

The first plan for SHINGLE was approved on 25th November. The operation was to be timed to coincide with the arrival of the main body of Fifth Army on the general line Capistrello-Ferentino-Priverno and was to be in the strength of one infantry division,* reinforced by some armour and anti-aircraft artillery. It was intended to make contact with the main body within seven days. We were to retain the necessary landing craft until 15th January but we now thought it unlikely that we should be within supporting distance until at least 10th January. By 18th December it was clear that even this date could not be met and General Clark signalled to me "reluctantly" recommending the cancellation of the operation on the grounds that the arbitrary date set for the surrender of landing craft made it impossible to mount the attack under the conditions necessary for success. I signalled this decision to General Eisenhower on the 21st but informed him that I was still studying the problem in the hope of being able to prepare a modification of the original plan for a later date.

I fully shared General Clark's reluctance to see ourselves forced back on a strategy of frontal assault in the present unfavourable conditions. There was now no hope that Fifth Army could arrive within supporting distance of a landing at Anzio within the proposed time; no advantage would be gained by a landing nearer to the present front under the abrupt southern slopes of the Aurunci; I therefore began to consider the possibility of making the SHINGLE force much stronger, strong enough to hold its ground by itself for a longer time than we had previously considered. I put up this proposal, which virtually amounted to a new plan, at a Commanders-in-Chief conference in Tunis on 25th December. The Cairo conference had just broken up and it had there been decided that General Eisenhower should take over the command of the invasion of North-west Europe, to be succeeded in the Mediterranean by General Wilson. Both were present at the conference, as was also the Prime Minister who was passing through on his way back from Cairo to London. I proposed we should assault with two divisions reinforced by some armour. The conference decided that, by a readjustment of the programme for the repair and refitting of landing craft in England, it would be possible for sufficient to remain in the Mediterranean long enough to carry out the assault without diminishing the numbers available for the invasion of North-west Europe.† We also had a lucky windfall in the arrival of fifteen Landing Ships, Tank on their way home from the Indian Ocean where a proposed operation for which they were earmarked had been cancelled. It was decided, therefore, that all preparations should be made for carrying out SHINGLE with two assault divisions on or about 20th January. The objective, as before, was to be the Alban Hills.

It was now necessary to press on rapidly with the planning of the new assault. The composition of the force caused some discussion as it would be difficult to compose a homogeneous Corps quickly enough. I decided, in

agreement with General Clark, to use the VI United States Corps Headquarters, General Lucas commanding, which was then out of the line, with 1 British Division, plus some Commandos and armour, and 3 United States Division, also supported by American armour, parachutists and Rangers. 1 Division had just arrived in Italy and was not yet committed, 3 Division had already been engaged on planning SHINGLE and was the obvious choice. I should like to mention, in this connection, a typically understanding signal I received from General Eisenhower, almost the last he sent me before leaving the Mediterranean. "The disadvantages of employing a mixed Corps," he said, "are of course as obvious to you as to me. I have wondered whether or not you may have been influenced by either of the following factors: that you felt it undesirable, because of the risks involved, to hazard a Corps of two American divisions when you as a British officer have the deciding responsibility or that you may have thought it undesirable from a political viewpoint for a Corps of two British divisions to be given the opportunity for the direct capture of Rome. In my opinion neither of these factors should be allowed to outweigh the military advantages of launching your assault by any troops you believe best fitted and most available. In giving these views I merely wish to remove any political difficulties that may occur to you in order that you can launch the best military operation that can be laid on in the time available." I replied that the composition of the Corps was based solely on the best formations available in the time: "the political aspect is of no consequence but I do think the sharing of risks and hazards together is of importance."

Orders for the operation were issued on 2nd January. The objective was defined as to cut the enemy communications and threaten the rear of the German XIV Corps. In the last paragraph Fifth Army was ordered to make "as strong a thrust as possible towards Cassino and Frosinone shortly before the assault landing to draw in enemy reserves which might be employed against the landing forces and then to create a breach in his front through which every opportunity will be taken to link up rapidly with the seaborne operation." For this 10 Corps was being reinforced by 5 British Infantry Division. This was the second division I had taken from Eighth Army, for 1 Division had been originally intended for it, and I was shortly afterwards to take three more. The Adriatic sector was now of secondary importance to the western sector. The intention was to launch successive attacks by the three Corps on the main front: the French Expeditionary Corps on 12th January against the high ground north of Cassino, II Corps on the 15th to capture Monte Porchia and Monte Trocchio and reach the Rapido river and 10 Corps on the 17th to cross the lower Garigliano in the Minturno area and attack northwards up the Ausente river valley towards San Giorgio a Liri. Finally, II Corps, with its left and right thus protected, would on 20th January force the Rapido in the area of Sant' Angelo and exploit rapidly, supported by armour, westwards and north-westwards. Two days later VI Corps was to land at Anzio and threaten

* 3 United States Division was nominated on 13 December.

† At that time the target date for the invasion was in May and it was agreed that this readjustment would not affect that date.