

the rear of the enemy who, it was hoped, would by then be already hard pressed on his main front.

I was still a little anxious about the time limit for the return of landing craft because of the needs of maintenance and my Chief Administrative Officer, General Robertson,\* gave me his opinion on 5th January that the plan was not sound administratively. I managed eventually a slight readjustment of the programme, as a result of a conference on 8th January, which gave us a reasonable guarantee that we should be able to supply the force landed. I also planned to land in the first follow-up convoy a mobile, hard-hitting force from 1 United States Armoured Division and 45 Infantry Division. Later the remainder of these divisions was to follow. This meant that in two months SHINGLE had grown from a first tentative figure of twenty-three thousand men to an expected eventual strength of one hundred and ten thousand. It was hoped that the Germans would not be able, with the resources available to them in Italy, both to block off this force and to hold the "Gustav" line.

Having made the outflanking force as strong as possible it was now essential to give the maximum strength to the frontal attack, which must have sufficient momentum to carry it well up the Liri valley. I therefore decided to withdraw the New Zealand Division from Eighth Army, to be concentrated in the Naples area by 26th January, D plus 4 for SHINGLE. This division, of good fighting quality, well motorised and with an armoured component, was the most suitable readily available for such exploitation. It gave me an Army Group reserve under my hand, for the first time, with which to influence the battle; as the events of the following May were to show, operations in the Liri valley and from Anzio must be treated as an Army Group battle. It was the third division taken from Eighth Army to increase our concentration at the vital point; I intended to put it at the disposal of Fifth Army when a suitable opportunity for its employment in an exploiting rôle could be foreseen.

#### *Operations Preliminary to the Anzio Landing.*

On the Adriatic sector General Montgomery still continued with his attempt to break through the enemy's defensive system and reach Pescara but with even less success as the weather worsened and the enemy's strength increased. The immediate objective was now Ortona, a small port surmounted by a medieval Old Town with a dilapidated castle and an outlying New Town of modern solidly built houses. It was hoped that we should be able to use the harbour for maintenance. On 6th December 1 Canadian Division and on 7th December 8 Indian Division crossed the Moro and drove on Ortona. Every advance was most bitterly contested by 90 Panzer Grenadier Division, which had now arrived complete; instead of the passive defence of 65 Division the Panzer Grenadiers spent lives recklessly in savage counter-attacks. But the acme of stubbornness was reached in the defence of Ortona itself by 1 Parachute Division which had been brought across from its hitherto inactive front

on the Maiella. These parachutists were undoubtedly the best German troops in Italy—in the German army, some said—and Ortona gave magnificent opportunities for street fighting. For over a week, from 20th to 28th December, the Canadians were engaged in the most violent hand-to-hand struggle. Street fighting, especially in a town of masonry houses, calls for the greatest skill and courage as Stalingrad had shown and the Canadians came triumphantly out of a test as severe as any in the war. On the 28th the parachutists were finally driven from the town. All our attacks on Orsogna in the meanwhile had failed and the enemy remained in possession for another five months. For the rest of the period no advance was made east of the Apennines; the Germans took the opportunity of the pause in operations to complete the relief of 65 Division by the newly arrived 334 Division.

On the Fifth Army front advances by II Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps between 3rd and 15th January drove the Germans back through the depth of their winter positions on to the final "Gustav" line. It was a strongly contested advance; the Germans had reinforced their front here in December with 44 Infantry and 5 Mountain Divisions and 71 Infantry Division was on the way. San Vittore was captured on 6th January and Monte Porchia on the same day; Monte Trocchio, the last hill before the Rapido, was abandoned by the enemy on the 15th. Meanwhile the French Expeditionary Corps, of 2 Moroccan and 3 Algerian Divisions, had also made contact with the "Gustav" line further north where they had captured Monte Santa Croce; across the upper Rapido, and Monte Pile, west of Viticuso. This represented an advance of about ten miles by the northern arm of my pincers aiming at Cassino and caused considerable alarm to the Germans; the newly arrived 5 Mountain Division made a poor showing in its first battle in Italy and had to be reinforced with detachments from the 3 Panzer Grenadier Division which had been intended for the Adriatic.

#### *Opening of the Battle for Rome.*

On 20th January I moved my headquarters over to the west of the Apennines and opened in the Royal Palace at Caserta. General Richardson had been succeeded as my Chief of Staff shortly before by General Harding\* who, after commanding 7 Armoured Division in the desert, had had command of a Corps in England.

It will be useful at this point to pause and describe the order of battle of the opposing armies as they stood on 22nd January, the day of the Anzio landing.† On our side there were at that time eighteen divisions‡ and six brigades, equivalent to rather over twenty divisions; however 3 Carpathian Division and 5 Canadian Armoured Division were not yet available for employment. Eighth Army had two Corps in the line, 5 and 13, with four divisions and two brigades, and two divisions arriving in the Army area. Fifth Army had three Corps in line, French Expeditionary,

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† Appendices "C" and "D".

‡ Ten British, five American, two French and one Polish.