

reorganisation for at the moment divisions were not only severely weakened by casualties but also in most cases split up into small groups, often under various different commands. It shows the efficiency of the German leadership and staff work that they were successful in bringing order out of this chaos and rallying so quickly a defeated and, in part, dispersed army.

Since our offensive began on 11th May all the German divisions which were at that date in Tenth and Fourteenth Armies, including the two originally on the Adriatic coast, had been drawn into the battle south of Rome and west of the Apennines. Of the seventeen involved at that time three, the 71st, 94th and 715th, had temporarily ceased to exist as effective formations and the remainder had all been heavily mauled. Of the reinforcements brought in before the fall of Rome the Hermann Goering Division had suffered extremely heavy losses and 92 Infantry Division had been so battered that it was disbanded and never re-formed. However, in spite of the fact that the invasion of France had now begun, and the Russians were threatening East Prussia, Kesselring had been promised considerable reinforcements of new formations, quite apart from the normal replacement drafts. It is strikingly significant of the different value attached by the opposing sides to the Italian campaign that at the very same time as the Allies were withdrawing seven divisions from Italy to France the Germans were despatching to Italy the equivalent of eight divisions, some of them actually from the threatened West. 19 and 20 Luftwaffe Field Divisions came from Denmark and Holland respectively, 16 S.S. Panzer Grenadier and 42 Jaeger Divisions from the Balkans and 34 Infantry Division from Russia. Three other infantry divisions which were forming in Germany, one of which had already been equipped for the Russian front, were sent to Italy where they were given the numbers of divisions which had been destroyed in the battle for Rome and incorporated their survivors. In addition a battalion of Tiger tanks, 504 Heavy Tank Battalion, was taken from the G.H.Q. reserve in the great tank centre of Mailly-le-Camp in France. In view of the general German shortage of armour and the desperate need for heavy tanks to employ against General Eisenhower's gradually widening bridgehead, this transfer seems to me to be particularly significant.\*

I reviewed the situation in a signal to General Wilson on 7th June. My object I defined as "to complete the destruction of the German armed forces in Italy and, in the process, to force the enemy to draw to the maximum on his reserves, whereby I shall be rendering the greatest assistance to the western invasion of which my Armies are capable". I calculated that the enemy, in spite of such reinforcements

as we knew to have arrived, was not strong enough to hold the "Gothic" line against a really powerful attack. Of our own troops I wrote "I have now two highly organised and skilful Armies, capable of carrying out large scale attacks and mobile operations in the closest co-operation. Morale is irresistibly high as a result of recent successes and the whole forms one closely articulated machine, capable of carrying out assaults and rapid exploitation in the most difficult terrain. Neither the Apennines nor even the Alps should prove a serious obstacle to their enthusiasm and skill". I proposed, therefore, to give the enemy no breathing space but to continue to press the pursuit up the centre of the peninsula to the line Bibbiena-Florence-Pistoia-Pisa and then over the Apennines; if they were held in force I would mount a full-scale attack on Bologna not later than 15th August. I would then establish a firm base in the area of Bologna and Modena for the development of further operations either westwards into France or north-eastwards into Austria according to the requirements of Allied strategy at that time. At the same time I would secure and protect any airfield areas in the Po valley considered necessary for the operation of the Allied Air Forces. As I explained, this plan was only possible on the assumption that I retained the forces I then had in Italy; I had to work on this assumption as long as I could while the fate of ANVIL was being decided.

My tactical plans for the pursuit north of Rome envisaged two main lines of advance: along the west coast for Fifth Army and up the axis of the Tiber, both east and west of the river, for Eighth Army. Fifth Army's first objective was the port of Civitavecchia, which was now vital for our maintenance; Eighth Army was directed on the area of Terni and Rieti, the capture of which would disrupt any German plans for forming a continuous front across the peninsula and would threaten with envelopment the left wing of Tenth Army. From the point of view of terrain the former task was rather the easier, for the country is of an open, rolling nature while the route up the Tiber, though not difficult by comparison with the country between Naples and Rome, offered many opportunities for delaying actions, especially on the east bank of the river. Enemy opposition was also much weaker on our left, for most of Kesselring's divisions had withdrawn northward east of the Tiber and, having rashly destroyed all the bridges from Rome as far as Todi, sixty miles to the north, were having great difficulty in getting across to the west to come to the support of the weaker forces retreating up the west coast. VI Corps therefore set the pace, with 34 Division on the coast and the 36th inland, both supported by armour from I Armoured Division. At 1030 hours on 7th June elements of 34 Division entered Civitavecchia. The speedy capture of this port, the most important between Naples and Leghorn, was a considerable gain and, although the Germans had carried out extensive demolitions, particularly fine efforts by the port reconstruction companies made it usable earlier than had been expected. The first Landing Ship, Tank berthed on 12th June and Liberty ships began unloading in the roads on the 14th.

The boundary between the German armies was now the Tiber, with Fourteenth west and

\* Other reinforcements were of less value. Two German equipped Italian divisions arrived towards the end of July and were employed at first on coastal defence and internal security. The Czech Army had arrived in Northern Italy about the time of the fall of Rome. It was twelve battalions strong and was used mainly for guarding railways and dumps in Northern Italy and keeping order among the Italian population. 1 Slovak Infantry Division, reorganised as a "Technical Brigade" for work on fortifications, had been in Italy since January 1944. There were also various Russian formations and units but, except for 162 Division and certain battalions, these were also normally employed only in rear areas. The indirect contribution of all these non-German formations in releasing German troops for active service was, of course, considerable.