

II United States and 10 British, with six divisions in line and one in reserve; VI Corps, landing at Anzio, had two reinforced divisions, to be followed shortly by elements of two more. There was one division in Army Group reserve.

Total enemy strength was between twenty and twenty-one divisions. On the main front Tenth Army had thirteen divisions (facing ten to twelve on our side) under LXXVI Panzer Corps in the east and XIV Panzer Corps in the west. The remainder were in North Italy under Fourteenth Army; some of the eight there were still in process of forming. In view of the weak state of some of these the German High Command considered it necessary to reinforce Italy with the equivalent of three good divisions, and allow the retention of a fourth, in order to meet the threat presented by Anzio.

The operations to which the Anzio landing was to be the climax began with the attack of 10 Corps across the Garigliano on 17th January. This was delivered by three divisions, the 5th, 56th and 46th but the last played only a minor rôle in the opening phases; the object was to crush the enemy's extreme right behind the lower Garigliano, and then turn northwards and, breaking through the hills between Minturno and Castelforte up the valley of the Ausente river, to appear in the Liri valley at San Giorgio. The attack began well. The German 94 Infantry Division, a relatively inexperienced formation, had not been expecting an attack and was surprised by the weight of its delivery, for the arrival of 5 Division had been well concealed. The Germans reacted rapidly to what they imagined to be our main effort, finding confirmation of this appreciation when II Corps attacked across the Rapido on 20th January. 90 Panzer Grenadier Division was brought down from the Eighth Army front and 29 Panzer Grenadier Division from the Rome area; the latter move was rather gratifying and unexpected, for it was the division which had been expected to oppose the Anzio landing; in addition the Hermann Goering Division was also put in on the lower Garigliano in spite of orders which had been received to transfer it to France on 20th January to prepare for the invasion battles of the coming summer.

The 10 Corps attack looked the more dangerous to the enemy; by the 19th 5 Division had captured Minturno and the 56th was in the outskirts of Castelforte. General von Vietinghoff decided to rely on the strong defences of the Rapido to hold off the frontal attack of II Corps. In this he was justified although the attack by 36 Division was pressed with great gallantry. A small bridgehead was seized on the 21st but it was eliminated on the 22nd. Meanwhile the Germans were preparing a powerful force to counter-attack 10 Corps. On the morning of the 22nd all the three newly-arrived mobile divisions, 29, 90 and Hermann Goering, were thrown into the attack; every division of the Tenth Army was thus actively committed at the moment when VI Corps was landing at Anzio.

The assault force had sailed from Naples at 0500 hours on 21st January in perfect weather conditions and with the prospect that the weather would continue fine. The convoy was made up of two hundred and forty-three warships, transports, landing craft and various other vessels of the United States and Royal Navies, supplemented by Dutch, Greek, Polish and

French ships. The assault force consisted of some fifty thousand American and British troops and over five thousand vehicles. The voyage was uneventful and the force was neither observed nor intercepted by the enemy. The first assault troops touched down on the beaches at 0200 hours on the 22nd; opposition was negligible and it was clear that complete surprise had been obtained. The enemy defences, except for a few coastal artillery positions, were unmanned and it was soon discovered that the only German unit in the area was a battalion of 29 Panzer Grenadier Division which had been so severely reduced in the recent fighting that it had been sent there the day before to rest and refit and to acquire some training in demolition by blowing up, at its leisure, the small harbour of Anzio*. Fortunately it had made no progress with the task before its training was interrupted. The failure of enemy reconnaissance is undoubtedly to be ascribed at least in part to a heavy air raid we had laid on for the purpose against the enemy's long-range air reconnaissance base at Perugia on 19th January. This was so successful that no reconnaissance was flown between 19th and 22nd January. A local diversion was made by the Navy who bombarded Civitavecchia and simulated landings there on the night of the 21st; the feint was taken seriously at first by the enemy who flew a reconnaissance over the area—the pilot asked where the landing was. Army Group "C" informed the German High Command at 0600 hours that a landing had taken place directed at Rome and requested the reinforcements which had been agreed for that case; but the first real news that the landing was taking place at Anzio was given by a Messerschmidt at 0820 hours, six hours after the assault troops landed.

Consolidation of the Bridgehead.

The first phase of the operation had thus gone better than we had reason to hope; we had gained both strategical and tactical surprise and had got our forces ashore with scarcely any fighting. The exploitation inland, however, was slower than I had planned and failed to reach our objective, the Alban Hills. This is in part to be ascribed to what is always a potent factor in all military operations, the delayed effect of preconceived ideas on a situation to which they no longer apply. At the time when the orders for the operation were issued Fifth Army's Intelligence Staff estimated that enemy resistance would be in the strength of one division (viz. 29 Panzer Grenadiers), four parachute battalions from Rome, a tank and an anti-tank battalion and other miscellaneous units, to a total of fourteen thousand three hundred men. VI Corps was therefore expecting to have to fight an assault landing and have some trouble in consolidating its beach-head. Although the enemy dispositions assumed in this appreciation had been radically altered, and VI Corps had, of course, been apprised of this fact before the landing, the effects of the original conception of the task undoubtedly remained. The fact that the whole nature of the operation had fairly recently been changed from a relatively small flanking assault designed to join up quickly with the advance of the main body of Fifth Army

* In addition there were dispersed on the seventy-three miles of coast from the Tiber to Terracina three engineer companies and part of the 29 Reconnaissance Battalion.