

of the Allied forces in the Mediterranean theatre, the Commando Supremo assumed that we were able to put on shore, at any point of the Italian coastline we chose, a force of such a size that, with the assistance of the Italian troops in the country, the Germans would either be destroyed or driven from Italy in rout. The least they hoped was that the Germans would be forced to evacuate all Italy south of the Apennines, the later "Gothic" line. In that case the authority of the Royal Government would continue over the greater part of the country, the capital would be secured, the Italian Armed Forces, though reduced in size, would remain in being with the position of the Commando Supremo unimpaired, and Italy would be able to take her place among the United Nations.

I have dwelt at some length on the military conceptions underlying the Italian offer because, unless they are thoroughly grasped, the progress of negotiations and subsequent operations will be misunderstood.* They were clearly brought out at the meeting in Lisbon between Castellano and General Eisenhower's emissaries. The latter began by presenting the Allied Armistice terms; these had already been prepared on the news of the fall of Mussolini in anticipation of an approach by the Italians and the approval of the Allied Governments obtained on 1st August. They were short and straightforward, dealing only with military matters; the full terms were not yet presented but the Italian Government, in accepting the short terms, was to undertake to sign the more comprehensive instrument at a later date. Castellano's reaction was as might have been expected from the circumstances of the Italian decision; almost disregarding the question of surrender terms, which he said, indeed, he was not authorised to discuss, he declared that his purpose was to concert the means by which Italy would transfer her allegiance from the German to the Allied side.† What he was interested in was our plans for the invasion of Italy, to see what help we could give to the Italian forces in resisting the Germans. He was told that there was no question of our revealing our intentions; not only was this an obvious measure of security in so dubious a situation but also, and more important, if the Commando Supremo had been apprised of the fact that the utmost we could do was to land three divisions no further north than Salerno they would undoubtedly have decided to postpone capitulation to a more propitious date. Castellano was therefore merely informed that, if the Italian Government accepted our terms, cessation of hostilities would take effect from a date and hour to be notified later; this would be five or six hours before the main Allied landings, which would be in considerable strength. At that time the Supreme Allied Commander

would broadcast an announcement of the armistice; the Italian Government must simultaneously make a similar announcement and order its forces and people to collaborate with the Allies and resist the Germans, its fleet and shipping to sail to Allied ports and its aircraft to fly to Allied bases, and ensure that all Allied prisoners in danger of falling into German hands should be released. Italian formations in the Balkans should be ordered to march down to the coast preparatory to evacuation.

With this Castellano had to be content; there was a considerable element of bluff in our attitude but it seemed likely that the bluff would be successful. It was clear throughout that his interest was centred, not on the distastefulness of surrender, but on apprehensions of what the Germans might do. One threat with which the latter had made great play was to employ gas against the Italian cities. For our part we did not allow ourselves to be carried away by the prospect of invading Italy with Italian assistance. I was sceptical as to the amount of assistance we should actually receive and determined not to attempt any rash operation, such as trying to land our three divisions out of range of air cover, in reliance on such assistance. This judgment, based on past experience, was justified in the sequel; I had expected a little more resistance to the Germans than was actually offered, but not much more. Any help, however, was welcome, for the German forces in Italy were growing at an alarming speed. At any rate the Italian Government was clearly in earnest, as it proved by the subsequent despatch to Lisbon of General Zanussi and General Carton de Wiart.*

Our next direct contact with General Castellano was on 31st August at Cassibile in Sicily. I had moved my headquarters there on the 28th. The scene of a historic disaster in 413 B.C., which marked the downfall of the Athenian empire, it was now destined to be the scene of the signature of an armistice which sealed the dissolution of the Italian empire and the disappearance of Italy from the ranks of the Great Powers. General Smith, representing General Eisenhower, Admiral Cunningham, Air Marshal Tedder and I were present, and General Clark also attended. It was clear that the Italian Government was prepared to accept any terms we offered but that it was obsessed by the fear that the Germans would be able, when the armistice was announced, to seize control of the whole country in spite of any resistance their troops might offer. German troops continued to pour in; from Naples southwards there were the four divisions which had been evacuated from Sicily, reinforced by two armoured divisions which had not yet been engaged, but there were between ten and twelve divisions in the rest of Italy, including two well placed for a stroke against Rome. Castellano now said that his government could not accept our terms unless we revealed our intentions, so that they could judge whether we were coming in sufficient force. He pleaded with us at least to assure him that the landing would be made north of Rome and in strength not less than fifteen divisions: he even seemed to think that we could land a force of that size in the area

* For instance the time which elapsed between 18 August, our first contact with the Italians, 3 September, the signing of the armistice and 9 September, the Salerno landing, has been ascribed to our intransigent insistence on, and Italian reluctance to accept, the principle of unconditional surrender. In fact the Italians never raised any difficulties on this; their delay was caused possibly by natural hesitation and certainly by their desire to discover our plans before committing themselves finally. The date of 9 September, of course, was determined by the availability of landing craft and the phases of the moon.

† General Castellano has published an account of these negotiations under the title "Come Firmai l'Armistizio di Cassibile". It is strikingly factual and sober.

* The former was sent, apparently on his own initiative, by General Roatta, Chief of the Army General Staff; Lieutenant-General (now Sir Adrian) Carton de Wiart, V.C., K.B.E., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., a prisoner of war in Italy, was released as a pledge of good faith.