

Corps entered Palermo on the evening of the 22nd and 45 Division of II Corps cut the north coast road east of Termini Imerese on the next day. These rapid advances had involved little serious fighting but considerable feats of endurance, for a large proportion of the troops had to march long distances in the sweltering damp heat of a Sicilian summer, far more trying than anything we had experienced in Libya or Tunisia. Seventh Army during this period took thirty-six thousand prisoners, nineteen thousand of them between the 16th and the 22nd.

The last week of July was characterised by a comparative lull on the Eighth Army front and the transference of the American effort to the axis of the north coast road and the road running parallel to it to the south. General Montgomery wished to rest his troops and await the arrival of 78 Division before resuming the offensive. I fixed on 1st August as the date at which both Armies should be ready to recommence active operations and I expected that after that date the process of clearing the island would be fairly rapid. The Germans had now four divisions in Sicily, Hermann Goering, 15 Panzer, 29 Panzer Grenadier and 1 Parachute, but they were not all complete and the first two had already suffered heavy casualties. General Hube, a man in whom Hitler was reported to have great confidence, had arrived to command them from the XIV Panzer Corps Headquarters. I moved my own headquarters over to Sicily and opened in a dusty but well-concealed site in an almond grove near Cassibile on 28th July.

Activity on Eighth Army front during this period was confined to the left flank where the Canadians and 231 Brigade continued to make ground. Nissoria fell on the 24th and Agira on the 28th. 78 Division had now arrived and it was General Montgomery's intention to use it in an attack down the axis Catenanuova — Adrano. The capture of Adrano would mean that the great mass of Etna was interposed between the two halves of the German force and the enemy's lateral communications would be pushed back to the far side of the mountain. On the night of the 29th 78 Division, with 3 Canadian Brigade under command, attacked and captured Catenanuova. There was further fighting before the bridgehead over the Dittaino was firm and on the night of 1st August the division proceeded to the attack on Centuripe. This hill city on an isolated pinnacle of rock was the main outpost of the Adrano position and was defended with fanatical vigour by troops of the Hermann Goering Division reinforced by 3 Parachute Regiment, perhaps the best German troops in Sicily. Fighting continued in the steep, cobbled streets of the town all the next day and it was not cleared until the morning of the 3rd. The storming of Centuripe was a particularly fine feat and its effects were widespread, for from that time the front once more became fluid. In face of the threat to Adrano the enemy position covering Catania became untenable.

Seventh Army in the meantime was pushing eastwards along the north coast. This was in accordance with my directive of 23rd July which called for the maximum pressure in this area. General Patton calculated that he

could operate one division on each of the two roads and in order to keep up the pressure proposed to relieve the leading formations regularly. He therefore sent for 9 Division, his reserve in North Africa, which was to sail direct to Palermo.* 45 Division began the advance along the coast road and 1 Division on the southern road; on 25th July the former captured Cefalu and the latter Gangi. On the 28th 1 Division took Nicosia and by 2nd August had advanced to near Troina. On the north coast 45 Division captured San Stefano on 31st July, where it was relieved on 2nd August by 3 Division. 9 Division was now in position behind the 1st on the southern road and the 45th behind the 3rd on the coast road and Seventh Army was in a position to keep up pressure continuously until they reached Messina.† Meanwhile, far to the rear, the whole of western Sicily had been cleared.

Operations were continuous and continuously successful from 3rd August onwards until the final reduction of the island. On that day Centuripe fell, 13 Corps began to advance on Catania and Seventh Army began the bloody attack on Troina. 5 Division, supported by the 50th on its right, began to attack on the night 3rd/4th August and by the 5th Catania, Misterbianco, and Paterno were in our hands. Adrano still resisted but it fell to 78 Division on the night of the 6th, together with Biancavilla in 51 Division's sector. All this time some of the fiercest and costliest fighting of the campaign was raging in and around Troina. 15 Panzer Division offered a desperate resistance lasting four days, though by the end of that period their position was becoming rather precarious, and 29 Panzer Grenadier Division offered an almost equally stubborn resistance on the coastal sector at Santa Agata and San Fratello. Troina was finally cleared on 6th August. General Patton now mounted a small amphibious operation on the north coast behind the enemy lines which was brilliantly successful and led to the capture on the 8th of Santa Agata which had been holding out against us for six days. On the southern road 9 Division passed through the 1st and captured Cesaro on the 8th. The next vital point north of Etna was Randazzo, the capture of which would leave the enemy with only one more lateral road across the peninsula. Both 9 and 78 Divisions were now converging on this point, though the latter had had some hard fighting for Bronte, which it captured on 8th August. Randazzo eventually fell on the 13th and 78 Division passed into reserve. On the coast road a further German line of resistance at Capo d'Orlando was turned by another seaborne hook behind it on the night 10th/11th August. These two small amphibious operations were prepared at very short notice and were most ably executed. They were of the utmost assistance in accelerating the advance on the coastal road which was delayed by extensive demoli-

* One Regimental Combat Team was already in the island having arrived to reinforce II Corps on 15th July at Licata.

† This was done by employing one regiment at a time on each axis for a short period of about forty-eight hours each, relieving continuously with the other two regiments of this division and then with the next division. This meant continuous fresh troops in action and must have imposed an intolerable strain on the German defence.