaps in the Civitavecchia area. Comparatively large German forces were therefore retained there (units of 90th Panzer Grenadier Division and 362nd Infantry Division which had arrived from North Italy.)

Regarding the assignment of coastal defence tasks to 362nd Division, it must be remembered that the division was newly formed and had so far received no divisional training and consequently, could not be committed on a major battle front - as the bridgehead would probably become - in the condition it was in at that time. However, the exigencies of the situation that developed soon made it necessary (at the beginning of February) for even this division to be used in the bridgehead battles.

Both Sides' Plans for Attacks - End of January:

The German Plan of Attack.

Both sides were anxious to avoid tying down large forces on the bridgehead front for a long period. The enemy realised that if his forces became static there he would not be able to accomplish his purpose - with which the landing operations were connected - of setting his general plan of attack in motion again; the German's on their side, wanted to eliminate the bridgehead in order quickly to release their forces deployed there.

The Germans' first plan for an offensive involved an attack on both sides of the Campoleone - Anzio Road. This direction for the attack was chosen in consideration of the following points:

1. Of course, it would have been preferable to attack in a direction which would have outflanked the enemy more. But any outflanking attack would have to be made near the coast and would therefore be exposed to the enemy's strong naval artillery. As an outflanking attack from the east would have to be made over ground completely without cover and would also involve crossing a number of canals, the choice of this direction for the attack was precluded from the beginning.
2. The attack must be devised in a manner permitting the employment of German tanks. According to reconnaissance reports which came in after the end of January, it appeared that the only terrain where tanks could operate was on either side of the Albano - Anzio road.
3. If possible, the attack must be made in the direction leading by the shortest possible route to the coastal sector vital to the bridgehead on both sides of Anzio. This factor also supported the choice of an attack on both sides of the Albano - Anzio road.
4. The attack would have to be made during cloudy weather in order to minimise the operations of the vastly superior enemy air force and possibly also attacks by naval artillery.
5. Regarding the time for the commencement of the attack, what mattered was that it should be carried out at the earliest possible moment - before the enemy could substantially reinforce his troops; at the same time as soon as the German forces appeared strong enough to be able to maintain a successful attack.

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In the light of the above considerations the following plan was arrived at. At first it was scheduled for 28 January, but owing to the delay in the arrival of expected reinforcements, due to enemy air attacks on roads and railways in central Italy, it had to be postponed till 1 February.

- (a) Attack by the Pfeiffer (Commander, 65th Infantry Division) battle group, comprising 9 battalions of 65th Infantry Division and 4th Paratroop Division with a strong east flank, west of the main road. This group was to attack in a southerly direction.
- (b) Attack by the Graeser (Commander, 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division) battle group. It was to attack along both sides of the main road using 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division and 26th Panzer Division, while 715th Infantry Division attacked further to the east and covered the east flank of the main attacking force. The Graeser attacking force was to be made up of 17 battalions and be supported at the focal point of its thrust by artillery.
- (c) The Konrad (Commander, "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division) battle group, comprising units of 114th Rifle Division and the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division, was to attack south westwards from the Cisterna area with the object of drawing off the strongest possible enemy forces, and particularly artillery fire, from the main attack by the Pfeiffer and Graeser groups.
- (d) According to this plan of attack, 1 Paratroop Corps, the units of 71st Division which had arrived so far and the two battalions of 16th SS-Panzer Grenadier Division were to be held as corps reserves in the area south of Albano.

However, it was not possible to put this plan into operation on 1 February as the enemy attack against Cisterna and Campoleone between 30 January and 1 February interfered with the German preparations and forced them to go over to the defensive again for the time being.

The purpose of the enemy offensive of 30 January was to launch simultaneous attacks on the west and east sectors of the bridgehead.

The objective of the main attack in the western sector was to capture the Alban Mountains, and from there - depending on how the situation had developed - to carry out the original intention of pressing on to either Rome or Valmontone. The objective of the secondary attack from the eastern side of the bridgehead was first to take Cisterna and then to advance to the heights north of Velletri (see Map 2).

In order to release the attacking forces for their assigned tasks, the troops on both flanks of the bridgehead were relieved by the newly-arrived 45th Division between 28 and 30 January.

The smaller attack on the eastern sector was made by 3rd U.S. Division supported by 504th Paratroop Regiment and 3 Battalions of Rangers. The main attack in the western sector of the bridgehead was made by British 1st Division and 1st U.S. Armoured Division.

Both attacks began during the night of 29/30 January. After heavy and very costly fighting, the smaller attack from the east had gained about 1½ km. of ground by the evening of 1 February. The enemy then halted on both sides of Ponte Rotto and was forced to go over to the defensive. The enemy made only local advances and was not able to accomplish his intended break-through against the stubborn resistance

of units of 1st Paratroop Division, 26th Panzer Division and the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division. The Allies suffered considerable losses; two battalions of Rangers which were supposed to have infiltrated and captured Cisterna by a coup de main an hour before the actual attack began, were completely wiped out. 3rd Division itself had suffered 3131 casualties since 22 January and had lost 26 tanks.

The enemy's main attack in the western sector of the bridgehead also met with tough German resistance. Nevertheless, the Allies succeeded in advancing as far as the railway at Campoleone. Here 1st U.S. Armoured Division found that the ground west of the main road, particularly in the deeply escarped river valleys, was impassable to tanks. Their attack west of the road had to be discontinued and the division was utilised on the road to support 1st British Division. The Americans were to have diverted from the British north of Campoleone. However, this was not destined to happen as the enemy attack was halted at Campoleone.

This main attack resulted in heavy losses on both sides. At the end of it there was a finger-shaped salient pointing northwards through the German lines, positively demanding German counter-attacks. 1st U.S. Armoured Division was withdrawn on 1 February after the enemy attack had halted and was held as corps reserve again, while one brigade of 1st British Division remained in the salient. But although the enemy's twin attacks failed to secure the tactical and operational objectives hoped for, German preparations for an offensive were disorganised and, in addition, the area between Campoleone and Aprilia had been taken by the enemy. This ground was indispensable to the Germans for use as a spring-board in the offensive they planned aimed at liquidating the bridgehead. It had therefore to be re-captured before the Germans could undertake this offensive. But this required both time and large forces, and the German Command were obliged to be economical with both.

The enemy's offensive miscarried because he believed that the main German battle line would not be encountered until he had advanced high in the Alban Mountains; the enemy had not reckoned on meeting resistance from more than advanced German units before reaching this line. The Allies relied too much on the effectiveness of their air attacks on roads and railways and discounted the possibility that 65th Division would have arrived from Northern Italy - much less that 715th Division would have arrived from the South of France and the first units of 114th Rifle Division from the Balkans - in time to take part in the fighting.

On 2 February 6 U.S. Corps ordered the change from offensive to defensive operations. There had been 6,487 casualties in this corps up till then; German losses also were heavy but it is not possible to give figures.

Following up this defensive success, the Germans endeavoured to complete the preparations for their own attack as soon as possible. But at the same time they had to allow for the possibility of a resumption of the enemy offensive.

All plans for an offensive in the sector of the bridgehead held by the Fourteenth Army had to be closely related to the battles of the Tenth Army on the southern front. As fierce fighting broke out again in the Cassino area of this front on 1 February, the Fourteenth Army was advised that it must expect a reduction in the supplies of ammunition and that it was even possible that forces would have to be withdrawn from the bridgehead

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front to support the Tenth Army. It was this last possibility that impressed on C. in C. South West the necessity for the Fourteenth Army to make a decisive attack against the bridgehead before the total forces then available were weakened by the possible transfer of units to the Tenth Army Front. At that time the materials at the disposal of the German Command in Italy were very limited and it was therefore obliged to conduct a "poor man's" war. In contrast with C. in C. South West who for the reasons stated was inclined to rush the offensive, the Army Commander, General von Mackensen, stressed the equally well-founded viewpoint that the decisive attack aimed at liquidating the bridgehead must be carefully prepared, especially in view of the relative weakness of the infantry, in regard both to their numbers and to their experience; due to the shortage of men and materials, the attack could not be repeated if the first attempt failed.

On 1 February the Fourteenth Army issued an order regarding the operations for the next few days. This order stressed the need for defending the existing line by all possible means. Special importance was attached to active and passive defence against tanks, above all other considerations, so that if the enemy attack was renewed, a break-through at least would be prevented. At the same time it emphasised that digging in to the positions then held must not be taken as indicative of a change-over to defensive operations, nor was the German soldier's keenness to attack to be allowed to weaken: the building of defence positions was to be regarded merely as a means of preserving the striking power of the coming German attack.

As a result of the enemy's cleverly contrived measures to deceive the Germans, particularly by increased air reconnaissance and air attacks, C. in C. South West was led to expect a new landing operation by the Allies in the Civitavecchia area.

A deterioration in the situation on the Cassino front resulted in the first transfer of a fighting unit (the machine gun battalion of 1st Paratroop Division) from the bridgehead to the Tenth Army front.

The fighting so far at the bridgehead had shown that it was not possible for the command to function properly with only one corps headquarters staff and the army had therefore requested another. C. in C. South West ordered the staff of LXXVI Panzer Korps to transfer from the left flank of the Tenth Army front to the Fourteenth Army's front at the bridgehead. At 1200 hours on 4 February it assumed command of the middle and eastern sectors of the bridgehead front from west of the Anzio-Albano road (Graeser group) to the east. I Paratroop Corps retained command over 4th Paratroop Division and 65th Infantry Division. In addition, 1 Paratroop Corps was ordered to consolidate the Campagna switch-line between the Tiber and Lake Albano. (See Map 2 of Part II, Chapter 2). For this purpose the commandant of Rome was placed tactically under command of the corps.

A review of the situation made by the Fourteenth Army on 3 February showed that, in general, enemy forces had been correctly assessed. (The presence of 1st British and 3rd U.S. infantry divisions and of 1st U.S. Armoured division had been confirmed by prisoners; 504th Paratroop Regiment and three battalions of Rangers had been similarly confirmed. 45th Division was also believed to be in the bridgehead and it was possible that one further British division, units of 2nd U.S. Armoured Division and also another corps headquarters staff had been landed.) The enemy's success so far was attributed to his heavy artillery and his seemingly inexhaustible supplies of ammunition and to his supremacy in the air. The German army's purpose was to prevent a break-through by the enemy and to prepare an offensive designed to eliminate the bridgehead.

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As the available German forces were rightly considered to be inadequate for an all-out attack to clear the bridgehead, the Army intended to make a number of small-scale attacks in order to weaken the enemy gradually. Thus the fullest possible use would be made of the present opportunity until it became possible to launch a large-scale attack to clear the bridgehead.

The first small-scale attack of the type described was to commence during the night of 3/4 February and its object was to eliminate the enemy salient north of Aprilia. If possible, the attack was to be continued beyond Aprilia to the south. But the Army did not expect to be able to clear the bridgehead by this process of limited attacks with the forces at their disposal. New forces were therefore requested. The army felt that a further weakening of the coastal defence forces was now possible, since for the time being practically all the enemy's reserves were tied up at Anzio.

This intended small scale attack against the enemy salient began during the night of 3/4 February. It was under the sole command of I Paratroop Corps. The attack had actually been scheduled to begin during the night of 2/3 February, but the command post of the artillery commander of I Paratroop Corps was hit during an enemy air raid and the entire communications network of the corps temporarily put out of action, so the attack had to be postponed for 24 hours. The following took part in the attack:

- (a) The West Group (1 reinforced regiment of 65th Infantry Division) from both sides of Hill 100 (see Map 3).
- (b) The East Group (1 reinforced regiment of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division and three battalions of 715th Division) - see Map 3.

The objective of these battle groups was to cut off the enemy salient as far south as possible and then roll it up northwards. If circumstances were favourable, the attack was to be pressed forward immediately to Aprilia.

Overcoming powerful enemy defence, both groups made good progress and linked up on the main road. Deeply escarped river valleys and the effects of rain and mud impeded the operations of German tanks to a great extent, and in consequence, the infantry had to bear the brunt of the attack. Enemy artillery fire was very heavy and naval guns also took part in the bombardment. During the afternoon of 4 February a counter-attack made by 168th Brigade of 56th (British) Division - which had just arrived at the bridgehead - supported by the 46th (British) Tank Battalion, succeeded in re-establishing contact with 3rd Brigade of 1st (British) Division, which had been cut off by the German attack, thus bringing relief to this sorely harassed formation. 168th Brigade also took over the defence of the switch front south of the former salient. Enemy losses in these battles were very heavy (1,400 men), but when the new brigade went into action, the Allies' defence was so strengthened that the Germans were unable to carry out their plan to continue their advance immediately and capture Aprilia. However, 3rd Brigade of 1st British Division was so heavily hit that it had to be withdrawn from the front and placed in reserve for the time being. The all-important factor emanating from this attack was that for the first time the Germans had been able to take the initiative. Now they had to retain it.

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An immediate consequence of the German attack was that the enemy now devoted more attention to building defensive positions. Three lines of defence were established (see Map 3): the Initial Line which was the main defensive line, the Intermediate Line and the Final Beachhead Line.

The next offensive on a limited scale took place on 5 February when units of the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division and 26th Panzer Division attacked in the Cisterna area. In the course of operations to straighten their lines, the Germans occupied Ponte Rotto which was as important for defence as it was essential for use as a spring-board for offensive operations in this area. The enemy suffered heavy losses, the 1st Battalion of 3rd U.S. Division being especially hard hit.

Since the enemy salient had been eliminated during the night of 3/4 February and 4 February, preparations had gone ahead for the resumption of the attack, the next objective being the capture of the Aprilia area. This attack was to be made by strong units of 65th Division, whose sector of the front was reduced for this purpose by a corresponding extension of the sector covered by 4th Paratroop Division. I Paratroop Corps was put in command of the operation. The attack was to be made west of the Albano - Anzio road while LXXVI Panzer Corps made the main attack on both sides and east of this road with the Graeser Group. Attacks designed to contain the enemy were to be made in the west by 4th Paratroop Division and in the east by units of 26th Panzer Division and the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division (see Map 4). The attack began during the night of 7/8 February and at first both attacking groups made good progress. Once again, the difficulties encountered by the attacking forces were caused less by the resistance of enemy infantry than by massed, heavy artillery fire (in which naval guns also took part) and by widespread minefields. Aprilia itself could not be taken during this night; this was postponed till the following night (8/9 February). Numerous enemy counter-attacks were repulsed in the course of 8 February. At midnight on 8 February the German attack was resumed. Aprilia was indeed taken, but on the other hand the enemy was able to hold Carroceto in spite of the heavy attacks of 65th Infantry Division. Once again, it was necessary to postpone the attack against this important point until the night of 9/10 February. Enemy losses were again heavy. Units of 1st U.S. Armoured Division made repeated counter-attacks during 9 February to relieve the hard-pressed 1st (British) Division. Most of these attacks were made in company strength and resulted in heavy enemy losses. The enemy found it necessary to send a regimental group of 45th Division into action on the east flank of 1st Division during the afternoon in order to relieve pressure on that division. During this day the Allied forces appeared for the first time to be suffering from a shortage of artillery ammunition. However, this shortage was compensated by the operations of strong formations of bombers and fighter-bombers giving tactical support to ground forces. 65th Division resumed the attack during the night of 9/10 February and this time Carroceto was taken.

After heavy fighting, in which they sustained severe losses, the Germans succeeded in capturing that area around Aprilia which was so important in their plans for a decisive attack. The fighting demonstrated once again that owing to the enemy's vastly superior artillery fire and to his air supremacy maintained by the operations of strong bomber and fighter-bomber formations, a German attack could be made only at the expense of heavy losses. But enemy losses also had been high. As a result of the fighting around Aprilia, 45th Division had to take over the sector east of the main road from 1st Division. This meant that there was only one regiment holding the entire width of the sector vacated by 45th Division (the regiment of 45th Division on the west flank of the bridgehead was replaced, with the exception of one battalion, by an engineer regiment employed as infantry).

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On 11 February the enemy tried to recapture Aprilia with the newly operational 45th Division supported by 191st Tank Battalion. The fighting was heavy but the attack was beaten off. On the same day exceptionally strong bomber formations were employed to give tactical support to the enemy ground forces in the Aprilia area. However, increasingly overclouded conditions hindered their operations later in the day.

The capture of Aprilia meant that the second of the larger but limited German attacks had been successfully concluded. The question now as whether the German forces were still strong enough, in spite of the losses they had suffered, to carry through a decisive attack against the bridgehead before the enemy time to obtain reinforcements. Time, undoubtedly favoured the enemy; this factor made it imperative for the attack to begin at the earliest possible moment. On the other hand, an attack on this scale needed to be made with such abundant forces, and to be so well prepared that its success was really assured, for it was evident from the general situation on the German side that it was doubtful whether sufficient forces could be scraped together for a further attack - as the Army Commander had already pointed out - if the initial attack failed. In view of these contradictory factors, it was not easy to choose the best time for the attack.

There was no large-scale fighting during the next few days until the German offensive aimed at forcing a decision began on 16 February, but local attacks in the Aprilia area and southwest of Cisterna continued.

During these days of comparative inactivity, while preparations were being made for the coming attack, a considerable amount of re-grouping was carried out. Briefly, these changes were as follows:

- (a) To replace 29th Panzer Grenadier Division released by Tenth Army for the 14th Army attack, the latter had to hand over units of 71st Division operating with it. This exchange took place between 10 and 14 February.
- (b) Units of the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division were concentrated for the offensive by transferring a reinforced regiment (956th) of 362nd Division - which covered the sector between the Cecina and the Tiber estuary - to LXXVI Panzer Corps. The regiment arrived there on 14 February. The fusilier battalion of this division had already been transferred some days previously to the sector of the bridgehead front covered by LXXVI Panzer Corps.
- (c) A reinforced regiment of 362nd Infantry Division which had remained for the time being in the Rimini area after the rest of the division had been transferred to the west coast north of the Tiber estuary, was now moved to the Pescara area for use as army group reserves.

The thoughts and work of the personnel at all command posts during this period were concentrated on completing the preparations for the forthcoming decisive and critical attack. Hitler placed considerable political significance on the outcome of this battle. He believed that if it ended successfully the Allied invasion of western Europe would at least be postponed. For this reason, he exerted pressure for the attack to be launched at the earliest possible moment. Hitler and OKW interfered a great deal with the tactical direction of the attack. Thus, Hitler ordered the attack to be made on a front of scarcely more than 6 km. The

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The Army's objections to this on the ground that it would involve the massing of men in the smallest possible area were not heeded. In the light of their previous experience, the Army maintained that concentration of this kind was a mistake in view of the enemy's great superiority of artillery - especially regarding the supplies of ammunition - and also because they were able to use strong bomber formations to give tactical support to the ground defence.

Owing to the nature of the terrain, there were only two possible directions in which the attack might be made: either on both sides of the Aprilia - Anzio road or south west from the Cisterna area. I have already mentioned elsewhere why the more outflanking direction of attack near the coast was not considered feasible. It was decided that the attack should be launched on both sides of the Aprilia - Anzio road as this provided relatively the best conditions for tank operations and also because it was the shortest route to the vital part of the coast at Anzio. Considering the choice in retrospect, it must be admitted that the direction decided upon had one very serious disadvantage: the enemy was strong and alert on this front as a result of the fighting which had taken place earlier for the salient of 1st British Division and for Aprilia. The enemy expected the German attack to be made here and were not taken by surprise. Bearing in mind the disadvantages mentioned and knowing the exact situation on the enemy front, I believe now that a more outflanking direction for the attack from the area of 65th Division and 4th Paratroop Division would have been much more favourable. If the attack had been made in this direction it would have taken the enemy by surprise and it would have been made against weakly held positions. Granted that tanks could not have been used to full advantage owing to the nature of the terrain, this would not have made such difference because, as was discovered during the actual attack, neither could they be used on either side of the road south of Aprilia.

On 9 February the Army issued the first order for the attack. This stated that it was to commence on 16 February from the sector of attack 1.5 km. west of the Aprilia - Nettuno road to the Fosso di Spaccassi, that is to say, on a front of slightly more than 6 km. I Paratroop Corps was to attack to the west of the road while LXXVI Panzer Corps would proceed along and to the east of the road. The boundary between the two corps would be close to the west side of the road. The task of I Paratroop Corps (4th Paratroop Division and 65th Infantry Division) was to attack in a southerly direction with a concentration of all its available forces, the main effort being on its east flank, and by it to protect the west flank of LXXVI Panzer Corps at the same time. The crucial part of the entire attack would be carried out by LXXVI Panzer Corps. It was to attack in two waves:

1st wave: 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, the Infantry Lehr-Regiment, 114th Rifle Division and 715th Infantry Division (Motorised);

2nd wave: 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and 26th Panzer Division.

See Map 5 for dispositions of divisional and army troops.

The task of the first wave was to break through the enemy front with a drive to the south. The second wave was then to go through the gap the first wave had created in the enemy defences and under command of Army H.Q., make a deep thrust to Anzio where it would proceed to roll up the enemy on both sides. All sectors of the front not taking part in the attack were to be weakened as far as was possible. In order to mislead the enemy, continual assaults were to be made along the entire front, particularly in sectors held by 4th Paratroop Division and the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division. 26th Panzer Division was to assemble in the area north west of Cisterna and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division in

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- 14 -

the area west of Velletri. These two divisions were to carry out reconnaissance of the Cisterna area, the troops wearing the black uniforms of armoured troops, in order to mislead the enemy into expecting an attack in this area. These divisions were not to move to their battle stations on the Albano-Aprilia road until after the attack had begun.

A supplementary Army order was issued on 13 February. It directed that the assault operations intended to pin down the enemy should begin at 0400 hours. However, this order was altered on 15 February by an amendment stating that on no account should any unusual assault operations be carried out during the night before the attack was to begin, in order to preserve the element of surprise for the main attack. Simultaneously with the main attack, which was to begin about 0630 hours, a feint attack would be made by LXXVI Panzer Corps against Isola Bella. The operations on this sector were to be supported by heavy artillery in order to heighten the illusion that a large-scale attack was being launched there. The Army order again emphasised the necessity for the closest co-operation between the artillery and the infantry. Owing to the shortage of ammunition the artillery was unable to support the infantry by means of a creeping barrage. The artillery could provide only a brief preparatory barrage against known points of resistance and thereafter it would have to fire only on selected visible targets. It was stressed that tanks and assault guns could not operate ahead of the infantry owing to the enemy's strong anti-tank defences and to mine-fields, and therefore must operate only with infantry cover. It was forbidden for security reasons to refer to the coming attack in telephone conversations. In order to ensure still further the element of surprise, an order of 15 February directed that the noise made by tanks moving to their battle stations between 2400 and 0400 hours was to be drowned by the noise of nuisance attacks by aircraft and artillery. This order finally fixed the time for the commencement of the attack for 0630 hours.

The preparations for the attack and the assembly of troops taking part in it proceeded for the most part according to plan. The principle shortcomings were:

- (a) Several groups which arrived from Germany shortly before the attack began, e.g. the Infantry Lehr-Regiment, did not have time to become orientated; moreover, some of the vehicles of these units were missing. The Army's request that the attack be postponed for one or two days in view of these very serious handicaps was not granted.
- (b) Artillery ammunition necessary for such a large-scale attack against an enemy so alert in defence could not be made available. This shortage prompted the special order concerning the use of German artillery issued on 13 February and mentioned previously. The lack of artillery ammunition was particularly serious having regard to the plentiful supplies available to the enemy.
- (c) The Army took an even more serious view of the fact that the enemy had complete air supremacy. Compared with the operations of the Allied air forces, those of the Luftwaffe were on a very small scale even though they did everything it was in their power to do.

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- (d) The concentration of large numbers of men into a very small area in the sector of attack caused the Army great anxiety in view of the enemy's vastly greater supplies of artillery ammunition and his air supremacy, which were bound to cause heavy losses of personnel. However, none of the objections raised by the Army resulted in an alteration to this order by O.K.W. (Hitler).

At this juncture, before I begin to describe the first large-scale German offensive, I must deal briefly and as far as my memory permits, with the question of German artillery.

The Army realised the decisive importance of artillery in this battle. Shortly after assuming command on the bridgehead front, Army H.Q. therefore consolidated all corps and army artillery commander. Divisional artillery regiments were not included in this consolidation as they were usually at the disposal of their division, though from time to time, under special circumstances they were required to take part in large scale barrages. This consolidation was to include Nebelwerfer (six-barrelled rocket projectors) and all anti-aircraft guns which could be used in a ground role. Artillery observations for the whole group was good due to the rising ground surrounding the perimeter of the bridgehead. The actual gun positions were also good, forming a complete semi-circle around the bridgehead, which made it possible to cover the bridgehead with concentric fire. The consolidated artillery was divided into long range and close range groups, under strict fire control and whose fire could be switched easily and quickly from one target to another. Particularly good work was done in this respect by the artillery control battery 'Feuerleitbatterie' (prediction and survey) attached to Army, with whose help it was possible to concentrate the fire of complete groups on to one target in the shortest possible time. Artillery observation by normal artillery OPs and by flash-spotting and sound ranging batteries was also very valuable. The results of this observation not only gave the Army a clear picture of the strength, organisation and positions of the enemy, thus making it possible for effective attacks to be made upon them, but in addition the extensive communications network of the artillery, with its efficient line and wireless communications, provided Army H.Q. with valuable tactical observation. In spite of the chronic shortage of ammunition the achievements of the German artillery on the bridgehead front were outstanding.

After the Germans captured Aprilia, the enemy naturally expected an attack to be made. The fighting since 30 January had caused very heavy losses, especially to 1st British Division. In order to make good these losses, to strengthen the defence and possibly to be able to resume the offensive later, the Allies had brought in 56th British Division to the bridgehead since the beginning of February. 168th Brigade of this Division arrived on 3 February, 167th Brigade on 13 February and 169th Brigade on 18 February. After the arrival of 167th Brigade the remainder of 1st British Division was relieved at the front and taken into reserve. This regrouping by the enemy was completed just as fresh troops arrived (45th and 56th Divisions) on the morning of 16 February in the sector of the front opposite the base line from which the German attack was to be launched which was held by I Paratroop Corps and LXXVI Panzer Corps.

At the beginning of the attack both sides had roughly the same strength of artillery (slightly more than 400 guns each) not including the naval artillery used by the enemy. According to the "Fifth Army History", the enemy himself estimated that the Allies fired an average of 25,000 rounds per day compared with the 1,500 fired by German artillery.

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Refer to Map 5 for information regarding the position of forces on the first day of the German offensive (16 February).

After normal activity by reconnaissance and raiding parties during the night, the attack opened on 16 February at 0630 hours following a short bombardment by all German artillery. To make things easier for LXXVI Panzer Corps, the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division was placed for the time being immediately under its command at the beginning of the attack. The feint attacks by units of the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division in the Cisterna area were very soon recognised as such by the enemy. Only local gains of territory were made here before the attack was halted by the enemy's defensive fire. The feint attack made by 4th Paratroop Division on the west flank of the bridgehead was much more successful. This division made a break-through in depth on the front of 56th British Division; the enemy division was obliged to bring up its reserve brigade and send it into action. It was not until about midday that the enemy perceived that the Germans were not following up their success on this sector and realised that this too, was a feint attack. However, contrary to the version given in the "Fifth Army History", I must add that my personal recollection is that the German command did not realise the extent of this success by 4th Paratroop Division.

From the very beginning the main attack on both sides of the main road met with exceptionally strong resistance. The enemy's greater supplies of artillery ammunition, which enabled him to fire twenty rounds for every one fired by the Germans, caused considerable casualties from the start. As the frost during the night had not made the ground hard enough to permit tanks to manoeuvre over it freely, they were confined to movement on roads and tracks and their operations were therefore completely canalized. Moreover, their movements were hindered by deeply excavated trenches which ran at right angles to their direction of advance. The German airforce also took part in the operations during the day, mainly by making numerous fighter bomber sorties in the battle area. For the most part they attacked ships, harbour installations and the airfield at Anzio and enemy gun positions. But the forces of the Luftwaffe were not sufficient to achieve more than nuisance raids.

As a result of the extraordinarily strong defence in which naval artillery also took part, and of the very limited scale on which German tanks could operate, the brunt of the fighting was borne by the infantry. Though the fighting was fierce, it was not possible to do more during this day than push back the most advanced enemy companies. The unusually powerful effect of enemy artillery, both as regards the actual damage it caused and its effect on morale, caused troops of the highest quality to be thrown back - such troops as the Infantry Lehr-Regiment which had been rushed from Germany and immediately thrown into this battle of massed materials and munitions.

Army was dissatisfied at the conclusion of the first day's fighting. While it was evident that the enemy had suffered losses equally as heavy as the Germans', on the other hand, he had not yet been forced to put his reserves into action, particularly 1st U.S. Armoured Division. But the outcome of the battle was still undecided, even the strong reserves of the first wave had not been called upon, while the two divisions of the second wave of attack had not gone into action at all. For this reason the Army Commander rejected a suggestion by C. in C. South West that the two reserve divisions should now go into action. The first day's fighting had shown that there was no doubt that the decisive battle would last longer than had been expected; nevertheless, the Army hoped to be able to force a break-through the next day.

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An Army order issued in the evening of 16 February emphasized the importance of allowing the enemy no rest during the night. The attack was to be continued throughout the hours of darkness by strong assault parties supported wherever possible by tanks operating on roads and tracks. The first objective of the two corps would be to capture Route 82, after which bridgeheads would have to be established across the Carocetello river. 26th Panzer Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division were to stand by ready to exploit immediately any success achieved.

See Map 5 for the second day of the attack (17 February).

The continuation of the attack by assault troops during the night met with some success. A deep thrust was made along the Aprilia - Anzio road between two regiments (157th and 179th) of 45th Division. German reserves were brought up and the advance was quickly exploited. By midday a wedge about 3 km wide and 1½ km deep had been driven into the front of the 45th Division. This success was achieved in spite of the fact that during this day the enemy artillery fired the greatest number of rounds since the landing was made and although 198 fighter-bombers, 69 light, 176 medium and 288 heavy bombers dropped a total of about 1,100 tons of bombs in the battle area. The morale of even the best German infantry troops was bound to be affected by this devastating use of munitions. Although German artillery was used to a greater extent than hitherto, its expenditure of ammunition could not possibly have been more than a tenth of the enemy's. The order from C. in C. South West insisting on the conservation of ammunition notwithstanding the continuation of the attack, made things particularly difficult for the Germans for the reasons already mentioned. The enemy also suffered grievous losses during the second day of the German offensive and had been compelled to throw into the battle the first units of the 1st U.S. Armoured Division as reinforcements. 1st British Division, which had been put in reserve after having been heavily hit in earlier fighting, was brought back into action during the evening in the rear of the battle field as rearguard along Route 82. Counter attacks made by units of 45th U.S. Division during the night of 17/18 February were repelled.

The first wave of the German attacking forces had incurred heavy losses due to the enemy's overwhelming artillery fire and air operations and the fighting strength per battalion now average 120 to 150 men. They could therefore no longer be expected to make the break-through as had been planned. In the evening of 17 February it therefore had to be decided whether the attack should be discontinued altogether or whether it would be possible to achieve a success if the second wave were put into action. Apart from the fact that the higher authorities had ordered that the offensive be continued, the Army was also of the opinion that every possible means must be tried to force a decision favourable to the Germans. In spite of the enemy's unprecedented superiority in the supply of materials he had suffered heavy losses during the second day; if, as seemed possible, the battle was almost won, it would be folly to break off now.

For this reason, on the evening of 17 February the Army ordered that the attack be continued during the night by the forces of the first wave while both divisions of the second wave were being brought up to the sector of LXXVI Panzer Corps. These divisions were to attack at 04.00 hours on 18 February from the forward positions reached by the first wave. I Paratroop Corps was to link up from the west with this attack, their primary task being to protect the western flank as the wedge was driven deeper into the enemy front. Attention was specially drawn to the necessity for protecting the eastern flank from enemy attacks supported by tanks from the Padiglione area. It was correctly anticipated that enemy resistance would now be strongest along Route 82 and in between this road and the wood to the south of it.

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See Map 5 for details of the third day of the attack (18 February).

Numerous assault troops continued the attack during the night. On the morning of 18 February 26th Panzer Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division continued the attack, I Paratroop Corps joining in on the flank. 715th Infantry Division was not transferred to the area south east of Aprilia as corps reserve. Already before midday 26th Panzer Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division had successfully broken through to Route 82. Here, however, the German divisions encountered extraordinarily fierce resistance and the enemy made repeated counter-attacks with tanks. Though the heavily overcast sky prevented massed raids by enemy aircraft, the enemy artillery barrage was again particularly heavy. In consequence, German losses were once more very heavy and the breakthrough in depth which had been hoped for could not be made. The fighting strength of 65th Division (minus one regiment which had not yet arrived), for instance, was only 26 officers and 871 men. Enemy losses were also heavy on the third day of the offensive. In order to strengthen his defence, the enemy regrouped part of his forces during the night of 18/19 February and was compelled to take soldiers from duties behind the lines to provide infantry replacements at the front.

In the course of the day's fighting the two divisions which had just gone into action reached the area of Route 82 and forced a small wedge in the defences there, but the divisions on the flanks had held well back. In fact, they were held up by an exceptionally valorous enemy force in the area of Buon Riposo (west of the main road); the eastern flank was also in great danger from the direction of Padiglione. In any case the situation on the flanks would have to be improved before a deep thrust to the south was possible. By the evening of 18 February there was no doubt that the German attack must be considered a failure; the impetus of the attack was broken. In consequence, all that was achieved during the hard fighting of the following day was the consolidation of both flanks of the wedge that had been driven into the enemy lines; but it was no longer possible to think of resuming the German offensive. Gradually the initiative passed over to the enemy; the number and strength of his counter-attacks increased; the devastating artillery barrage and aerial bombardment he kept up led not only to continued losses but also to a marked falling off of the physical and moral resistance of German troops. Those who experienced the formidable power of the enemy's armaments can well understand this. Nevertheless, the achievements of the German soldier in this, the fifth year of the war, in a battle in which masses of materials were employed, must be recognised as truly remarkable.

A new course of action had to be decided upon. However, before I deal with this I should like to say something more about the first large-scale attack made by the Germans.

1. The attack was planned on the basis of a thrust by deeply echeloned forces to the Anzio district of the coast by the shortest route, over comparatively the best ground for tank operations. This basic idea, that is, of being able to feed the attack with appropriate reserves from the rear, conformed to a self-evident, fundamental military principle; unfortunately, only too often this principle could not be observed by the Germans during this war owing to lack of forces. In this particular instance, this obvious military rule was exaggerated beyond all reason on explicit orders from OKW. To send six divisions into an

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- 19 -

attack on a front scarcely more than six kilometres wide against an enemy possessing air supremacy and vastly more artillery ammunition than the attacking force could result only in unprecedented losses and failure. Where such a concentration is expedient, then a corresponding concentration of materials must be at the disposal of the troops involved. This was not the case in this attack; on the contrary, the ammunition available to the Germans was not more than 5 to 10 per cent of the quantity at the disposal of the Allies, and in addition, the enemy had complete mastery in the air.

2. The main reasons for the failure of the attack were:

- (a) As described under (1) above - the concentration of masses of men in the smallest area without a corresponding concentration of the essential materials, and also the enemy's air supremacy.
- (b) The fact that it was impossible to make full use of tanks, which were confined to operations on roads and tracks.
- (c) The exceptionally high losses caused for the reasons given under (a) and the inevitable reaction these losses had on morale. Vitally necessary though it was to relieve such hard-hit divisions as 65th, 114th Rifle and 715th Infantry (motorised), owing to the acute shortage of manpower generally, it was not possible to withdraw more than individual battalions alternately for 10 to 14 days' rest.
- (d) The tough resistance of the enemy.

The accounts of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division (General Fries) and of 26th Panzer Division (Colonel Graf Bernsdorff) also provide good descriptions of the Germans' first large-scale attack.

As already mentioned, it was now necessary to arrive at a new decision. Since the higher authorities attached great political significance and propaganda value to the attack, for the reasons previously stated, it was now merely a question of choosing another zone of attack and deciding upon an alternative plan. The Army therefore decided on 22 February that the new attack should be launched from the Cisterna area. (See Map 6). In the light of the experience gained during the offensive south of Aprilia, the new attack was to be launched on a considerably wider front so as to avoid concentrating troops into a small area, to reduce the effectiveness of enemy artillery and to enable tanks to operate to greater advantage.

The following forces were available for this new attack:

The "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division
26th Panzer Division
29th Panzer Grenadier Division and
362nd Infantry Division,

brought up from the coastal sector Cecina-Tiber Estuary which sector was then taken over by the newly formed 92nd Infantry Division. 362nd Infantry Division itself relieved the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division until 18 February as the latter was required for the assault.

The "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division and 26th Panzer Division together with 362nd Infantry Division were to be put in the front line, while 29th Panzer Grenadier Division was for the time being to be held in readiness as reserve in the area west of Velletri; from here, depending upon the way the situation developed, this reserve division could be used either to mop up enemy positions south west of Cisterna from the west, or to attack the enemy on the eastern flank from the direction of Borgo Podgora, in the Isola Bella area.

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- 20 -

In order to make 362nd Infantry Division also available for attack, the sector of the front which they had taken over temporarily from the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division, had to be reduced. To this end, 715th Infantry Division, which had become available since the attack south of Aprilia was discontinued, was put into the eastern sector of the bridgehead from west of Cisterna to the coast (from about 23 February).

It was desirable to begin the attack as soon as possible so that the enemy would be taken by surprise. However, the necessary regrouping and changes of the forces taking part and the provision of supplies of ammunition would take several days to complete. All possible measures were to be taken, therefore, to conceal these preparations from the enemy, one of the measures taken was to provide dummy tanks for distribution behind the sector held by 4th Paratroop Division in the Ardea area while real tanks were placed in and south of Borgo Podgora, on the eastern flank of the bridgehead.

In order to ease the pressure on LXXVI Panzer Corps and at the same time to consolidate the Aprilia area into one sector, 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division was placed under the command of I Paratroop Corps with effect from midday 25 February; the Infantry Lehr-Regiment remained under command 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division.

The Army issued an order on 25 February concerning the renewal of the attack. It set the time for the beginning of the attack at 04.00 hours on 28 February. The tasks of the corps taking part would be:

(a) I Paratroop Corps was to simulate preparations for an attack launched from its sector, particularly by making widespread raids during the night of 27/28 February. It was specially important that the enemy should get the impression that a strong attacking force was being assembled in the Ardea area. For this purpose, as already mentioned, dummy tanks were to be distributed over this area. The artillery was also to make it appear that a large number of guns was being assembled in this area. Finally, the illusion of large-scale preparations was to be heightened by conspicuous movement of vehicles of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division on 26 and 27 February and during the night of 27/28 February in the Ardea area.

(b) LXXVI Panzer Corps was to simulate preparations for a large-scale offensive across the Mussolini Canal in its southern sector (south of Borgo Piave). For this purpose, the main defence line which had been withdrawn from the Mussolini Canal to the east, was to be pushed forward again as near the Canal as possible during the night of 26/27 February by small assault groups supported by tanks. On the other hand, conspicuous reconnaissance activity in the actual area from which the attack would be launched was forbidden. It was very important that LXXVI Panzer Corps should quickly establish bridgeheads over the Astura.

On 27 February the attack was postponed till 29 February. During the night of 27/28 February 29th Panzer Grenadier Division began to transfer from the front south of Aprilia to the area west of Velletri. There was relatively little activity during the days preceding the beginning of the 2nd German attack. The Commander of the Fourteenth Army reported briefly to C. in C. South West on the condition of the troops. He referred to their lack of training and battle experience, particularly of the newly arrived divisions. He stressed the heavy losses that had occurred, especially to 65th Infantry Division, 114th Rifle Division and

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715th Infantry Division (Motorised). He mentioned that 75% of the casualties were caused by enemy artillery and 10% to 15% was attributable to enemy air operations.

The regrouping of German forces and the preparations for the attack were not hidden from the enemy. Thanks to his superiority in the air, he was able to detect all the measures the Germans took to conceal their real purpose. Such artifices are necessary and legitimate, but they can be expected to succeed only if the enemy is prevented from discovering the real preparations being made; this can be done only if the air forces of the opposing forces are more or less equally matched.

The success of the German attack depended to a great extent on whether:

- (a) the enemy would be taken by surprise, and whether
- (b) German tanks would be able to operate.

Supposition (a) failed because in spite of all the measures taken to conceal the real preparations and to mislead the enemy by faked moves, owing to his mastery in the air he was able to differentiate between the simulated and the genuine moves made by our forces. In addition, the large-scale regrouping of German forces before the attack could not be completed quickly enough to preserve the element of surprise.

Supposition (b) failed because it so happened that a period of bad weather began during the night of 25/26 February, as a result of which the condition of the ground deteriorated to such an extent that not only tanks, but also artillery and heavy weapons could not venture off the roads. And the surfaces of some of the roads had been damaged to such an extent that even they were impassable for tanks. The mud was reminiscent of conditions on the Russian front. The weather was also responsible for the decision to postpone the attack till 29 February. I cannot remember why the attack was finally started in spite of the weather conditions, but I imagine an order from OKW must have been responsible, as Field Marshal Kesselring saw the condition of the ground himself at the battle headquarters of 362nd Infantry Division on the afternoon of 28 February. The only advantage deriving from these weather conditions - which, however, by no means outweighed the disadvantages - was the inability of the enemy air force to operate.

LXXVI Panzer Corps opened the attack on 29 February. The enemy defence was fully prepared and the Allies compensated for their inability to use their air force by well directed and exceptionally heavy artillery bombardments. The German troops became almost immobilised in the mud and could make only local gains of territory at the cost of considerable losses. Enemy artillery fire exceeded anything previously experienced in the fighting for the bridgehead and was twenty to thirty times heavier than the Germans' barrage. On 1 March the enemy went over to the attack in the entire battle area. Some of the ground won by the Germans during the previous day had to be given up. There is no need for me to go into details. The reports of 26th Panzer Division Colonel (Graf Bernsdorff) and 362nd Infantry Division (Lt. Colonel Duensing) deal comprehensively with this phase of the action. The German attack had to be abandoned on the evening of 1 March. On 2 March weather conditions improved and permitted the enemy air force to carry out large-scale operations again: 351 heavy and 113 light bombers attacked Velletri, Cisterna and Carroceto.

The commander of the Fourteenth Army informed the Field Marshal of the reasons for the failure of the attack, drawing attention once more to his report of 27 February. He referred once more to the enemy's prodigious superiority in materials and stated that he had come to the

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conclusion that the Germans could no longer afford to mount attacks on the scale of those launched hitherto simply by reason of their lack of manpower and materials. He assessed the situation correctly and anticipated that in the near future an attack would be made against the Tenth Army front simultaneously with a major offensive to enable the Allied forces to break out of the bridgehead. It therefore seemed to him that the best plan would be to conserve German fighting strength for defence against this offensive. This strategy would permit only small-scale attacks to be made to improve existing positions. The army commander succeeded in persuading the Field Marshal of the correctness of this appreciation of the situation. An Army order in line with the commander's views regarding the need for conserving German forces was issued in the evening of 1 March. The divisions were to train specially formed and equipped assault companies to carry out the small-scale attacks on the lines proposed. The mobile divisions were to be withdrawn from the front as soon as possible to form army reserves; the first to be withdrawn were 26th Panzer Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. But for the time being, however, 26th Panzer Division had to take over the sector covered by the "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division until it was released by Army. 26th Division took over this sector until 1200 hours on 6 March and between then and 14 March it was relieved by 362nd Infantry Division and 715th Infantry Division (Motorised). 26th Panzer Division was transferred to the Cori - Velletri area. The artillery regiment of the division and its anti-aircraft battery remained at the front, the reconnaissance battalion was placed under 715th Infantry Division and took over coastal defence duties in the Torre di Fogliano - Terracina area.

Following the publication of this Army order, offensive operations by the Germans were for the most part discontinued. After the race between the opposing armies for the acquisition of the initiative, the Germans had seized it at the beginning of February; and now, in spite of all their efforts to retain it, they had to discontinue offensive operations and see the initiative pass over to the enemy. Thanks to his almost inexhaustible supplies of men and materials, it was only a question of time before he exploited the advantageous position he was now in. The German Army was fully alive to the seriousness of the situation but the troops themselves had been always confident that they would be able to clear the bridgehead. But in spite of their extreme devotion to duty and their remarkable achievements, they had not succeeded. The reward for their bravery was that now they had somehow to extricate themselves from the wreckage and except for making small local attacks where possible, to prepare to defend themselves against an enemy offensive which was bound to come sooner or later.

The most important points which now had to be considered may be summarized as follows:

- (a) The formation and training of strong mobile reserves;
- (b) The provision of facilities for training and resting front-line division;
- (c) The establishment of a system of defence in depth;
- (d) Setting up strategic positions which would enable planned operations to be continued even after a successful attack by the enemy against the Tenth Army or after the enemy had succeeded in breaking out of the bridgehead.

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Steps had already been taken to form the strong mobile reserves required by (a) since the withdrawal from the front of 26th Panzer Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division. The measures referred to under (b) and (c) were immediately taken in hand by the Army and pursued with the utmost vigour. In connection with the measures mentioned under (d), the Commander-in-Chief South West issued an order at the beginning of March requiring the construction of the so-called C-line. This line extended along the Army's sector from the Ardea area through Velletri to west of Valmontone, where it connected with the 10th Army front. (For details see Major-General Bessall's report).

From this time till the beginning of the Allied offensive in May there was no large-scale fighting, but both sides remained on the alert; there was lively activity by raiding and reconnaissance parties and also small local attacks. The enemy was heavily reinforced during this lull at the front; eventually, some of the divisions were as many as 750 men above strength. Moreover, during the second week of March 5th (British) Infantry Division arrived to relieve 56th Infantry Division and from about 20 March the Allies were further re-inforced by 34th U.S. Infantry Division.

The Army requested that the following full divisions be transferred in addition to several individual troop units and apart from the withdrawal of mobile divisions to form reserves behind their front;

1. 114th Rifle Division to the Tenth Army;
2. The "Hermann Goering" Panzer Division to the von Zangen Army Group for coastal defence in the Leghorn area. This transfer was necessary because C. in C. South West believed that now there was increased danger of a new Allied landing on the west coast of Italy.

In view of the possibility of new enemy landings, the main reserves of the Fourteenth Army - 26th Panzer Division and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division - were ordered to be ready to leave at two hours notice every day between the hours of 2100 and 0300. A reconnaissance was to be made at once in connection with the deployment of forces in the Civitavecchia area.

Another measure taken to deal with the threat of another enemy landing was the transfer of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division to the area between the Tiber and the Via Appia as an Army reserve. From this area the division could be moved more quickly to the Civitavecchia district, for this was one of the places where C. in C. South West thought a new landing might be made. Places where the enemy might land were considered to be:

- (a) between the bridgehead and Terracina;
- (b) between the bridgehead and the Tiber estuary.
- (c) between the Tiber and the Cecina.

Plans were devised to cover landings at any of these points; it was decided which groups should be moved immediately to the threatened area in any given eventuality and all precautions were taken to ensure that the German forces concerned would be able to go into action quickly and without hitch.

The lull in the fighting also enabled improvements to be made in the organisation of German troops and provided an opportunity to give them extra training. Every battalion could now count on having ten days' rest in rear areas after three weeks' spell at the front. But this period of rest from the front would have to be used not only for further training and for improving the organisation of troops, but also for the construction of rear positions. There was therefore no question of time

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being allocated solely for rest. It may be mentioned in contrast that enemy troops remained only about 10 days at the front; they then spent two days in the intermediate line followed by six days complete rest.

At about midday on 29 March C. in C. South West issued the code word that signified an enemy landing was imminent in the Tarquinia - Civitavecchia area. Accordingly, 29th Panzer Grenadier Division (at first less one re-inforced regiment) was dispatched during the night of 29/30 March to the Lake Bracciano area. I do not remember which particular reports to C. in C. South West caused this order to be issued, but I recollect that 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was transferred from the command of the Tenth Army to replace 29th Panzer Grenadier Division and moved to the area between the Tiber and the Via Appia as Army reserve.

During March and April the Germans made the following smaller rearrangements:

(a) On 7 April the reconnaissance unit of 26th Panzer Division was relieved in the sector between the bridgehead and Terracina by the reconnaissance unit of 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division.

(b) About 17 April the two battalions of 16th SS-Panzer Grenadier Division on the eastern front of the bridgehead were relieved by 1028th Panzer Grenadier Regiment. The sector of the northern front of the bridgehead hitherto held by this regiment was subsequently covered by extending the sectors of the adjoining 362nd Infantry Division and 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division. The two battalions of 16th SS Panzer Grenadier Division returned to their own division located in the Florence area.

(c) The Army formed counter-attack groups from the Army Armoured units placed under its command; these groups replaced 26th Panzer Division which had become an Army reserve. They were held in readiness behind specially important sectors of the front.

(d) On 26 April units of 26th Panzer Division were transferred from the area west of Velletri to east of Sezze for use as Army reserve. From this locality they would be able to go into action quickly on the southern flank of the Tenth Army.

Although a whole series of plans was evolved during March and April for attacks on a limited scale to decrease the size of the bridgehead, none of them was put into operation owing to the Germans' shortage of forces and ammunition in contrast to the ever-increasing strength of the enemy. The enemy airforce was very active during this period and made it practically impossible for army vehicles to move by day.

The more the enemy exploited the initiative he had gained the clearer it became that the offensive he was preparing, whether it came sooner or later, would be made with vastly superior forces and involve the expenditure of enormous quantities of materials. There was a danger that the fighting strength of the Germans would be grievously impaired from the very beginning by the preparatory barrage of enemy artillery. To reduce this danger as far as possible, an order was issued for the German positions to be extended to a greater depth (3 to 4 Km). And in fact the effectiveness of enemy artillery was considerably reduced as a result of this disposition in depth of the German forces. In this way sufficient strong points remained in operation to bring the enemy attack to a halt.

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In addition, switch-lines were constructed in the rear to prevent an enemy break-through. Several switch-lines were made between Terracina and the bridgehead for the purpose of preventing an enemy break-through from the Terracina area in the direction of the bridgehead. The extension of rear positions would be made mainly further back in the C-Line.

The Army, C. in C. South West and OKW considered the best method of meeting a large-scale enemy offensive from every angle. The Army had staggered the defence in great depth. OKW (Hitler) suggested it might be advantageous to follow a plan similar to that used by the French in 1918: evacuating the front line shortly before the beginning of the offensive and waging the battle from the second line. However, this strategy could be employed only if the exact time of the start of the offensive was known, and this was not the case. If the first line were given up too soon in anticipation of the enemy attack, this would not remain unobserved for long by the enemy's reconnaissance and raiding parties which were always very active; thus it might be possible for the enemy to occupy the line vacated by the Germans without having to fight for it. It was therefore decided that a deep defence zone would be established in which the enemy attack would gradually be worn down and halted; a counter-attack would then be made by the reserve forces in order to recapture the old defence line.

In order to acquaint all grades of command with the ways in which it was possible for the enemy offensive to develop, tactical exercises without troops were carried out by Army and by Corps H.Q. It was always assumed that the enemy would launch twin attacks - one against the southern flank of the Tenth Army, the other against the German forces encircling the bridgehead. It was also expected that the enemy would attempt new landings in the area of Terracina or north of the Tiber.

As already mentioned, 29th Panzer Grenadier Division was transferred to the Bracciano Lake area on 29 March as C. in C. South West believed an enemy landing was imminent in the Civitavecchia district. Thus 92nd Infantry Division manned the strong points along the coast between the Cecina and the Tiber estuary and 29th Panzer Grenadier Division was behind this sector as a mobile reserve.

Since the time that all ideas of a German attack had to be dropped, German plans and measures had become more and more dependent on the enemy's probable course of action. Owing to the steady reduction of the fighting strength of the Germans on the bridgehead front, resulting from the transfer of some divisions to other fronts and from casualties (from 29 February to the end of April, 42,800 men), while the enemy's fighting strength and reserves of materials steadily increased, it became progressively more difficult to find a way of regrouping the remaining German forces which would be satisfactory whichever way the situation developed. This is a good example of what happens once the initiative is lost and forces are continually reduced. Nevertheless, the Command and the troops set about the task of preparing to meet the inevitable enemy offensive with systematic thoroughness. The Army was confident it could cope with any situation that might arise, in spite of the enemy's vast superiority, provided the forces available at the end of April remained at its disposal, and provided it could call upon the reserves (26th Panzer Division and 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions) standing by behind the front line. However, if any further forces had to be given up it seemed that the German position must become untenable.

Thus, at the beginning of May, the Army awaited the enemy attack. The might of the German forces had been greatly reduced by the withdrawal of divisions and by heavy losses in battle. But the will to resist was unbroken and the fighting spirit sustained by successes won in tough battles despite temporary crises.

/SUPPLEMENT

SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTER 12.

Commentary by General von Mackensen

on

"THE CAMPAIGN IN ITALY"

by

Major-General Wolf Hauser

Though I have no documentary corroboration of it and have to rely entirely on my memory, I believe that the narration of the events and their interpretation contributed by Major-General Hauser, then Chief of Staff of the Fourteenth Army, covering the period from the Allied landing at Anzio at the end of January till the fall of Rome at the beginning of June 1944, are substantially correct from an historical point of view. I have only a few criticisms to make.

PART I

1. The preparations for the decisive attack, which was launched on 16 February, were begun early in the same month. I had to submit my plan for the attack to Adolf Hitler at his East Prussian headquarters in the evening of 5 February. I am therefore in a position to confirm that Hitler not only urged that the preparations be made with the greatest possible speed, but that he also gave me many directions regarding the tactics to be employed in the attack; these directions were not at all helpful. He agreed to the general scheme for the utilisation of the forces but reduced in a calamitous manner as described by Major General Hauser the width of the sector of the front from which the attack was to be launched. He also categorially ordered that the Infantry Lehr-Regiment, which he valued particularly highly, was, contrary to my intentions, to be given the vital task of making the main effort of the attack.

I regard the reduction of the width of the front from which the attack was to be launched not so much from the point of view of the consequent massing of men in a small space, as from the standpoint that it makes it impossible to come to grips with the enemy's main forces and reserves, thus pinning them down, which could be achieved on a broader front. In my opinion, this was one of the reasons for the mistakes made in the attack. The losses were heavy, but as far as I remember, they were not disproportionately high for a large-scale attack of this kind. These losses were understandable quite apart from the overwhelming superiority of the enemy's artillery and air force.

The Infantry Lehr-Regiment proved a great disappointment on the first day of the attack. It suffered a heavy reverse. While the regiment was made up of excellent material, it had conducted training exercises only in Germany and had never faced the enemy as a formation. It was not equal to the excessive power of the enemy's weapons; in the succeeding days the regiment recovered.

A third direction given me in Hitler's presence by his chief adviser on tactics, General Jodl, concerned the inclusion of a creeping barrage, reminiscent of those used in World War I, in the plans for the attack. But this idea was dropped simply for lack of ammunition. In order to be effective the creeping barrage would have used up several allocations of ammunition.

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But there were only slightly more than two allocations available; it was also important to remain equipped to cope with counter-attacks. Supplies over the Alps were very unreliable.

2. Regarding the direction in which the attack was made, which Major-General Hauser discusses, his remarks apropos an attack from the area of the inner flank of 4th Paratroop Division and 65th Infantry Division are no doubt theoretically correct. But in any case they could not be taken into consideration at that time, as the considerable armoured forces - especially remote control tanks - made available by OKW, had to be dispensed with from the beginning. Not only Hitler and his military entourage, but also the tank experts themselves had counted upon the tanks and their ability to break through the enemy defences. Preliminary exercises carried out in my presence over ground comparable to that of the zone selected for the attack, gave every promise of success. This fact in conjunction with the confidence of the experts resulted in the command and troops alike expecting much more from the use of tanks than was justified by later events. The infantry felt it had been let down. This was another reason for the failure.

3. In August 1946 I read a report by a war correspondent in an American army newspaper in which he stated that the Allies' position at Anzio was so critical on 18 February 1944 that they ordered ships to be brought up in case it became necessary to evacuate the bridgehead. The correspondent concluded that the position was stabilized only by the heroic fight of an English battalion on the high ground around Buon - Ripose. I can well believe that this report is true. This fight resulted in 65th Infantry Division being held up on the west flank of the main attack and was the primary cause of their collapse on Route 82. But the courageous English battalion must have been practically wiped out. This also agrees with the figures of the fallen and prisoners of that period. The fight of this battalion won the greatest respect of its opponents even at the time.

Unfortunately, I cannot remember the name of the author or the title of this article. As far as I can remember, I believe this war correspondent also revealed that Field Marshal Alexander used the bridgehead as a large-scale preparation of his troops for the fighting north of Rome. This may also explain the night-long fires caused by the German nuisance barrage among the enormous supply dumps; at that time we were unable to reconcile these dumps with the actual strength of the enemy on the bridgehead. (cf. next paragraph).

4. After the force of the German attack was spent, a carefully thought-out and prepared nuisance barrage was maintained throughout every night, under the unified command of the senior artillery commander, at that time General Kruse. Thanks to the favourable conditions created by the nature of the terrain and to the valuable work of the artillery spotting companies, it was possible for the German artillery to cover every single position in the bridgehead. The numerous fires among enemy positions indicated that this barrage was very effective; I gather from the article in the newspaper already referred to that it also had a marked effect on morale; the reporter stated that Allied soldiers had informed him that Nettuno was worse than anything else they had experienced in the war. The "Feuerleit-Batterie" (artillery control battery) mentioned by General Hauser played an important part in obtaining such good results with the barrage. With its help it was possible to concentrate the fire of up to 15 batteries on one target in a very short time.

PART II

1. I am of the same opinion as General Westphal concerning Kesselring's lack of appreciation of the general situation after the start of the May offensive by the Allies against the Tenth Army, and the consequent "withdrawal of all reserves in the vicinity of the bridgehead", "the disastrous results of which had to be borne by the Fourteenth Army".

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This, I am sure, did not arise out of a consideration on his part of political, propaganda or prestige questions - unlike OKW and Hitler - but rather out of his own extreme optimism which, in my opinion, failed to take sufficient account of actual conditions. This was particularly true of his failure to appreciate how much more difficult it is in questions of space and time to overcome fortified positions in land warfare, than in air warfare, with which he was naturally more familiar.

As General Westphal points out, long-standing and deep-rooted differences of opinion between Field Marshal Kesselring and myself led me to ask him twice within a short time at the beginning of February, to transmit my request for a transfer to higher authorities. As I was unable to convince him that my less optimistic appraisal of the situation was correct, I felt I should be betraying the trust the troops placed in me if I did not tender my resignation. Unfortunately, at that time Kesselring refused my request. I repeated it for the third time on 31 May or 1 June. At 0600 hours on 6 June I handed over the supreme command of the Fourteenth Army to General Lemelsen.

2. If the order for the transfer of reserves from the Fourteenth Army to the Tenth Army was the first fundamental error, the sudden and completely unexpected shifting of the army boundary made the position much worse and almost intolerable for the Fourteenth Army. Map No. 1 of General Hauser clearly shows what an important sector, almost completely cleared of Tenth Army troops, in the rear of the Army, had to be given up as a result of this calamitous shifting of the Army boundary. 94th Infantry Division of the Tenth Army had a front-line strength of 200 (sic) men. The enemy launched his main thrust against this sector, using the French Expeditionary Force at the crucial point. The outcome of the battle north of Terracina was not surprising.

3. Field Marshal Kesselring refused to authorise the relaxation of pressure against the enemy in the bridgehead on 23 May but agreed to it in the evening of 24 May. However, pressure of swiftly-moving events had necessitated issuing the order to LXXVI Panzer Corps during the afternoon of 24 May, without waiting for Kesselring's sanction.

4. I was convinced then - and I still am convinced - that the enemy would never have been able to capture the Artemisio Ridge if the Hermann Goering Panzer Division had been placed at my disposal immediately it arrived. But I was ordered to muster them in the rear, and though two battalions were commanded to take over the foremost positions then reached, they were withdrawn again without my knowledge.

I cannot conclude my commentary without paying tribute, in gratitude and respect for their unprecedented heroism, to the splendid troops I commanded at the Anzio - Nettuno bridgehead. Where, as in the cases of the Infantry Lehr-Regiment and 362nd Infantry Division there was temporarily cause for complaint, the troops themselves - spurred by their own ambition - soon regained their reputation as first-class fighters. Even the enemy, who felt the effectiveness of our artillery on the bridgehead, will give credit perhaps to the heroic struggle of German troops, after 4½ years of war, if he bears in mind the fact that his ammunition supplies were ten times those of the Germans and that he held complete mastery of the air.

/CHAPTER 13.

CHAPTER 13 .ARMY GROUP'S COMMENTSByGeneral Westphal

The course of events at Anzio - Nettuno from 22 January to 11 May 1944 has been dealt with as exhaustively as the scope of the available materials, the limitations of human memory and the allotted time permit. There is nothing I can add to what has been written. The same applies to a great extent to the strategic and tactical questions as well as to the events viewed in retrospect, discussed in Chapter 12. The following notes are therefore concerned only with one or two points that seem to be especially important, in order to develop or underline them.

1. Events leading up to the landing at Anzio - Nettuno

The Army Group knew that Naples harbour had been made usable again comparatively quickly. The Army Group, and particularly Field Marshal Kesselring, continually stressed the need for air reconnaissance to be made over this important harbour as frequently as possible so that they could be kept informed of shipping movements there, for it was clear that any new landing operation by the enemy on the west coast of Italy would have to set out from Naples. For several months German aircraft had seldom been able to penetrate as far as Naples. When they did succeed in reaching the port, they were prevented by bad weather conditions or by strong defences from obtaining clear photographs of the shipping in the harbour. The last useful picture was obtained at the beginning of January 1944. It was awaited with impatience and showed there was about 400,000 tons of shipping space in the harbour and also a large number of landing craft. The tonnage itself gave no cause for alarm as yet. We knew that the railways in southern Italy, at the best of times not remarkably efficient, had not yet been fully restored and that in consequence, most of the enemy's supplies reached Naples by sea routes. However, Army Group regarded this latest information obtained by air reconnaissance as advanced warning of a projected new landing. They therefore examined once again the orders they had issued at the end of December 1943 relative to the rearrangement of forces in the event of landings. Of the five plans evolved to cover the five different ways the enemy might undertake new landing operations, the plan for Rome (Operation "Richard") received the most attention.

For this reason, Field Marshal Kesselring himself demanded that the Tenth Army release 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions to the Army Group for use as reserves in the Rome area. In exchange, he made 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division, which had been resting in Rome, available for the left wing of the Tenth Army front. From the beginning, the Army Group constantly endeavoured to have two divisions always available in the Rome area. Since August 1943, the Army Group had regarded this as the most endangered area of their long flank.

In this connection, Field Marshal Kesselring, in his own persistent manner, constantly referred to the long-established, fundamental principle that a commander without reserves is unable to exert any influence over the course of a battle. Once an operation or engagement is under way, the only means of influencing it and the outcome is by use of reserves. This was the basis for his ever-recurring demand that the armies segregate for themselves and their corps at least some reserves - even if they were small - and the Field Marshal himself constantly endeavoured to obtain reserves for the Army Group. As it was impossible to withdraw front-line divisions for rest periods according to a definite, regular plan, the only

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possible (though very limited) means of providing a short breathing space for a certain number of troop units was while reserves were being formed. Regarding complete formations generally it was possible to withdraw only the mobile divisions for one or two weeks from the front.

Hitherto only one division had been kept available in the Rome area for an emergency; but now, in January 1944, it was possible for the first time to have two mobile divisions there. Thus it was specially unfortunate that they had to be returned to the front again shortly before the enemy landing was made, because although these divisions had previously been mauled, they were still battle-worthy. Why was it necessary for this transfer to be made?

2. Reasons for the return of 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions to the Tenth Army

A heavy attack was launched against the southern part of the Tenth Army front on 12 January. On 18 January the attack was enlarged in scope to include also an assault against the Army's right wing. The enemy broke through these as far as Ausonia. In addition, he made a new landing on the right wing of the Army, in order to outflank the front in the coastal sector.

These attacks not only prevented the large-scale regrouping of the Tenth Army forces, planned in January 1944 for the purpose of obtaining reserves, from being carried through; they also resulted in the Rome area being denuded of troops. Thus the enemy's intention to tie up the German forces in this attack succeeded.

The Tenth Army reported that an enemy break-through was threatened on and beyond Ausonia into the Liri Valley. If the enemy gained control of the Liri Valley, a threat would exist which could not be eliminated and which might even affect the strategy of the campaign. The Army was not in a position to overcome this menace with the forces at its disposal. It needed assistance from at least two divisions in order to stabilise the situation. The Army hoped that in this way it would be able to end the battle with a complete defensive success. The divisions would be needed for only a few days; they would be at the disposal of the Army Group again after a very short time.

A bitter tussle now began over the disposition of the two divisions. It was exceedingly difficult for the Army Group to arrive at the most satisfactory decision. Was the situation at Ausonia really as critical as the Tenth Army depicted it? An even if it was, did it justify placing the Rome area in hazard by removing the two divisions to the Tenth Army front? Or should the Army Group not give any assistance and let matters run their course at the front? But if the Tenth Army's fears of an enemy break-through into the Liri Valley were realised, the damage would be irreparable.

There was a further complication: about the middle of January 1944 an enemy wireless message was intercepted which revealed that a landing operation was imminent. Perhaps this strengthened the argument put forward from several quarters that the landing had already been made and that the message referred to the operation that had just taken place on the right flank of the Tenth Army; if this were the case, no further landing need be feared in the immediate future.

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The Chief of the Office of Foreign Intelligence of G.H.Q. Admiral Canaris, visited Army Group H.Q. at this time. The following questions on matters of great importance were put to him: We are afraid there will be another landing, probably near Rome or Civitavecchia. Where are the enemy warships and aircraft carriers? Above all, where are all the materials required for a landing? How many ships are there in Naples harbour? The sense of the Admiral's answers to these pressing questions was as follows: At the present time there is not the slightest sign that a new landing will be undertaken in the immediate future. The number of ships in Naples harbour may be regarded as quite normal.

At last the Army Group felt they could not refuse the Tenth Army's request. They did not comply without misgivings: they would far rather have remained adamant. To facilitate the work of HQ XIV Armoured Corps on the southern wing of the Tenth Army, Army Group placed H.Q. Staff I Paratroop Corps temporarily at its disposal as an operational G.H.Q. of the two divisions.

3. The first days of the landing and the effectiveness of preparations that had been taken against this eventuality.

The first few days after the landing kept the Army Group in a state of acute continuous tension. The resistance of the weak holding forces and coastal artillery in the area south of Rome was soon overcome by the units of 6 U.S. Army Corps which landed first. Would it be possible to bring up a part of the German forces, which were en route, before the enemy could occupy the commanding heights south east of Rome. That was the vital question. If one looked at the matter dispassionately, one was bound to admit that there seemed to be little chance that reinforcements would arrive in time. On 22 January and even the following day an audacious and enterprising formation of enemy troops - e.g., a reinforced reconnaissance group - could have penetrated into the city of Rome itself without having had to overcome any serious opposition. Valmontone could also have been taken without any difficulty on 22 January. But the landed enemy forces lost time and hesitated; it was only this which enabled German counter-measures to succeed.

The steps which the Army Group had ordered to be taken in connection with Plan "Richard" were carried out in a manner which measured up to their expectations in every way. This bespeaks the excellence and precision of the preparatory work of all the associated sections of G.H.Q. and of the administrative offices, particularly of the Army H.Q. The armies and the independent battle groups lost no time in setting in motion the transfers they had to make under the plan. Indeed, at one stage the Army Group had to apply the brake, when they learned that C. in C. West had ordered 715th Infantry Division (motorised) to proceed to their destination uninterruptedly by day and night, regardless of traffic conditions and without thought for the wear on vehicles. The time taken for the transportation of the various groups corresponded with the estimates previously made and in some cases was even less. The Supreme Commander of the German Forces in Italy also backed up the Army Group in a most gratifying manner. Among other things he took care of the provision of directional signs on all the routes and arranged for the Appenine passes to be cleared of ice. It was his foresight in seeing that troops were regularly drilled in the procedure to be followed to effect speedy transfer from one locality to another that made it at all possible for the various groups of infantry to be brought up rapidly. In addition, refuelling was carried out en route without delays and without hitch.

The G.H.Q. of I Paratroop Corps was ordered to return at once and until it arrived the Commandant of Rome and his staff, enlarged for the purpose, was placed in command. It became evident soon after I Paratroop Corps had taken over the Command that it would not be able to direct defence

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at the bridgehead by itself. G.H.Q. Fourteenth Army was therefore ordered to take over. Its task in Northern Italy would now have to be entrusted to one of the Corps H.Q. Staffs there. It was a choice between H.Q. LXXXVII Army Corps on the Ligurian coast and the Commander, Adriatic Coast. The last-named could not easily be replaced in Istria - an area thoroughly terrorized by partisans. In any case, his Staff was at best only an improvised one. A considerably younger man, General von Zangen, and his staff were therefore commissioned to look after the defence of the North Italian area and to construct defensive positions in the Appenines. The name of the Corps H.Q. Staff was therefore changed to "the von Zangen Army Force". At that time it was still believed that it would be only a temporary measure.

It soon became clear that a further Corps H.Q. Staff was needed at the bridgehead. There was a great lack of these operations staffs in Italy. There were only five G.H.Qs in the whole theatre. OKW was unable to comply with any request for further allocations owing to the lack of signals units necessary for new G.H.Qs. The only G.H.Q. available just then was that of LI Mountain Corps, but it had not so far had front line operational command in Italy and accordingly, it had not obtained any experience of actual fighting against the Western Allies. The Tenth Army was therefore obliged to give up one of its two G.H.Qs. In exchange for G.H.Q. LXXVI Panzer Corps which was placed under the command of the Fourteenth Army, the Tenth Army was given G.H.Q. LI Mountain Corps.

4. The failure of the two big attacks

By the evening of 25 January 1944 it was safe to assume that the acute danger of an enemy break-through to Rome or Valmontone was passed. The following tasks now confronted the German Command:

- (a) the prevention of any further enlargement of the bridgehead;
- (b) compressing the area of the bridgehead; selecting and preparing bases from which later attacks could be launched to liquidate it;
- (c) an attack aimed at forcing a decision and pushing the enemy back into the sea.

Only (c) need be dealt with here.

Army Group fully realised, of course, that if the enemy were to be pushed back into the sea, the bridgehead would have to be liquidated as soon as possible. The Tenth Army could not indefinitely do without the forces it had released. OKW made it clear that the reinforcements provided by C. in C. West, C. in C. South East and from the home front were also only for temporary use. And the units of the Luftwaffe supplied as reinforcements from the south of France would have to return in due course.

Thus it was necessary that the attack aimed at forcing a decision be made as quickly as possible. This was urged by Army Group and particularly by OKW. OKW repeatedly stressed that the Army Group could retain the reinforcements for only a short time.

The direction in which the attack would be made, the width of the front on which it was to be launched and the number of divisions to be concentrated into the zone of attack were decided and ordered by the supreme authorities.

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The Army Group raised no doubts at the time concerning the zone and direction of the attack. And as far as I remember the Fourteenth Army made no objections. It was simply taken for granted that the forces at our disposal - under the circumstances they were relatively very strong - were bound to succeed in breaking through to the coast by the shortest route. Looking back now, I agree with the opinion expressed by the Chief of General Staff of the Fourteenth Army in Chapter 12, that it would have been better if the attack had been made from north west to south east as this direction of attack would probably have taken the enemy by surprise.

The Army Group shared and supported the views forcibly expressed by the 14th Army regarding the dangers attending such a strong concentration of forces on a sector of attack only 6 kilometres wide. But these views made no impression on OKW. The Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff (Wehrmachtfuehrungsstab) informed me that Hitler flatly refused to cancel the instructions limiting the width of the sector of the front from which the attack was to be launched to 6 kilometres. Finally, the point of main effort in the attack had to be decided upon. Even the Supreme Command seemed at that time - though no doubt unconsciously - to be infected with the feeling developing from the "poor man" complex, that the exceptionally strong means available and the keenest co-operation between all concerned would ensure the success of the attack. In all probability, we on the spot were also to some degree under the same impression - an impression capable of psychological explanation.

The Army Group was not so conscious of the difficulties imposed by the terrain on tank operations as was the Fourteenth Army. But I believe that these difficulties first became fully apparent after the attack had begun on 16 February 1944. Before 16 February frost had set in and the ground appeared to be sufficiently hard. Later events proved that the covering of frost was only thin and that it was not strong enough to support heavy vehicles.

My assessment of the situation regarding ammunition is as follows: The Army had rather more than two allocations of ammunition at its disposal on the day the attack began. It was estimated that a quantity of ammunition up to the equivalent of one issue could be expended on 16 February. Thus for the first day of the attack the amount of ammunition available was equivalent to the supplies for ten days of normal fighting.

Field Marshal Kesselring accompanied me to the battle-field on 16 February. The fire power of German artillery did not appear to us to be in any way notably heavier than on other days. Between 10.00 and 12.00 hours, at any rate, it was no different from other days, ten enemy shells arriving for every round fired by the Germans.

The Field Marshal thereupon immediately sought out the Senior artillery commander of the Fourteenth Army, Lieut-General Jahn, who was responsible for the co-ordinated fire plan of ground and anti-aircraft artillery, and who was the last peace-time commander of the School of Artillery. General Jahn stated that 11 issues of ammunition had already been used and for this reason had been obliged to reduce appreciably the size of the barrage. The Field Marshal said that as an old artilleryman he was unable to understand how more than an entire allocations of ammunition could have been fired so quickly. But General Jahn stood by his estimate. The Army now received the order to conserve ammunition, otherwise an insupportable shortage was to be feared if the battle lasted a long time. The next day the daily returns of ammunition expenditure showed that on 16 February Fourteenth Army artillery had not fired more than .4 of one allocation. Verification of the figures revealed that General Jahn himself was the victim of incomplete reports submitted by the Artillery Regiments. They had reported as expended, ammunition stored at their emplacements. But that amounted then to about only half an allocation, the other half was still with the two ammunition companies and in army dumps.

RESTRICTED

- 34 -

Even at that time it seemed that a decisive success could have been achieved if a complete allocation of ammunition had been expended in the operations on 16 February. Just how close we were for a time to success we did not realise until after the war. I have in mind, for example, the thrust on 19 February by units of 29th Panzer Grenadier Division along Highway 82 to the south, when the German spearhead was scarcely 10 km. from the coast.

After the attack had to be regarded as a failure by the evening of 19 February, Field Marshal Kesselring in consultation with General von Mackensen decided that a second attempt should be made from another position. But this decision was taken purely on military grounds; the Army Group no longer had much faith in the new attack from the Cisterna area. When this also miscarried, the intended complete elimination of the bridgehead had to be regarded as having failed. It was not to be expected that the small-scale attacks now planned could be decisive.

Before going into the inferences to be drawn from these facts, the following details should be dealt with.

5. Miscellaneous Items

(a) The co-operation of the Luftwaffe was unable to give any immediate support to the Fourteenth Army. They lacked sufficient forces to be able to do this. The German Me. 109 fighter was obviously too inferior as it could only clear some of the enemy aircraft from the sky for a few hours at a time. Thus German troops were never once free from the particularly unpleasant activities of enemy artillery spotting aircraft. The operations of two fighter groups (Jagd-Gruppen) of FW 190s brought about a marked respite, but unfortunately the aircraft were available for only a few weeks.

On the other hand, I believe that the operations of ground attack aircraft carried out almost every day and very often at night together with the frequent attacks of the 1st Flieger-Division operating from the south of France, contributed in no small measure to ease the pressure on the army. By these operations a considerable number of supply ships were sunk or damaged. Judging by intercepted radio messages attacks made against artillery positions, supply depots etc. on the bridgehead itself were not without effect.

(b) In contrast, the support the German Navy was able to give was necessarily of little value owing to its being even weaker (than the Luftwaffe) in the Mediterranean. The assistance it could give was confined to minesweeping the supply routes, to submarine operations and to several attacks by S-boats. One-man torpedoes were first used in March - after the attack had already been discontinued. They were not as successful as the Navy had hoped.

(c) In compliance with the express wish of the Italian Government, several Italian army units were deployed on the quiet south-eastern front of the bridgehead. They scarcely came into the picture.

(d) The "Feuerleit-Batterie" mentioned in Chapter 12 was to some extent an experimental prototype which the artillery General at OKH had made available and which proved itself invaluable in practice.

6. Conclusions

As already mentioned, the consequence of the failure of the two attacks of 16 and 29 February 1944 was that there was no longer any hope of liquidating the bridgehead. The reasons are fully dealt with in Chapter 12.

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RESTRICTED

- 35 -

The lessons learned by the inner councils of the Army Group go even further. The two attacks were made with a build-up of materials such as the German command had not had at their disposal - with the exception of Sevastopol - on a battle field since 1940. Making full allowances for errors in estimation, difficulties of the terrain and the absence of more or less compensatory effective support of the other two Services, it was clear that the causes of the failures lay still deeper.

In the view of the Army Group these causes were in the final analysis to be found in the gradual exhaustion of the army after four and a half years of war. The spirit of the troops was still amazingly good. Officers and men gave of their best now as hitherto and sacrificed their lives freely. No one recognised this performance of the German troops at the Anzio beachhead better than their Commander-in-Chief, General von Mackensen, who always whole-heartedly strove in his own outstanding manner for a just evaluation of his troops.

The army was very much the worse for wear. The lack of commanders and subordinate commanders had become so acute through the long years of bloodshed, physical exhaustion had become so profound, that German troops could no longer fulfil what was expected and hoped of them.

The German army was still able to wage defensive warfare but it was no longer capable of attack.

This conclusion was so grave that it must in any case be conveyed as soon as possible to the highest military and political quarters to enable them to draw from it the necessary far-reaching conclusions. The Army Group was of the opinion that a turning-point of the war had been reached. In certain respects the position could be compared to that of 8 August 1918 in World War I. On that day - called the "Black Day" of the German Army - German divisions on the Somme had been unable to withstand that attacks of strong armoured forces. The situation in Italy now was not identical but still, it was serious enough.

There was a danger that a written report would be ineffective or simply ignored. I was therefore commissioned to convey the Army Group's conclusions to Hitler. I flew to Berchtesgaden. General Jodl received my report at first and refused to conduct me personally to Hitler. He said he would convey the report to Hitler himself. Jodl's statement must have excited Hitler for he sent for me to hear the statement at firsthand.

Thus on 6 March 1944 I made a statement lasting three hours in the presence of the Chief of OKW, the Chief of the Armed Forces Operations Staff and the Chief of the Army General Staff. No other officers were present except Adjutants. Hitler was very quiet during this evening. Thus I was able, in spite of his numerous interruptions, to deal with all the problems which were worrying us.

Hitler asked, among other things, how many allocations of ammunition we believed would be required to throw the enemy back into the sea. I replied that four or five allocations would be necessary but that it was impossible to bring them to the front owing to the daily severance of rail communications in Italy by bombing attacks. Thereupon this idea was dropped and Hitler finally agreed to the change-over to the defensive at the bridgehead. The important thing to me was that Hitler said - in essence - the following: He realised that large sections of the German population and Army were very depressed and longed for peace. He knew that an end would have to be made as soon as possible. As I was leaving Field Marshal Keitel expressed his astonishment that Hitler had listened for several hours that day to so many unpleasant things. I had been very lucky.

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RESTRICTED

- 36 -

Coincidental with my visit some 20 officers from the front, representing all units of the Army and branches of the service, from company commanders to divisional commanders, were summoned from the Italian theatre to OKW. For the next two days they were questioned by Hitler, some of them individually, on their experiences at the Anzio bridgehead. I believe that a measure of this kind was taken on only one occasion. I was not permitted to be present at these conferences as it was felt that these front-line officers might have been influenced in some way by the presence of the Chief of General Staff of the Army Group. However, I had an opportunity of speaking to these officers briefly beforehand. I merely asked them not to be silent about any of the worries and shortages which beset them. I learned afterwards that the answers given by these officers yielded the same results as I myself had obtained on 6 March.

However, none of the conferences bore any fruit. I should have deceived myself if I had supposed that my statement could have made any lasting impression.

RESTRICTED

- 37 -

CHAPTER 14

The Air Situation in the Spring

of 1944

by

Colonel CHRIST.

Distribution and Strength of Luftflotte 2 before the
Start of the Anzio-Nettuno
Battles

1. Long Range Operations (II Flieger Korps, later "Helbig".)

Concentration of all bomber formations as hitherto.

Bases: Northern Italy (Chedi, Villaorba, Aviano, Villafranca).

Strength: About 80 Ju 88s.

Operations: Attacking shipping targets and harassing the unloading of enemy ships and enemy mine-laying operations. Attacking vital points immediately behind the Allied front.

2. Long Range Reconnaissance

Base: Central Italy (Perugia).

Strength: About 12 aircraft (Ju 88s and Me 410s).

Operations: Reconnaissance over the central Mediterranean primarily with the object of being able to detect at an early stage any by-passing landing operations.

3. Fighter Operations

Bases: Northern Italy (Milan to Udine).

Strength: About 50 Me 109s

30 Macchi and Fiat aircraft (Italian).

Operations: Defence of Northern Italy (airfields, industrial and communications installations) against attacks by the Allied strategic bomber forces.

4. Close Support Operations: (hitherto Fliegerfuehrer on Sardinia)

Base: Viterbo - Rome

Strength: About 60 Me 109s

" 30 FW 190s

" 10 FW 190s (reconnaissance)

Operations: Ground Attack Aircraft:

Giving close support to the Army (Tenth and Fourteenth Army) in ground battles (attacks against ground targets such as battle stations, vehicle concentrations, artillery positions). Harassing the supply and reinforcement of Allied forces by attacks on ships being unloaded.

Fighters:

Protecting ground attack aircraft during their raids and combatting Allied strategic bomber forces.

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5. Anti-Aircraft Operations:

Protecting airfields and industrial installations in the Italian area.

In addition, torpedo-carrying aircraft and about 30 aircraft equipped to launch glider-bombs operated exclusively against shipping from bases in the South of France. They were under the command of the 2nd Flieger-Division.

Meanwhile, the high-speed bomber formations (Me 110s and 210s) were withdrawn by the Supreme Command of the Luftwaffe for use elsewhere.

The 270 (approximately) German and Italian front-line aircraft were opposed by an Allied force of between four thousand and five thousand front-line aircraft.

Allied Air Attacks Preparatory to the Landing at Anzio - Nettuno.

A few days before the landing took place, tactical and strategic formations of the Allied air forces attacked the airfields in Central Italy, but with little success. The small number of aircraft spread over the numerous airfields no longer constituted massed targets for enemy attacks, especially as it was possible after the defection of Italy to construct parking places and dummy installations outside the airfields themselves.

Simultaneously the scale of attacks against supply lines and communications between Northern Italy and Rome were stepped up. In normally good weather conditions the roads and railways between Northern and Central Italy were always under the domination of the Allied air force from Sardinia and Corsica, because apart from a few fighters and anti-aircraft guns the Germans were defenceless.

Situation in the Air on the Day of the Landing

Luftflotte reconnaissance aircraft reported in the evening of 21 January that a convoy had left Naples. However, the landing at Anzio - Nettuno came as a surprise.

From early in the morning strong forces of Allied aircraft covered and supported the landing operations by attacking bridges, transport vehicles, concentrations of troops, etc., in the immediate vicinity of the beachhead so as to isolate them from the rapidly approaching German forces.

The German air force threw everything available into the battle - heavy bomber formations, ground attack aircraft and fighters; anti-aircraft artillery was brought up quickly and joined in the actions at an early stage. Naturally, in comparison with the sustained, massed attacks of the Allied air force, the effect of the operations of the small German formations was negligible. As had been the case since the beginning of the Italian campaign, again in this critical situation the army had to fight without adequate air support and without sufficient protection from the massed air raids.

Air Situation in the Battles for Monte Cassino

Concurrently with the heavy fighting at the Anzio - Nettuno bridgehead, the Allies began massed raids against the Benedictine Monastery on Monte Cassino.

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The heaviest bombardment the valiant German defenders were exposed to lasted three days, during which time the German air force was unable to bring them any significant relief. (Allied reports speak of 576 tons of bombs per day during the attack). A few German ground attack aircraft took part in the action but for morale rather than for any material effect.

In spite of a repetition of these massed raids about the middle of March (1,100 tons of bombs on one day) and extended attacks by fighter-bombers to which the German air force was unable to offer any opposition, Allied troops did not succeed in taking the monastery mountain at this time.

Consolidation of all flying formations at the bridgehead

In order to ensure the unified command of all formations of the air force and to achieve maximum effectiveness by the integration of air operations with anti-aircraft artillery, in the course of the fighting the commander of the close support units was placed in control of all A.A. artillery employed at the bridgehead. Hitherto, this had been retained by a separate A.A. command.

Operations by reconnaissance, ground attack and fighter aircraft co-ordinated with anti-aircraft artillery could now be undertaken in support of the army and directed from an advanced battle H.Q. which afforded an unrestricted view over the entire battlefield as far as the landing points.

Development of the Air Situation in the Course of the Fighting

To avoid too high a proportion of losses, heavy bombers attacked during the battles only at dusk or at night. They bombed warships and landing craft, the unloading of supply ships, artillery positions, and fuel and supply dumps at the bridgehead. ~~At the same time attacks~~ against harbour installations and shipping, as well as mine-laying in Naples harbour, were continued.

Torpedo-carrying aircraft based in the South of France continued to attack Allied convoy routes in the Western Mediterranean.

Long-range reconnaissance aircraft - owing to shortage of planes there were usually only two in operation at a time, day and night- kept watch over the sea areas along the coasts of central Italy and around Sardinia and Corsica, in order to obtain an early warning of any new landing operations the Allies intended to make.

Owing to their lack of forces, fighters in Northern Italy met with ever decreasing success in their attempts to counter allied raids on industrial targets in Northern Italy.

During the daytime, ground attack aircraft covered by fighters operating over the bridgehead, interfered with the unloading of Allied vessels in the face of formidable defensive fire. At the same time a few ground attack aircraft occasionally took part in the battles for Monte Cassino.

Anti-aircraft artillery massed at the bridgehead attacked Allied reconnaissance and fighter aircraft and formations of the strategic bombing force. A.A. artillery also took part in concentrated barrages as long-range artillery.

As far as weather conditions permitted, the Allied air forces continued to cover and to support their armies with the same strong forces as on the first day of the landing. On a normal day strategic bombing units maintained their attacks against industrial and communications

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RESTRICTED

- 40 -

installations located in Northern Italy and on the Brenner without being seriously hindered by the weak German fighter and A.A. defences. Units based on Sardinia and Corsica were able to patrol the supply routes and communications between Upper and Central Italy in such a way that it was impossible, in the normally clear weather obtaining in Italy, for German troops to be transferred by day, on foot or by rail, without heavy losses being incurred.

Superiority in the air enabled the Allied air force to keep artillery spotting planes in the air over the battlefield from dawn to dusk. Thus the battlefield and the movements behind the German front were uninterruptedly under Allied surveillance.

Air superiority enabled the Allies to smash the German counter-offensive in the middle of February. Allied air forces in Italy made numerous sorties every day over the battlefield, attacking German preparations, artillery positions and supply bases. According to figures published by the Allies, about 1,100 tons of bombs were dropped on the battlefield in one day.

Performance of Luftwaffe Personnel

In spite of the Allies' formidable superiority in the air, the Luftwaffe in the Italian war theatre and in the battles at Anzio - Nettuno was not entirely eclipsed, thanks preeminently to the splendid performance of the Luftwaffe personnel. They were deperately short of materials of all kinds and such as they had was technically inferior to the enemy's, but airmen, A.A. crews and air formation signals units were selflessly devoted to their duty at all times and endeavoured to carry out their allotted tasks as far as was humanly possible.

Distribution

Same as VII/80