

for various reasons, it would be impossible to launch the attack before May and 25th May was chosen as the target date. This considerably reduced the value of the operation as there was reason to hope that by that date enemy coastal traffic south of Elba would be diminished by reason of our overland advance and he would not be likely to pay much attention to a threat to his right flank when he knew that all our strength was committed on the southern front.

A final conference was held on 1st May, also in the War Room at Caserta, at which decisions were taken on the remaining outstanding points. D-day was fixed at 11th May and H-hour at 2300 hours; postponement would only be on account of bad weather and would be for periods of twenty-four hours, the decision to postpone being taken not later than 1600 hours on D-day. The breakout from Anzio, which it had already been agreed should be prepared for D plus 4, would take place when a penetration of the enemy's second line of defence on the main front (i.e. the "Hitler" line) had been achieved. It was hoped that there would be sufficient air resources to meet all the demands of both Armies but, if not, priority would go in the first phase of the attack to Eighth Army and in the second, the breakout from Anzio, to VI Corps. Until the attack was about to open the air forces would continue with their existing plan of attacks on enemy lines of communication. The effects of this were most valuable but, since this was the first time we had tried anything of this nature, there was a certain tendency to overestimate them. I felt it necessary to emphasize that our intelligence staff credited the Germans with at least four weeks supplies at full operational rates and ventured the prophecy that we should have at least twenty-one days actual fighting, quite apart from days spent in movement, before the enemy could be defeated. It was actually twenty-four days from the opening of the offensive to the entry into Rome.

The definitive order for the attack, Operation Order No. 1, was issued on 5th May.\* This added little new information to the decisions already taken at the preceding conference. Reference was made for the first time to 91 United States Division which was now beginning to arrive in North Africa and was due to move to Italy during the latter part of May and the beginning of June, to join Fifth Army. It had arrived in North Africa at the end of April from the United States and was originally assigned to Allied Force Headquarters but one Regimental Combat Team was ordered to Italy, arriving at Anzio on 1st June; the remainder of the division joined Fifth Army after the fall of Rome. 1 British Armoured Division, which was expected to arrive in June, could not in fact be brought over from North Africa until July.

General Leese worked out his plan for Eighth Army at a series of conferences for Corps Commanders and did not issue any written operation orders. The Army's task was to break through the enemy's front in the Liri valley and advance on Rome. This involved breaking through, or turning, both the "Gustav" and "Hitler" lines, and the Army

Commander divided the former task into two phases. In the first phase 2 Polish Corps would isolate the area Monastery Hill—Cassino from the north and north-west and dominate Route 6 until a junction should be effected with 13 Corps, subsequently capturing Monastery Hill. 13 Corps would secure a bridgehead over the Rapido between Cassino and the Liri, isolate Cassino from the west by cutting Route 6 and effecting a junction with 2 Polish Corps, and then clear the town and Monastery Hill and open up Route 6. In the second phase the Poles were to gain contact with the "Hitler" line north of Route 6 and develop operations against it with a view to a break-through. 10 Corps, covering a wide front, was to secure the right flank and demonstrate in force in the direction of Atina with the object of leading the enemy to believe that an attack was being made in that direction, a plan which had at one time been considered but rejected. 10 Corps was also to be prepared to relieve formations as the battle progressed. 1 Canadian Corps, in Army reserve, was to be held in readiness either to assist or to pass through 13 Corps, as the situation required. 6 South African Armoured Division was also in reserve; it was not yet quite complete and it was intended to use it for exploitation. The total strength in the attack was about six to seven infantry divisions and three armoured divisions.

The task of Fifth Army on the main front was described as to "capture the Ausonia defile and advance on an axis generally parallel to that of Eighth Army but south of the Liri and Sacco valleys." In his Field Order No. 6 of 20th April General Clark further defined this as "to advance with both Corps abreast, secure the Ausonia defile and advance south of the Liri River to cut the Pico—Itri road." Subsequent advances would be made on Army orders. The advance to the first objective was divided into four phases. In the first the intermediate objective was the Ausonia—Formia road; the French Expeditionary Corps, on the right, was to take Monte Majo and secure the defile at Ausonia while II Corps, on the left, was to seize the high ground west of Castelforte and Santa Maria Infante, thus threatening the southern end of the Ausonia road. These attacks were to be simultaneous with each other and with the Eighth Army attack. In the second phase the French were to advance across the River Ausente and drive through the central part of the mountains to capture Monte Revole from where they could threaten the Pico—Itri road. II Corps were to cross the Formia—Ausonia road and capture Monte La Civita and Castellonorato. In the third phase the French were to cut the Itri—Pico road near Itri and direct their main strength on the capture of Monte d'Oro, overlooking Pontecorvo on their right. II Corps was to advance on the left to Monte Campese and Monte Scauri and on the right towards Itri. The fourth phase would put Fifth Army all along the Itri—Pico road, ready for a further advance. This division into phases was only to be regarded as an indication and it was expected that, after the "Gustav" line had been broken, the progress of operations would be fairly fluid. The total strength in the attack was six infantry divisions, plus twelve thousand "goumiers," with one infantry division in reserve.

\* The name of my headquarters had been changed on 9 March from "Allied Central Mediterranean Forces" to "Allied Armies in Italy" and this was the first operation order issued since the change of title.