

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
GENERAL SECTION
MILITARY HISTORY COMMITTEE
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

ADVANCED OFFICERS COURSE
1946-1947

THE PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN
5 April - 2 May 1945

Type of operation described: Final Campaign of 15th Army Group

Captain Roy W. Sorrell, Infantry

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index.....	1
Bibliography.....	2
Introduction.....	3
The General Topography of Northern Italy.....	8
Order of Battle.....	10
The 15th Army Group Plan of Attack.....	11
The 5th Army Plan.....	13
The Eighth Army.....	16
Preliminary Operations.....	17
The Main Attack.....	20
Analysis and Criticism.....	28
Conclusions.....	32
Lessons Learned.....	33
Sketch No. 1....Topography of Northern Italy	
Sketch No. 2....Order of Battle	
Sketch No. 3....The 15th Army Group Plan of Attack	
Map No. 1.....Eighth Army Plan	
Preliminary Operations	
Main Attack	
Map No. 2.....Main Attack and Exploitation	

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A....The World Almanac for 1946
- B....Report by the Supreme Commander to the
Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Operations
in Europe.
- C....Final Campaign Across Northwest Italy
- D....Remarks by Lt. General John K. Cannon, Commander
12th Air Force and Major General B. W. Chidlaw,
Commanding General, 22nd Tactical Command, Army
and Navy Journal's: "United States At War"
- E....Remarks of General Joseph T. McNarney, Deputy
Allied Commander MTO in Army and Navy Journal's
"United States At War"
- F....Remarks of General Mark W. Clark, Commanding
General, 15th Army Group in Army and Navy
Journal's: "United States At War"
- G....The Encyclopedia Americana, Volume 15
- H....Field Artillery Journal, October 1943
- I....Finito---The Po Valley Campaign
- K....Nineteen Days From The Appennines To The Alps

THE PO VALLEY
OPERATIONS OF 15TH ARMY GROUP IN THE FINAL OFFENSIVE
IN ITALY, 14 APRIL - 2 MAY 1945

INTRODUCTION

On the 12th of February 1945, a report on the Big Three conference at Yalta, in the Crimea, was made public at the White House in Washington, D. C. Among the other decisions made at the conference and publicized at this time, the following significant statement on the defeat of Germany foreshadowed what was in store for the German Armies pinned down at the time in Northern Italy by the Allied forces: (1) "We have considered and determined the military plans by the Three Allied Powers for the final defeat of the common enemy. The military staffs of the Three Allied Nations have met in daily meetings throughout the conference. These meetings have been most satisfactory from every point of view and have resulted in closer coordination of the military effort of the Three Allies than ever before. The fullest information has been interchanged. The timing, scope and coordination of new and even more powerful blows to be launched by our armies and air forces into the heart of Germany from the east, west, north and south have been fully agreed and planned in detail.

Our combined military plans will be made known only as we execute them, but we believe that the very close working partnership among the three staffs attained at this conference will result in shortening the war."

The final twenty-three days of operations "launched by our armies and air forces into the heart of Germany" from the south, the Mediterranean theater, which resulted in the complete destruction of the Nazi military forces in that theater is the subject matter with which this monograph deals.

These operations by two armies, the American Fifth and the British Eighth both composed of men of many various national origins have been officially designated as the Po Valley Campaign. This campaign was the last of the series

(1) A--pg. 109

of events that had brought the Allied Armies from North Africa across the Mediterranean and up the Italian Peninsula to the long vaunted Gothic line. A brief summary of these events follow.

The German armies had been defeated in North Africa in the Spring of 1943 by a combined force of American and British Troops and hostilities having ceased in that region, a base had been obtained from which to launch an invasion of the island of Sicily and eventually, the Italian Peninsula. Thus, on 10 July 1943, combined American and British forces under General Dwight W. Eisenhower struck at the Italian mainland by invading Sicily and thirty-eight days later this phase of the "back door invasion" of Europe had ended with victory for the Allies and the ousting of the Italian premier. The stage was thus set for the invasion of the Italian mainland.

On 3 September 1943, British troops under General Bernard Law Montgomery landed on the "toe of the boot", while the American forces under General Mark W. Clark landed at Salerno. Almost immediately the Italians surrendered. With their surrender, the long bloody winter campaign against the German forces, who had no intention of giving up Italy with its resources in material, munitions and even manpower began. During this period, the Allies captured the Port of Naples after bitter fighting and established a beachhead at Anzio. The Americans were containing the Germans on the western end of the line while the great "cross channel" invasion into France from England was being planned by General Eisenhower who had been ordered to London to consummate it in a directive issued to him 12 February 1944. (2)

On 11 May 1944, the Allies launched an offensive against the German forces that sent the Nazis reeling north and on 4 June, Rome fell, followed two days later by the long contemplated cross channel invasion into France.

The sweep of Allied forces up the Italian boot had been long and costly but unrelenting, when Fall weather came and found the Allied forces poised to

(2) B--pgs. 6 & 8; (3) C--pg. 2

to strike through the Gothic line.

In early September of 1944, a skillful withdrawal was executed by the German Commander Field Marshall Albert Kesselring to place his forces on more suitable defensive terrain in the Northern Appennines. (3) Thus, the Fall of 1944 found the German armies "holing up" in a strong defensive position. However, the difficulties offered to 15th Army Group for penetrating the position at this season of the year did not deter it from proceeding with plans to break through the Gothic line and out into the Po Valley. Accordingly, from September to the first week in November the 5th Army, making the main effort on its right, struck up the difficult Prato road and Highway 64, a direct frontal attack from its center line and right flank positions until its right flank rested on the plains of Bologna.

In November, the mud and snow, inevitable in the winter in the Appennines, disrupted the Allied plans and our forces were compelled to wait for better weather.

During this period the Italian was reduced to active patrolling and air interdiction.

Both the tactical 12th and the strategic 15th Air Forces were based in Italy. These two units along with the British Royal Air Forces, components of the British dominions, units from France, Yugoslavia, Italy, Greece, Poland and Brazil made up the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces--The MAAF. (4) Strategically, the primary mission of these forces was to destroy and keep destroyed the great oil production centers of Europe. This it accomplished with dispatch. But more important to the "front slogging" doughboy were the constant attacks on enemy battle lines, on supply routes, and on shipping and harbors. A notable example of this kind of support to the land armies was the successful interdiction, Brenner Pass.

To maintain its armies in Italy the foe had need of the riches of the Po

(4) D--pgs. 44 & 48; (5) ~~D~~ pg. 48

Valley. To supply this need, he depended on two principal lines of communication, --the Brenner Pass and the roads through Northeastern Italy. Of these the Brenner Pass was ~~most~~ paramount. (5) The Brenner Pass is a large natural defile through the Italian and Austrian Alps extending for a distance of some 168 miles from Verona, Italy to Innsbruck, Austria. During this phase of the war, this pass was the veritable life line of the German armies.

As the armies settled down to "constant patrolling" and limited offensives" it was decided to reduce the air effort immediately in front of the armies and throw the full weight of the effort into a long range interdiction program to isolate the Po Valley and prepare for the final campaign in the Spring ^{by} denying the enemy use of the Brenner Pass. (6) On 6 November 1944, there began "Operation Bingo", an "all out" effort against the Pass, which kept it virtually im-
portant strategically.

During this period of interdiction air superiority was maintained with little effort. This little discussed "Battle of the Brenner" is one of the significant factors that prepared the enemy for the final knockout blow in the Spring.

At the time that "Operation Bingo" initiated the interdiction of the Brenner Pass, the 5th Army, having punctured the Gothic line in the center, stood with its right flank on the last important ridge line south of the Po river. There it rested and regrouped while the British 8th Army on the right of the 15th Army Group line continued the offensive, rolling up the German eastern flank and assaulting the river lines covering the Po. (7)

In late December the enemy attacked through the Serehio river valley, making a thrust at the Port of Leghorn through the approximate center of the 5th Army positions. This attack again disrupted the plans of the Allied Supreme Commander to continue the offensive. In addition to his difficulty the weather was steadily getting worse and shortages in certain types of

(5) D--pg. 48; (6) D--pg. 41; (7) E--pg. 41

ammunition was becoming serious. It was decided to delay continuing offensive operations until troops could be rested and regrouped and ammunition supplies could be increased. (8) This was a serious and not-easily-arrived-at decision inasmuch as there were indications that the enemy was planning to build a redoubt where he could make a stand for an indeterminate length of time in the Austrian and Bavarian Alps which, if successful, could prolong the war indefinitely. General Mark W. Clark has pointed out: (9) "It was appreciated that the Germans would hold the rich Italian Northland as a supply source for, and as a buffer to such a redoubt as long as possible, and that rather than attempt a voluntary withdrawal to positions behind the Po river and subsequently the Adige, the enemy would fight where he stood. If forced to withdraw, they would attempt to delay successively on each river line using floods and demolitions to slow our advance." Obviously, the longer we delayed our advance against the enemy the better able he would be to resist our advance and the more meaningful that resistance would be to him.

The fighting did not become completely static. The enemy was not to be led to believe that we were postponing our final punch. Moreover, there was plenty of need for preparatory operations.

In December, the 10th Mountain Division--specialists in mountain operations had begun arriving in Italy. They could not have arrived at a better time. The enemy had, for sometime, been seriously menacing one of our few main supply routes, Highway 64, one of the two principal roads to Bologna, from positions on Mt. Belvedere to the northwest, which dominated it. Late in February, these troops attacked and captured this mountain peak. With this task completed, our forces had but to wait for good weather to strike the final blow against the Nazi armies in Italy, for which plans had already been carefully drawn.

It will be recalled by the reader that during the period just described, significant events were taking place on other fronts that were foreshadowing

(8) E--pg. 41; (9) F--pg. 202

the inevitable collapse of Germany. On the long eastern front, the Russians had made rapid gains all along the line from the Baltic Sea on the north to the city of Vienna on the south. The great Winter offensive had begun with a terrific "hub-to-hub" artillery preparation on 12 January 1945. This offensive had swept unabated across East Prussia, Poland, deep into Czechoslovakia and across Hungary into Austria. Budapest fell on 13 February 1945. By the end of February the Russians stood only 40 miles from Berlin.

On the western front the Allied line ran generally along the Rhine river. By the end of winter, the Allies had recovered completely from Rundstedt's offensive through the Ardennes and they now awaited only firmer ground and better weather.

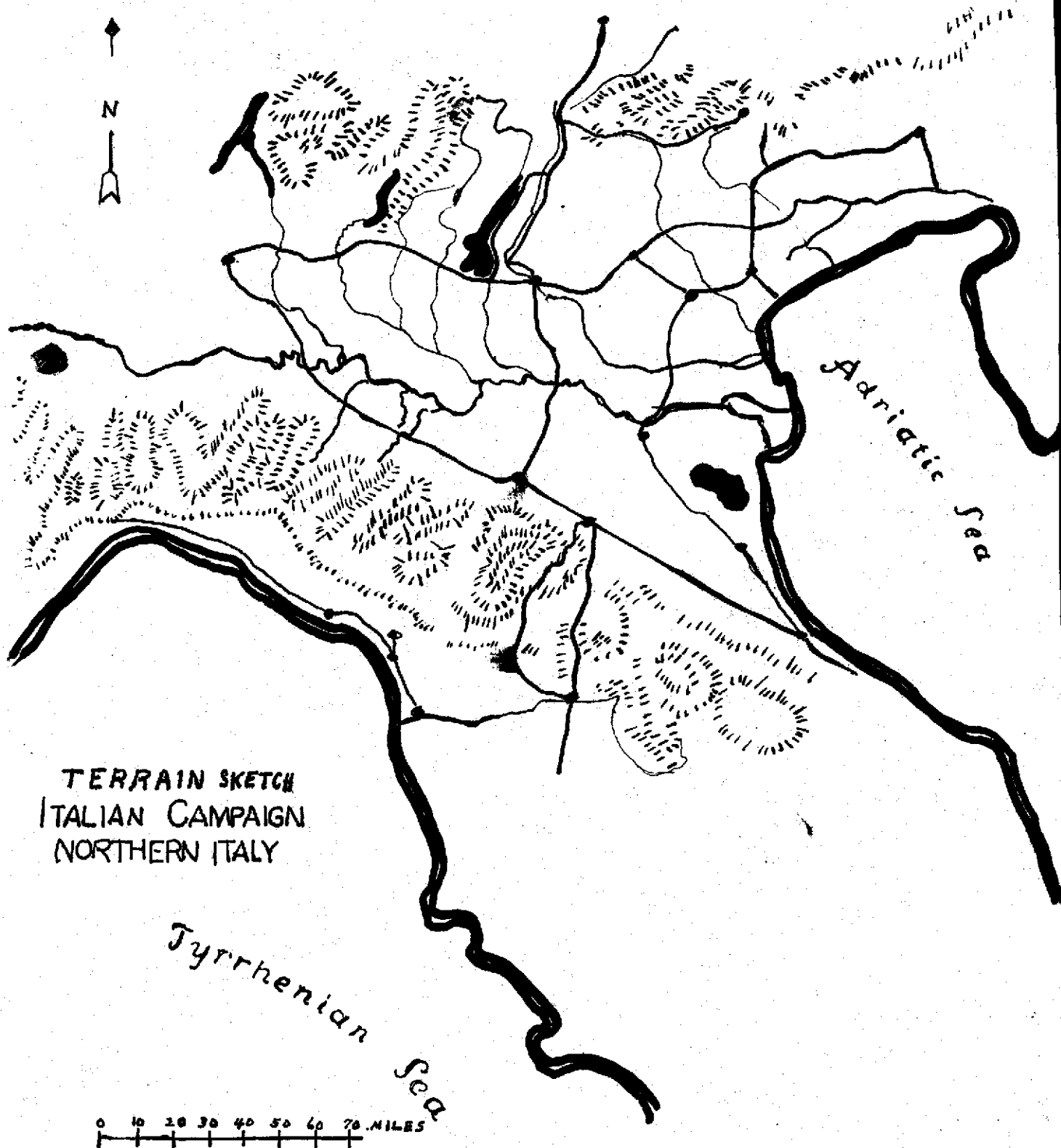
THE GENERAL TOPOGRAPHY OF NORTHERN ITALY

From a strategic standpoint the land over which the Po Valley operation took place is unique. It is doubtful that the terrain of this region can be reproduced in exact likeness anywhere else in the world. (See Sketch No. 1)

Northern Italy, sometimes referred to as Continental Italy, is bounded by the Alps on the north and northwest which, in reality, forms a continuous chain with the northern Apennines that dip into the Ligurian Sea to the west and southwest, and by the Gulf of Venice to the east. The great plain inclosed by the mountains which is the heart of North Italy is wider from east to west than from north to south. This great plain is commonly referred to as the Po Valley; it is drained principally by that river, the largest in Italy. This river varies in width from 500 feet at Turin to 4000 feet at Zibello, extends through the entire valley from west to east from a distance of 261 miles, and "in proportion to the modesty of its length, may be considered to have the greatest volume of water of any river in the world". (10)

The Plain which makes up the Po Valley and which is about 140 miles in width across its widest area and 350 miles in length, is narrow in the west where it begins from the

(10) G--pg. 432



TERRAIN SKETCH
ITALIAN CAMPAIGN
NORTHERN ITALY

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 MILES

SKETCH NO 1

Maritime Alps which separates it from the extreme northwesternmost section of continental Italy, and France. It widens considerably as it extends to the southeast into broad flat terrain that ends at the Adriatic Sea on the southeastern coast. On the north it is headed by the Swiss Alps to the west which separates it from Switzerland and the Dolomite Alps to the east which separates it from Austria. On the northeast the Plain is further separated from Yugoslavia by the Carnac and Julian Alps. Approximately one-third of the southernmost borders of the plain are shut in by the Ligurian Appennines the extension of the Maritime Alps from France and Switzerland and extends downward to the south along the Ligurian coast on the west through the port city of Genoa, gradually moving eastward and traversing the entire peninsula lengthwise. The other great river in the plain is the Adige and there are many smaller rivers and tributaries and numerous large lakes.

In a strategic analysis of the Po Valley, Colonel Conrad H. Lanza writing in the Field Artillery Journal for October 1943 (11) states as follows: "The Po area is extremely fertile, densely cultivated, and thickly inhabited. At the foot of the mountains near the French border, at the city of Torino (Turin), the elevation is 825 feet; at Milano, it is 400 feet, then declines rapidly to slightly above sea level. This valley is full of rivers, canals, and irrigation ditches which are natural antitank obstacles. Though there are no forests or woods, there are innumerable orchards, the vines going from tree to tree and forming an impediment to cross-country movements. They also so limit the view that over large areas satisfactory OP's can not be found. Walls and hedges, with or without adjacent ditches, border fields and orchards. To ride horseback through this country requires constant jumping. Rice fields are numerous and at certain seasons are under water to form another military obstacle.

This territory has always been difficult for maneuvers. There are only a few places where large bodies of troops can be deployed. Consequently in

(11) H—pg. 749

the past two thousand years the battles fought in this area have centered around the same relatively few places where there was space to maneuver. They consist of a series of complicated and connected defiles.

" Southward from a line extending from Spezia on the Ligurian Sea to Rimini on the Adriatic, Italy is a peninsula whose dominant feature is the Appenine Mountains. Along this line the Appennines cross Italy, neatly separating the valley of the Po from the peninsula. The mountains then extend down the peninsula, the watershed being in general between 30 and 40 miles from the Adriatic and parallel thereto, and twice the distance from the Tyrrhenian Sea.

" Due to the closeness of the mountains to the Adriatic coast there are comparatively few cities on this side of Italy, and no important military objectives except the ports."

ORDER OF BATTLE

April, 1945

During the winter there had been changes in commands and dispositions on both sides of the opposing forces, the most notable of which was the replacement of Field Marshall Albert Kesselring by General Heinrich von Vietinhoff-Scheel as Commander of the Axis Forces.

The Order of Battle was as follows on 1 April 1945: (12) (See Sketch No. 2)

The Allies 15th Army Group consisting of the American 5th and British 8th was under the command of General Mark W. Clark. The 5th Army, under Lieutenant General Lucian K. Truscott Jr. occupied the left half of the Allied front. The 8th Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Sir R. L. McCreery occupied the right half of the front. Disposed from left to right beginning at the Ligurian coastal end of the 5th Army Flank was the 92nd Division, the Brazillian Expeditionary Force, 10th Mountain Division, 1st Armored Division all of which made up the 4th Corps. Continuing to right was the 6th South African Division, the

(12) (L) -pg. 11 (See also Sketch No. 2)

88th Division, the Legnano Gruppo, an Italian organization roughly comparable to an American Brigade. The 91st Division, the 34th Division, which comprised the American 2nd Corps. Beginning on the 8th Army's left flank and continuing to the right was the 10th Indian Division, the Folgore Gruppo, another Italian organization, organized into the British 13th Corps; the Jewish Brigade, ^{and} the Friuli Gruppo both comprising the 10th Corps; the 3rd Carpathian Division, 5th Kres Division made up the 2nd Polish Corps; the right flank of the 8th Army was held by the 5th Corps, composed from left to right of the 2nd New Zealand Division, the 78th Division, 8th Indian Division, the Cremona Gruppo (Italian) and the 56th Division. For the 5th Army, the 85th Division was in Army reserve, while the 8th Army held out the 6th Armored Division.

On the enemy's side our forces faced the German 14th Army in the left half of our sector and the Tenth Army in the right half. As our troops faced the enemy their forces were found to be disposed from our left to right as follows: 148th Infantry Division, the Italia Division, 232nd Infantry Division, 334th Infantry Division, 114th Jaeger Division, 94th Infantry Division, 157th Mountain Division, 65th Infantry Division, 305th Infantry Division. These were organized into two corps the 51 Mountain Corps on the flank of the 14th Army and the 14th Panzer Corps next in line. In the 14th Army Reserve was the 29th Grenadier Division. East of Bologna the 1st Parachute Corps consisting of 1st Parachute Division, 278th Infantry Division, 4th Parachute Division, and on the enemy's left flank, the 76th Panzer Corps consisting of the 26th Armored Division, 98th Infantry Division, 362 Infantry Division and the 42nd Light Division. The 90th Panzer Grenadier Division was in Tenth Army Reserve.

THE 15TH ARMY GROUP PLAN OF ATTACK

Much had been written, discussed, and predicted concerning the possibility that the Nazis would establish a redoubt in the Austrian Alps where at the most, they could continue the war for years and, at the least, make final victory for the Allies incomplete and uncertain.

General Clark, estimated that the enemy could do one of two things viz:

(13) a. "Fight where he stood, and if forced to withdraw, delay successively on each river line, using floods and demolitions to slow our advance, or
b. attempt a voluntary withdrawal to a position behind the Po and subsequently the Adige." He decided upon a plan that would nullify both of these capabilities, a plan designed to close with the enemy and destroy or capture him, or both.

The front lines of the 15th Army Group in the Spring of 1945 extended from Forte di Marme on the Ligurian coast eastward through the mountains to Lake Comacchio on the Adriatic Sea (14) (See Map No. 1) The 5th Army's line extended to Monte Grande, the 8th Army's line extended southeast astride the Sillaro and Santerno rivers and thence northeast along the Senio's southbank to Lake Comacchio and the Adriatic Sea. (15)

The attack was to be divided into three phases. (Sketch No. 3)

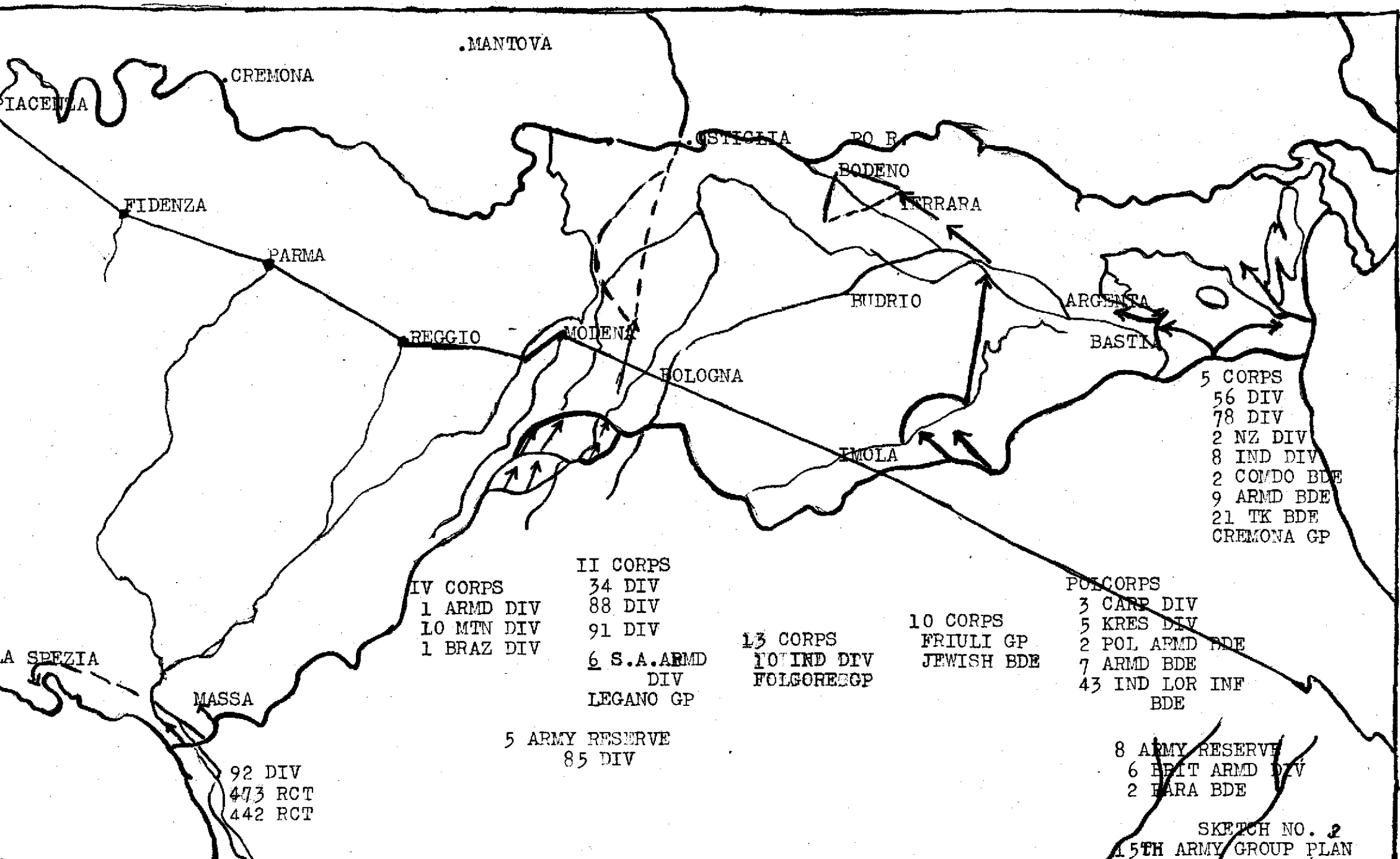
In phase 1, the 8th Army was to effect a crossing over the Santerno river and attack toward the town of Bastia and Budrio; the 5th Army was to debouch into the Po Valley with the secondary mission of either capturing or isolating Bologna.

Phase 2--(16) provided for a breakthrough by either or both armies and an encirclement of enemy forces south of the Po river. The 8th Army was to break through the Argenta Gap and seize the Po crossings at Ferrara and Bondeno, and if not successful in this, to push on to Bologna. It was expected to make contact with 5th Army Forces exploiting northeast down the corridor north of the Reno. At the same time a secondary 5th Army effort was to be made northward on Ostiglia. (17)

In Phase 3, the Po river was to be crossed and exploitation made to the north to include the capture of Verona, followed by crossing of the Adige river and further exploitation. (18)

It must be borne in mind that the plan envisaged continuous operation rather than separate phases or any pauses between phases. (19)

(13) I--pg. 7; (14), (15) (L)--pg. 9; (16) (L)--pg. 9; (17), (18), (19) (L)--pgs. 9 & 10



MANTOVA

CREMONA

PIACENZA

FIDENZA

PARMA

REGGIO

MODENA

BOLOGNA

OSTIGLIA

BODENO

FERRARA

BUDRIO

ARGENTA

BASTIA

EMILIA

A SPEZIA

MASSA

5 CORPS
 56 DIV
 78 DIV
 2 NZ DIV
 8 IND DIV
 2 COMDO BDE
 9 ARMD BDE
 21 TK BDE
 CREMONA GP

IV CORPS
 1 ARMD DIV
 10 MTN DIV
 1 BRAZ DIV

II CORPS
 34 DIV
 88 DIV
 91 DIV
 6 S.A. ARMD DIV
 LEGANO GP

13 CORPS
 10 IND DIV
 FOLGORE GP

10 CORPS
 FRIULI GP
 JEWISH BDE

POLCORPS
 3 CARP DIV
 5 KRES DIV
 2 POL ARMD BDE
 7 ARMD BDE
 43 IND LOR INF BDE

92 DIV
 473 RCT
 442 RCT

5 ARMY RESERVE
 85 DIV

8 ARMY RESERVE
 6 BRIT ARMD DIV
 2 PARA BDE

SKETCH NO. 2
 15TH ARMY GROUP PLAN

Concurrent with these phases, there was to be a separate and distinct phase in another area--a diversionary attack by the 92nd Division and attached units up the Ligurian coast towards Massa, and, if possible on toward La Spezia and beyond to Genova. (20)

The plan also contemplated dropping the British 2nd Independent Parachute Brigade behind the enemy's lines. However, this phase was later cancelled. (21) The tentative dates set for these thrusts were: for preliminary operations on the east coast 1-2 April; for the diversionary attack toward Massa on the Ligurian coast, 5 April; for the 8th Army's thrust, 9 April; for the 5th Army's main attack, a date to be decided later by General Clark. (22)

In looking at the map (op cit, Map No. 1) and considering this plan with its three phases and diversionary separate phase, one must keep in mind the mission as stated before, the destruction of the German forces. These forces were not to be allowed to retreat into Germany or to climb into their suspected Austrian Alps redoubt. They were to be destroyed.

THE 5TH ARMY PLAN

The 5th Army had received on 12 February 1945, from 15th Army Group, the plan as outlined above in the form of a directive, Operations Instruction No. 3 which stated the objectives of the general plan and outlined the fundamental strategy. (23)

On 24 March, Operations Instruction No. 4 was received by 5th Army Headquarters which set forth in greater detail the part to be played by both Armies. D-Day was announced at 10 April. (This date was later changed to 9 April). 5th Army was designated in the instruction to make the main attack. (24) ("Operation Craftsman"). (25)

This plan provided for 5th Army to attack with 2nd and 4th Corps abreast, main effort initially up Highway 64 (see Map No. 1) to clear the Setta Creek

(20),(21) L--pgs. 9 & 10; (22) (L--pg. 12; (23),(24),(25) K--pg. 19

Valley and capture the Praduro road junction 15 miles north of Vergato. A secondary effort, was to be made along Highway 65, east of Highway 64 while 4th Corps reduced the highground west of the road. After this, the main effort was to be concentrated astride Highway 65. (26)

The plan included the diversionary thrust along the Ligurian seacoast toward Massa--La Spezia--Genoa, mentioned before.

Other features of the plan were the same as had been provided for in the 15th Army Group directives mentioned before.

From the book "19 days from the Appennines to the Alps" (27) an interesting passage analyzes the 5th Army plan as follows: "The approval of this plan, described here in brief outline, was reached only after full examination and discussion of half a dozen plans which had been considered at one time or another during the Winter. The main question had been whether the principal line of attack would be up Highway 65, the most direct route to Bologna or up Highway 64 from the southwest.

On Highway 65 our forces were already within 12 miles of the city, while on Highway 64 they were 20 miles away. Along 65 the terrain was more favorable and the road net, the best in the Army area, was capable of supporting five divisions. But it was on this approach to Bologna and entrance to the Po Valley that the enemy had constructed his strongest array of defenses. All winter he had been working on this defensive system, and at 5th Army Headquarters its character was well known. Virtually every square yard of the area bristled with mines, artillery emplacements and all the other devices designed to make a ground assault costly to the extreme.

"The Highway 64 route, while longer, was less heavily fortified, offered the possibility of a close envelopment of Bologna from the northwest after our troops had descended from the mountains, and also might be exploited to supply five divisions. This road, which followed the course of the Reno river was partially defiladed from the west over much of the distance, and was the more protected of the two. On the other hand, it was commanded by

a ridge 15 miles long in possession of the enemy. This would have to be cleared, as would Monte Sole to the east before the road could be used throughout its length.

A close study of all the aspects of the situation, including many which had been discarded almost immediately, led to the conviction that a direct, massed attack straight down Highway 65 would be too costly in men and material, and would consume a considerable period of time. Consequently all planning thereafter was restricted to operations in the area west of Highway 65 and immediately west of 64. On the extreme left of this area there was a road net which led into Highway 9, the broad trans-peninsular route passing through Bologna, at points only five to six miles west of the city."

On 1 April 1945, 5th Army's plan was complete. There were to be three phase lines, Green, Brown, and Black for purposes of control. The main attack to be delivered by 4th Corps, spearheaded by the 10th Mountain Division on the left west of Highway 64 and generally parallel to it, and the 1st Armored Division on the right along and to the left of that highway. The Green phase would be completed when the 10th Mountain Division had cleared the ridge which dominated Highway 64 and the 1st Armored Division had captured Monte Pero and the town of Vergato, and at that moment 2nd Corps would join the attack and Brown phase would begin. 4th Corps would operate in the Brown phase, both Corps would continue its attack to the northeast parallel to Highway 64. 2nd Corps with all divisions in line, to attack abreast of and on the right of 4th Corps. The 6th South African would capture Monte Sole, the 88th to take Monterumici, the 91st to capture Monte Adone and Pianoro on Highway 65 and the 34th Division to advance abreast of the other divisions but east of the highway. The Italian organization Legnano Gruppo was to attack on the extreme right flank and maintain contact with the 8th Army.

Black phase involved a continued advance after missions mentioned above had been accomplished. During this phase, 2nd Corps would capture Praduro and continue the attack. The 85th Division which was to follow along in close reserve during the first two phases, and pass through the 1st Armored Division sometime during this phase, exact time to be dictated by the situation.

During the Black phase, the 1st Armored Division and the 6th South African Armored Division was to be organized into a mobile reserve of armored units for the purpose of striking into the Po Valley at the right moment and encircling Bologna; this to be followed by the rapid advancing of Task Forces of Infantry and Armor along main avenues of many retreating columns to seize Po crossing and cut escape routes.

THE EIGHTH ARMY PLAN

In conformity with the general plan of the 15th Army Group the British 8th Army completed its plan in the last week in March. It provided for a drive straight to the northwest astride Highway No. 9 (See Map No. 1) which traverses the Po Valley from northwest to southeast, and northward to the Po river. This would require reduction of enemy forces holding the Adige river line, Finally Venice would be seized by the 56th Division, while 2nd New Zealand Division would attack toward Bologna on the north cross the Idice river, the Reno river, and then head north across the Po, execute a turning movement to the right, attack to northeast and effect a juncture with Yugoslavian forces moving toward the north along the Adriatic Sea.

Preliminary operations were planned providing for a coordinated initial attack of the British 5th Corps and the 2nd Polish Corps against the enemy positions along the Senio river, and encirclement of Bologna. At the same time an amphibious operation across Lake Commachio would be launched to eliminate enemy observation on the 8th Army's right flank from the ground between Lake Commachio and the Adriatic coast.

PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS

A part of the preliminary operations was a skillful plan of deception in the 5th Army sector that contributed materially to the success of the initial attacks by insuring secrecy of real plans and throwing the enemy completely offguard as to the nature and locations of the main attacks. This plan is described in the book, "19 Days From The Appennines To The Alps" as follows: (28)

" An elaborate program of deception was worked out and put into effect as a preliminary to the big push.

" This was desired primarily to make the enemy believe that the entire Corps, composed of the 85th, 88th, and all supporting units, was moving over to join the 8th Army for a major push from the right while 4th Corps took over control of the entire 5th Army area. Although most of the "movement" was simulated, some actual shifts did take place. Forward elements of the 88th were pulled back behind a screen of other 2nd Corps units, and Division Reconnaissance parties were sent to Forli over in the 8th Army area. A dummy 2nd Corps command post was set up at Forli, and Army Headquarters stepped up its liaison with the British. Meanwhile 4th Corps set up a dummy command in the 2nd Corps area.

" For ten days before the 5th Army jumped off, certain units maintained radio silence, but the dummy CP's received dummy messages, the real headquarters handling all their communications by wire. Artillery batteries involved in the mythical move went off the air, and fired their missions by telephone. And on 9 April, before the 5th Army jumped off, a small group of operators from the 85th Division opened a dummy radio net in the 8th Army zone, continuing to operate it until 2nd Corps actually had begun its attack.

To mask the actual hour for the opening of the attack, a twenty day program of steadily increasing artillery fire was substituted for the customary preparatory barrage, with the rate of fire accelerating over three periods.

In the execution of this, three hundred forty-two 105mm howitzers fired 7840 rounds the first five days, 19,152 rounds the second eight days and during the last seven days, 799,390 rounds. To conceal the presence of heavy artillery reinforcements moved up during the early Spring, these guns were not permitted to participate in the accelerated program. As guns moved to their attack positions they remained silent, while those remaining in the Winter defense positions increased their volume of fire."

In the 4th Corps sector, the scheduled preliminary operations in the form of a diversionary attack along the Ligurian coast was effected 5 April. (See Map No. 1) At dawn the 442nd Nisei Regiment climbed into the mountains overlooking Highway No. 1 in the vicinity of Forte di Marmi, east of the Coastal Plain and destroyed the enemy holding those positions. Later, the same day the 370th Infantry attacked up the coast, followed by the 473rd, a converted anti-aircraft organization. The immediate objectives were Massa, the Naval Base of La Spezia, and finally Genoa. These latter two units were attacking as attached units to the 92nd Division, the 365th and 371st, the two other organic units of the 92nd having been previously removed to the right of the 4th Corps sector on security missions.

There was bitter fighting all the day due principally to the well placed heavy artillery pieces and mortars in the enemy positions in this sector making forward movement slow and tortuous.

At the end of the second day, the 442nd had secured Monte Cerrata and the coastal Monte Belvedere (not the same as the one 10th MTN had already captured). On the second day also, the 473rd which had been passed through the 370th to continue the attack was in sight of Massa.

On the 9 April, the Eighth Army attacked on the opposite end of the 15th Army Group line with 5th Corps and Polish 2nd Corps spearheading, after one of the most devastating artillery preparations of the war (29) and supported by medium and heavy bombers. (See Map No. 1) Under the light of a pale moon and powerful searchlights beamed on the clouds, the two corps attacked abreast

the 5th on the right, north of Highway No. 9 towards Bologna. They crossed the Senio river after overcoming bitter resistance.

By the afternoon, 10 April, 8th Indian and 2nd New Zealand Division, the Lugo Canal to the right of the spearhead had been crossed and secured including the capture of a bridge before the Nazis could destroy it.

Early, on the morning of 11 April, the 56th Division in conjunction with no. 40 Commando on the extreme right flank of the line crossed the southern waters of Lake Commachio and the narrow spit of land between it and the flood waters of the south and struck out for Bastia, the so-called Argenta Gap, Ferrara and points beyond.

On the same day that the 56th struck across the floods to the north, the spearheading forces to the south began preparation on the friendly shores to breach the river.

To the left on the flanks in the mountains, the 10th and 13th Corps began advancing from the mountains on the twelfth.

On the night of the thirteenth, the 2nd New Zealand and 3rd Carpathian Divisions had been across the Santerno for several hours with tanks, foot troops, and engineering equipment. The 10th and 13th Corps had pushed ahead for three miles, Mordano had been taken, and all troops of the Eighth Army were advancing steadily.

By the afternoon of the thirteenth, on the Ligurian coastal end of the 15th Army Group line, Massa, Carrara, and the villages of Cragnana, Torano and Colonnata had fallen to the 92nd Division and attached troops, and steady progress toward La Spezia was being made from the Frigido river, five miles north of Massa. This put the American forces eleven miles from the Spezia Naval base as of nightfall, 13 April.

On this same day, an announcement was made at a 92nd Division Staff conference, that the French troops poised all winter on the French Italian border to the northwest, in the Italian Alps had crossed the border and was

moving rapidly, and up to that time unopposed into positions behind the Nazi forces.

Such was the situation on the night of the thirteenth when the 5th Army forces in the center awaited "the call" from its Chief to launch the 15th Army Group's main attack, the thrust that officially began the Po Valley Campaign.

THE MAIN ATTACK

The main attack was begun at 0945, 14 April, (30) twenty miles southwest of Bologna on the west side of Highway 64, by the 4th Corps. (See Map No. 1) This was in conformity with the 15th Army Group plan, which will be recalled, required debouchment into the Po Valley by both armies, in addition to isolating or capturing Bologna, with the main effort being made by the 5th Army. Thus the 5th Army's plan, as devised by its Commanding General, provided for Corps abreast, initially astride Highway 64 with the purpose of debouching into the Po Valley between the Reno and Panaro rivers. This scheme of maneuver for the 4th Corps had been decided upon as the result of the limited offensive by the 4th Corps in March, at which time the enemy showed extreme sensitivity by rushing several good divisions to the 10th Mountain Division sector, west of Bologna in the Belvedere area. (31) Also, intelligence had indicated that defenses south of Bologna were built up during the Winter and an attack straight to the north would be difficult and costly. (32) Thus, 4th Corps launched its attack with the 10th making the main effort, attacking generally northeast with the hope that the situation would so develop that an opportune time might arrive when the 10th could turn north and debouch into the Po Valley and strike across it. (33)

The 85th Division was being held in reserve to be committed either west or east of the Reno river as the situation might eventually require. (34)

The attack was preceded by heavy air and artillery preparation ahead of

(30) K--pg. 41; (31),(32),(33),(34)--C--pg. 7 & 8

the 10th Mountain Division and the unit struck at 0945 with two Combat Teams abreast. (35) The units opposing their immediate advance were the German 94th Infantry Division and elements of the 334th Infantry Division. These divisions fiercely resisted the attacks of the two 10th Mountain Combat Teams and progress was slow for the first thirty-six hours. However, by the morning of the seventeenth, the town of Tole and Monte Mosca, a high ridge line directly in the advance of the Division had been captured and the attack continued to progress toward the northeast to Monte Vignola and Montepastore. By nightfall, Monte Mososco and San Prospero fell, and at this precise moment the Division Commander made the decision to strike due north. (36)

At the same time that the 10th Mountain launched the offensive to the northeast, the 1st Armored Division which had been concentrating in the vicinity of Rviola for sometime prior to D-Day attacked up Highway 64 on the west side of the road and on the right flank of the 10th Mountain. Its mission was to clear the Highway on into the Po Valley. Attacking on the afternoon of 14 April, it had by 17 April reduced enemy defenses in Vergato, Suzzano, and secured the high peaks atop Monte Pero. After that it moved northwest to support the attack on the high ground northwest of Venola on the seventeenth. (37)

To the left of the 10th Mountain, the 1st Infantry Division of the Brazillian Expeditionary Force was relieved on its left flank by the 371st Infantry reinforced, on the same day that the 10th launched its attack and relieved, in turn, the positions formerly held by the 10th, with the mission of holding a defensive line until given the order to attack. It was to follow up any enemy caught attempting to withdraw along either the Zocca-Guiglia Bazzano road or the route through Monte Ombraro and Zappolino. (38) On the fourteenth, the division attacked to seize Montese, with a Battalion of Infantry, reinforced with tanks and tank destroyers, and the town along with

(35) C--pgs. 25,26,27; (36),(37),(38) C--pgs. 25,26,27

several smaller towns and localities were captured. (39)

On the afternoon 17 April, the 85th Division was relieved from Army Reserve; it was assigned to the relief of the 1st Armored Division for the continued clearing of the areas astride Highway 64. One of its regiments relieved the 1st Armored on the morning 18 April and later in the day other elements of the division relieved certain elements of the 10th Mountain on its left. (40)

The 1st Armored was moved to positions behind the 10th Mountain astride its main supply route. This was an important tactical move that contemplated early debouchment into the Po Valley, where Armor could sweep up the South banks of the river and disorganize German resistance and prepare the way for the Infantry Units pressing the enemy northward across the Po to prevent his escape into the Alps.

On the night of 15 April, while all Units of the 4th Corps were pressing hard against, and confusing the enemy with a secondary attack, and the enemy was engrossed with what he believed was the main attack driving up over the plains of the east from the British sector, the 2nd Corps delivered the 5th Army's secondary effort on the right of the 4th Corps. This Corps contained all of the 5th Army's seasoned and battle-hardened veteran divisions, the 6th South African, the 88th, 34th, 91st and an Italian fighting force, the Legnano Gruppo.

At 1030 hours, under searchlight illumination and preceded by an unusually heavy artillery and mortar barrage, the 6th South African and the 88th Divisions struck to the north, the 88th on the left, as in the 4th Corps sector the opposing German forces, mostly elements of the 157 Mountain Division and 305 Infantry Division bitterly contested every square foot of ground. Despite the stubborn resistance however, and numerous well-defended mine fields, Mount Sole, a dominating peak east of Highway 64 was captured in a short time and defended successfully against two counterattacks. The 88th was making slow progress

(39),(40) C--pgs. 25,26,27

against heavy machine gun fire but the progress was steady and relentless.

Five and one-half hours after the initial attack of the 2nd Corps, the 91st and 34th Divisions launched their offensives supported on the right by the Legnano Gruppo.

The fall of Mount Sole to the South Africans put the enemy in a serious tactical predicament. He had but to lose the two dominating peaks on the western side (not far from Mount Sole) of Highway 65 and virtually all his best observation of the 5th Army main routes of supply would be gone, these two peaks were Monterumici and Monte Adone. These two peaks provided the enemy excellent observation over a vast area of the 2nd and 4th Corps front lines. For months accurate artillery fire placed on allied positions in this area had brought demoralizing results. Whole towns had been literally "wiped off the map". When the 91st jumped off, it literally "jumped off for Mount Adone". It was an attack in conjunction with that of the 88th on Monterumici. By 18 April both summits had been reduced and secured. The 91st raised the American flag over the peaks in jubilation over the event. (41)

By 20 April, all elements of the entire 15th Army Group had advanced to the point where it was possible to foretell the end of the struggle within a short time. (See Map No. 2) On this day the Allies could take into account these gains: The 10th Mountain Division had pushed its attack relentlessly through the mountains from ridge to ridge until it had taken Monte Mosca, the last serious obstacle to debouchment into the Po Valley.

The 1st Armored Division had captured Monte Pero and Monte Radichio and were now poised for the thrust toward Bologna.

The 88th Division had been shifted to the left of the 6th South Africans and both divisions had attacked through the Reno river valley and captured Riale, a town from whose church steeples, Bologna could be seen to the north-east.

The 91st was in the sector formerly occupied by the 88th, and the 34th had moved through its sector directly south of Bologna close enough to the city "to walk in at anytime"; it was astride Highway 65, the main route into

Bologna from the south.

On the preceding day, 19 April, both the 91st and the 6th South Africans crossed the Reno, southwest of Bologna and the 85th seized the town of Casalecchio only a good walking distance into Bologna from the southwest.

The 4th Corps had breached most of the enemy's organized positions, placed all of his mine fields behind it. (42)

The rapid rate with which the enemy was committing his reserves, in addition to the fact that each advancing unit found itself fighting units below them on the terrain instead of above them as had previously been the case, pointed to the fact that the enemy was on the brink of disaster.

The 365th Infantry was about to debouch into the Po Valley in its advance astride Highway 12 towards the city of Modena.

Over in the Ligurian coastal sector to the left of the main effort of 5th Army, the 92nd Division was attacking La Spezia. In the Serchio Valley the enemy was withdrawing with the 370th Infantry in rapid pursuit.

On the eastern flank, the British 8th Army was moving ahead with rapidity considering, as has been pointed out before, the extreme difficulties of terrain in the heart of the Po Valley with its intricate canal system and marshes. The 2nd Polish Corps, astride Highway 9 was within sight of Bologna.

By nightfall, 20 April, the few remaining German forces in Bologna were virtually invested by the converging 1st Armored, 10th Mountain, 85th, 88th, 6th South African, 91st, 34th and Brazilian 1st Divisions together with British forces coming up from the east. Before daylight, Saturday, 21 April, Infantry troops of the 133rd Infantry, of the 34th Division riding on tanks of the 752nd Tank Battalion entered Bologna on Highway 65, the first Allied troops to set foot inside of the city after the push ^{to} of the city had commenced. (43)

With the fall of Bologna, the balance was tipped in favor of the Allied troops. From then on, the disintegration of the Nazi forces was rapid and continuous. A veritable mad race then ensued with the enemy racing too late to retreat across the Po and the Allies racing to encircle him.

(42), K--pg. 43; (43) K--pg. 52.

On 20 April, the 10th Mountain had raced rapidly north after debouching into the Valley, and on 21 April its leading elements crossed the Panaro river. On 22 April, the 85th, 88th, 91st, 6th South African and 1st Armored Divisions crossed the Panaro. Modena fell on this day to the 1st Armored Division.

Another notable feat was accomplished on this day; the 88th captured a bridge at Camposanto intact and crossed to the other side of the Panaro Unit.

At the time of the fall of Bologna, the British had forced the German troops to retreat from the so-called Argenta Gap. The British, on any other terrain but this could have possibly quickly reduced their immediate objective Ferrara. One must bear in mind however, what has already been said concerning the terrain in the Po Valley, particularly in the southeastern portion. Its many, many canals, ditches, lakes and marshes makes it "accursed" terrain from a military standpoint. It handicaps both defender and attacker but, in moving situations it, of course, favors the defender and is a great handicap to the attacking force.

The week of 17 April to 24 April was a decisive week for the British. With the Po crossings within range of its guns and the air forces daily cutting the retreating German forces to pieces on both sides of the Po, it nevertheless had to fight bitterly against implacable enemy troops in its efforts to take Ferrara. (44) With the combined strength of the 8th Indian Division, the 78th, and 6th Armored Divisions thrown against the city the German garrisons remained unmovable against repeated thrusts. However, on 24 April, with Bologna fallen and the Germans everywhere in retreat, the Ferrara garrison disintegrated completely, apparently because of the general collapse everywhere else.

From 20 April on through the next eight days, the collapse and dissolution of the German armies in northern Italy was so rapid and at the same time totally without pattern that it was difficult for Commanders and Staffs to determine locations and dispositions of troops, both our own and enemy's. The German
(44) (L) pg. 33

military situation had gone from bad to desperate to hopeless in eight days.

When Bologna fell their situation became desperate. It became hopeless on Sunday, 22 April, when the leading elements (Task Force Duff) of the 10th Mountain Division, reached the Po river at the town of San Benedetto Po.

On 23 April, the 85th, 88th, and 91st Divisions crossed the Po and the next morning the 6th South African crossed. On this same day, the 34th which had been attached to 4th Corps struck to the northwest astride Highway 9. Along with the 1st Armored Division, the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron and a few days later, the Brazillian Expeditionary force, it cut off and invested many German Divisions attempting to extricate themselves from their precarious predicament in the mountains.

The 34th pushed on, taking thousands of prisoners, and by 25 April had captured Parma, 60 miles northwest of Bologna. On 28 April, they captured Piacenza.

The 1st Armored turned north from Modena on 25 April, and crossed the Po and on 26 April, was in process of mopping up Brescia.

The 88th Division entered Verona, 25 April.

The 10th Mountain moving north along Highway 62 captured Villa Franca airfield, a huge and strategically important Axis air base, built before the war by the Italians.

On 26 April, the 85th Division moved north beyond Verona and crossed the last prepared defensive lines the Germans had in the north, the Adige. The 88th soon followed, cutting Highway 11, and moving on into the Alps. The 6th South Africans and 91st, breached the river line with little difficulty on 27 April.

Far to the west, the 92nd Division with its attached 473rd and 442nd Infantry regiments had fought all the way up the Ligurian coast to Genoa and with the help of partisans took the city by 28 April.

While Units of the 5th Army were crossing the Po and advancing on a broad point toward the Adige line and points beyond, the British were making preparations to cross also. As stated before, the 5th Corps had pushed through

Ferrara and was locked in a struggle with enemy forces west of Ferrara and some elements were fighting pockets of resistance south of the city, on 24 April. The British decided to take advantage of the 5th Corps "protective cover" to the west and cross the Po. Accordingly, on 25 April, the British started its crossings through their 6th Armored Divisions's bridgehead thrown across that morning. 13th Corps crossed on 25, 26, and 27 April. By 28 April, the bulk of the 8th Army had advanced from the Po and crossed the Adige on a broad front taking many hundreds of towns and villages and capturing thousands of prisoners.

The 43rd Gurkha Brigade seized Padua on 29 April.

The 2nd New Zealanders captured Mestre on 29 April, and next day advanced into the ancient city of Venice.

By 30 April, the 56th Division had entered Venice while the 6th Armored entered Udine the same day.

By 1 May, the 2nd New Zealand Division had linked up with the forces of Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia, whose forces had been advancing from the southwest.

On the 5th Army front, by 1 May, the 1st Armored Division had reached Lake Como in the northwest after having captured and cleared Mantua.

The partisans had taken Milano from the Germans without additional fire power from the 5th Army.

With Genoa in 5th Army hands, and the 34th Division spread from Cremona to Piacenza, further resistance by German elements in the Ligurian region was senseless.

All the important cities and many towns and villages in the valley, virtually every strategic locality was in Allied hands. Whole Divisions had been captured and all escape routes out of Italy cut by, 2 May. There was no longer a front. Strategically the war in Italy was over.

In the afternoon, 2 May, an Emissary of General Von Vietinghoff appeared before General Clark at his Headquarters and addressed him thus: "General Clark,

as the Representative of the German Commander-in-Chief, Southwest, I report to you as the Commander of the 15th Army Group for your orders for the surrendered German Land Forces."

The Po Valley Campaign was officially at an end with these words. (45)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In analyzing this Campaign, the student will be struck with the speed with which, after the main attack was launched, the Allies were able to exploit their initial successes, bring about the collapse of enemy forces, and occupy the entire Po Valley and end the war in Italy in a matter of sixteen days in spite of the fact that the opposing forces were approximately equal in total effective combat power on the ground and in spite of the natural defensive powers of the terrain of the Po plain.

The analysis will reveal that several factors working together, brought about the downfall of the German Armies.

Consider again the terrain over which the operations took place. As has been pointed out before, the terrain of Northern Italy is among some of the most difficult in the world.

The mountains and valleys and the few, narrow and difficult roads in the Appennines presented great disadvantages to the attacker and conversely, great advantages to the defender. In the Po plain itself, the many rivers, ditches, canals and lakes plus the sparseness of vegetation and lack of cover also should have and was expected to hamper the attacker and nullify its advantages in superior armor and armament.

The Allies depended on two main supply routes, Highways 64 and 65. These two highways were the only good ones capable of supplying the Allies without otherwise resorting to long, circuitous and often tortuous routes. Both of these highways pass directly through Bologna as do most of the other main arterial highways of the Po Valley; Bologna was therefore the strategic keypoint, the "sine qua non" for Allied operations in the Po Valley. When the German garrison

withdrew from Bologna they virtually "opened the gates" to the valley for the Allies.

In Combat effectiveness, the opposing forces were approximately evenly matched. The immense fertility of the Po plain sustained the German Armies occupying it completely and they therefore were not deficient in the ability to subsist for an indefinite period in this area.

In arms and armament they could not be said to be woefully deficient even though Allied aviation had made re-supply extremely difficult. They had used ammunition judiciously and wisely conserved the bulk of their munitions supplies in places inaccessible to our air forces.

Their armies were not seriously immobilized by their lack of oil and gas and automotive parts because of the availability of other modes of transports, mostly animal.

It is apparent therefore, that other factors, some strategic, others not strategic in nature brought about the final collapse of the enemy forces.

These factors were superior Allied generalship, the collapse of enemy armies on other fronts, air superiority and cooperation, assistance rendered by Italian partisans, strategical and tactical errors of the enemy.

When the Allies attacked, it was only after considering all of these factors. These factors, considered from a strategic point of view, made the plan of attack a delicate and difficult one to decide upon. The Allied leaders had to take into consideration three of these factors; Allied Air superiority and collapse of enemy armies on other fronts and assistance that could be expected from partisans. Considering these three factors, the question then was the feasibility of attacking at all.

On the one hand there was the fact that the Russian armies were rapidly closing in on the German Fatherland from the east while the Allies in the west were making good progress from the opposite side of the continent. The bulk of all the German armies in Europe and the homeland itself was about to be compressed by this giant

pincers movement. The German Armies in Italy, in time, might see their situation as hopeless and then surrender either piecemeal, or as a whole.

The second factor that had to be considered was the efficient performance of our air forces, already related. Overwhelming air superiority had restricted Allied movement kept communications disrupted and remained a constant tactical threat with no opposition. It might conceivably keep the enemy in check until the final collapse of the European Armies made surrender in Italy mandatory.

There was one good reason why it was necessary to attack: The enemy had to be destroyed. It was pointed out previously that there was much speculation at the time concerning the probability that the German Armies in Europe would never formally surrender but instead retire to their "national redoubt" and continue the struggle. It will be recalled that General Eisenhower had officially reported this as his belief to the War Department. Most of the great military thinkers of the Allied world had advanced this theory as the way the war would "end". One of America's most eminent and respected military analysts, Mr. Hanson Baldwin reflected this point of view in the New York Times for Sunday, 1 April 1945: "A citadel gradually, perhaps rapidly, contracting in size seems to be indicated. The final bastion---if the Allied estimates of German plans are correct---would include the Alpine regions in Germany, Italy, and Austria---an area of mountains, lakes and rivers about 280 miles long and 100 miles wide, or somewhat larger than Switzerland.

Thus, the attack was made in great mass, and with enough speed to prevent retreat and destroy enemy forces at the same time.

The skill of Allied generalship in achieving secrecy and surprise in the planning stages was demonstrated in this Campaign. In the mountainous terrain with limited passes and roads into the enemy's lines the desired secrecy was not too difficult to maintain. But where Allied authorities showed skill and cleverness was the plan of deception they organized and carried out by which they were able to make the enemy believe that the entire 2nd Corps was being moved to join the Eighth Army thus leading the enemy to expect the main attack

from that sector, the most logical place, from the standpoint of terrain and tactics. Manifestly the success of such a plan required skillful staff and logistical planning.

The enemy had shown extreme sensitivity on the Ligurian coastal flanks during the Winter operations undoubtedly due to the fact that he could not discount as an Allied capability a combined armor and Infantry thrust up the west coastal plain coupled with an amphibious landing in his rear in the vicinity of Sestri and Genova where there are excellent landing beaches and from which points a thrust across the mountains which are not too difficult in this area, and down through the Po Valley from the west. This was a perfectly possible and plausible capability, especially at this season of the year. Therefore, in planning the diversionary attack on the Ligurian coast to precede the main thrust, the enemy was deceived and confused as to the possibility of expecting attack from that sector.

Thus Allied generalship demonstrated its superior skill by creating the following situation: The diversionary attack on the west coast was launched first on 5 April. The enemy could then estimate that this was either the main attack or, what was more likely, a deceptive attack to draw forces away from the Eastern flank from where the main attack would actually come. At the same time he could not fully discount the possibility mentioned before so he could not withdraw troops from this area. The Eighth Army was then pushed into what looked like the main attack four days later, preceded by heavy air bombardment and strafing and the characteristic heavy artillery preparation fires. It had all the earmarks of a typical Allied main attack. When the main attack was pushed forward the enemy could not even discern it as such and continued to make his best effort at opposing the Eighth Army. When the Fifth Army debouched into the Po Valley, the enemy was surprised. The main attack completed the pattern of great mass, so skillfully concentrated that the enemy could not discern it until too late. When he realized what was happening, the combined might of two armies in skillful

and complete coordination of all the Air forces in Italy was ostensibly being concentrated on Bologna. Before this mass, the enemy hastily withdrew and, in doing so made a fatal mistake. As heavily fortified as it was Bologna could have been held by the same type of fanatical troops that had previously blindly followed the Fuehrer's orders and in so doing could have caused serious delay and confusion to the Allied forces. Had the enemy forces held, as the Allied forces had done at Bastogne, for example, they might have prevented the disaster that was to follow.

Once Bologna had fallen, the Allied Divisions fanned out over the valley on what was probably the most rapid exploitation since the Fall of France. From the day of the fall of Bologna, on until the final surrender, this exploitation increased in momentum with such rapidity that virtually all enemy communications were cut and whole divisions disintegrated in a matter of days. Before the enemy could recover from the shock of this momentum the Allies were across the Po river and the enemy's situation was hopeless. He then began surrendering in droves.

The activities of the Partisans throughout the Campaign, especially in all the big cities assisted to a great degree the rapid advance of the Allied columns. The Partisans were Italian Patriots who were unsympathetic toward the Germans, and who favored instead the cause of the Allies. They had been working in great numbers throughout the Winter supplying valuable intelligence information and doing sabotage work behind the enemy's lines. When the Spring offensive was launched these Partisans, under the Allied direction struck in most of the principal cities and prevented the enemy from offering any kind of serious resistance. In many cases, Milan and Genoa for example, they captured garrisons and took over the cities with no additional fire power support from Allied troops.

CONCLUSIONS

The enemy made four grave errors in this Campaign that helped bring about his disastrous collapse. (1) In not holding Bologna at all costs, with suicide garrisons if necessary, and denying the Allies unhampered main supply routes. (2) In not withdrawing his armies across the Po and sufficiently in rear to

reorganize his forces without interruption by the Allies, once he understood the Allied intentions. (3) In depending on the natural difficulties of maneuvering in the Po Valley to aid him in repelling the Allies attack. (4) In doing what the Allies wanted him to do, stand and resist their advance thus allowing the breakthrough at a most unexpected point and consequent encirclement and destruction.

The Allied attack was characterized by superior generalship, clever deception, skillful concentration of mass and rapid mobility. Very little can be found that deserves criticism of an adverse nature.

LESSONS LEARNED

The following are some of the lessons learned from this Campaign:

1. Nothing is so important to the success of a campaign than superior leadership.
2. The staffs of higher echelons of command must be able to foresee every thing and anything the enemy might do and be prepared with prearranged plans to exploit any successes gained over him.
3. Skill in combining and applying the principles of mass, mobility, an maneuver is an indispensable quality of leadership in offensive operations.
4. In spite of the refinements and technological advancement in modern war, the element of surprise still saves lives, shortens wars and achieves decisive results.
5. When a terrain feature is being held by a defender that is indispensable to the success of an attacking force, the terrain feature should be held at all costs.
6. When circumstances favor increase in the momentum of an offensive operation, if every effort and every sacrifice necessary is made to increase it more decisive results will be obtained.
7. Radio is a most effective device in effecting a plan of deception of enemy forces.

8. A wise commander in modern war will not consider any terrain impassable or even difficult.
9. When retrograde movements are necessary a force should always withdraw sufficiently to the rear to prevent interruption by the attacking forces, while reorganizing.
10. Sympathetic civilian populations are a valuable source of intelligence and assistance to attacking forces when their sympathy and friendship is encouraged.
11. The most essential requirements of a successful strategic plan are simplicity, correct estimates of enemy capabilities, and proper preparations for immediate exploitation of successes.