

the choice was narrowed down to two sectors, the centre and the extreme right, and there was little to choose between them. On the axis of Route 65 the mountains are higher but Bologna, the most important objective south of the Po, is nearer. On the east coast the ground is much lower but the ridges are at right angles to the direction of the advance and there are a number of serious water obstacles. It was, however, largely on considerations of timing that I rejected the idea of an attack up the east coast. It was vital not to allow the enemy a day more than was unavoidable to strengthen his defences and reorganise his formations. The bulk of my forces was advancing up the centre of the peninsula and the west coast by routes which would bring them to the Arno in the area of Florence and Pisa so that it would be both easier and quicker to concentrate for the attack round Florence than anywhere else. In the days when I still had my full forces I expected to be able to rush the Apennines almost without stopping; in my present situation some slight pause would be necessary but I was determined to reduce it to the minimum.

The plan involved a simultaneous attack by Fifth and Eighth Armies on parallel axes, each with their main strength on their contiguous wings. Eighth Army would be able to bring forward for the attack two fresh Corps, 5 and 1 Canadian, with five divisions between them, to be reinforced by 1 British Armoured Division which was arriving in the country. For the moment, until arrangements for forward maintenance could be perfected, these forces were to concentrate in the general area of Assisi with some elements to the west near Siena. On 17th July Eighth Army Headquarters produced a detailed appreciation. The conclusions were that the attack should be made by two Corps, each with two divisions forward, operating up the axes Florence-Firenzuola and Florence-Bologna. The Poles were to hold on the Adriatic coast and would be connected with the central front by a Corps with a defensive rôle. A cover-plan had already been put into force by my headquarters on 3rd July to suggest to the enemy that the main attack would come on the Adriatic coast.

It was more difficult to decide on the rôle and capabilities of Fifth Army which had now been reduced to one armoured and four infantry divisions, all of which had seen heavy and continuous fighting recently. On 19th July, in a letter to General Clark, I outlined the position as I saw it and my proposals for his actions preliminary to the main attack on the line. I suggested that it would almost certainly prove too costly to attempt to force a crossing of the Arno west of Pontedera, where the great Monte Pisano feature gave the enemy commanding observation, and proposed that he should hold the line from Pontedera to the sea with light forces and cross between there and Empoli, exploiting to capture Lucca and Pistoia. This would give us the desired start line for an attack from Pistoia and the front from Pistoia to the sea could be held as a defensive flank with reduced forces. General Clark fully concurred with these plans and issued orders to that effect on 21st July; he estimated that D-day for the operation would be between 5th and 10th August and ordered measures to be taken in the meantime to ensure a thorough rest for all troops. At the same time Fifth Army took energetic steps to increase their

potentiality by creating new defensive formations from the exiguous forces left by ANVIL. The most striking was the creation of "Task Force 45". This force, of roughly divisional strength, was made up from five American Light Anti-Aircraft battalions, a British Light Anti-Aircraft regiment, an American Tank battalion, part of two Tank Destroyer battalions, part of a divisional reconnaissance battalion and some miscellaneous service units; it was divided into three regiment-sized groups. Up to 24th July these units were still being employed in their original rôles, and had only a very short period of intensive training before taking over part of the line on the Arno from 34 Division. The success of this remarkable effort at conversion was very encouraging and "Task Force 45" remained for many months a valuable part of Fifth Army's order of battle, used for holding defensive fronts.

On 26th July I sent an appreciation on future operations to both Army Commanders. My general plan was divided into four phases and described as follows: "To penetrate the centre of the 'Gothic' line roughly between Dicomano and Pistoia; to thrust forward over the Apennines to secure the general line Imola-Bologna-Modena; to complete the destruction of the enemy forces south of the Po by rapid exploitation across the Po valley; to secure a bridgehead over the Po north of Ferrara and if possible at Ostiglia as well". Plans for Eighth Army's attack were unchanged and the main subject for decision was the task of Fifth Army, for the weakening of that Army was the chief new factor which had been introduced. General Clark would be unable to produce more than a Corps of two divisions plus for the attack. If Eighth Army was to attack up the main routes north from Florence on Bologna Fifth Army must clearly attack towards Modena, from either Lucca or Pistoia. On full consideration of topographical factors, which I need not detail here, the latter axis was clearly preferable. I calculated that Fifth Army would probably be strong enough to seize and secure Modena but that it could not be called on for any more than to exploit to a radius of some ten or fifteen miles from that objective. Eighth Army would therefore have to be responsible for the advance up to and across the Po. After bearing the brunt of the attack in the mountains it would probably only be able to exploit to the Po on one axis, to Ferrara, though it would be most desirable, if at all practicable, for it to seize a bridgehead also in the Ostiglia area.

From this appreciation it seemed clear that, after fighting our way through the mountains we should arrive in the plains too weak to exploit rapidly northwards. This conclusion I had reached some time before and I therefore decided to implement the plan which the Air Forces had already made for the destruction of the bridges over the Po. This operation, given the code-name MALLORY MAJOR, was first studied after the fall of Rome and an operational directive for it was issued on 17th June. The object given was "to disrupt the enemy's flow of supplies into northern Italy by the destruction of six rail bridges over the Po river and one across the Trebbia river, supplemented by the destruction of the Recco or Zoagli viaduct" (this was a long and vulnerable viaduct on the coastal line east of Genoa). The date of the operation was to be decided by me, to fit in with the situation on the ground. As