

clear that we should have stiff fighting before we could drive these excellent troops from their positions. Their artillery support was better co-ordinated now, and a particular feature of the fighting here was the German use of their heavy artillery, especially the 17 centimetre gun, and of a reinforced strength in multi-barrelled rocket projectors. 305 and 44 Infantry Divisions, withdrawing from Perugia, had fallen back unhurriedly, the former closing in east of Arezzo. 114 Jaeger Division, moving up the centre of the peninsula, put in several counter-attacks to ease the pressure on its neighbours. On the Adriatic coast 278 Division, in its first major engagement, was fighting hard for Osimo and Filottrano and losing heavily.

IV Corps on the left had a very bitter struggle for Rosignano, which the S.S. Panzer Grenadiers defended against 34 United States Division with the same stubbornness as they had shown at Cecina. The town is situated on a hill top, very compactly built of large masonry houses with an ancient castle in the centre. In these circumstances street fighting was bound to be a long job; it lasted in fact from 3rd July until 9th July. Naturally only part of our force was directed into the town itself and the remainder endeavoured to out-flank it to the east, but here too resistance from 26 Panzer Division was strong. Further east 1 United States Armoured Division was relieved by 88 United States Infantry Division which on the 8th captured the "far-famed hold" of Volterra.

Arezzo presented a more complicated problem. The town itself lies in a flat plain but it is surrounded by mountains on three sides. The broad and fertile Val di Chiana leads up to it from the west side of Lake Trasimene but some three miles short of it the plain ceases and the road turns north-eastwards to enter the town through a comparative defile. The advance on Arezzo from the Trasimene line was relatively rapid both by 13 Corps and 10 Corps, though the latter was employing only one infantry division and an armoured brigade. 13 Corps first met stiff resistance late on 5th July. The full strength of the German position was not immediately appreciated, for the exposed approaches and heavy shelling made reconnaissance difficult, and for the next three days the leading brigades continued to probe forward in the expectation that the Germans would turn once more to withdrawal under continued pressure without our having to mount a full-scale attack. 6 Armoured Division in the valley, having relieved 78 Division, attempted to press on by the direct route to Arezzo and succeeded in gaining a tenuous foothold on Monte Lignano, due south of the town on the right hand side of the defile. On the Corps' left 4 British Infantry and 6 South African Armoured Divisions tried to break through the enemy defences on the hills running parallel to the Arezzo-Siena road and thus break into the Arno valley west of Arezzo but though 4 Division succeeded in seizing one of the hills, Poggio all'Olmo, the main line held firm.

It was clear that further reinforcement would be needed before we could break through this line of defence. Our main weight must be developed in 13 Corps' sector, where the approach was easiest, but the three divisions which had fought their way through the Trasi-

mene line were now stretched over a front of twenty-five miles and had no reserves.* In 10 Corps 8 Indian Division had been fighting with only four days break since the crossing of the Rapido; 10 Indian Division had arrived to reinforce and had taken over almost the whole Corps sector to allow the 8th a partial rest. 4 Indian Division, which had had three weeks mountain training, was coming forward and the first brigade reached the Umbertide area by 7th July. However, even when thus reinforced, 10 Corps could have little effect on the battle for Arezzo as the country east of the town is very broken and badly roaded and the Corps' main task was to press up the Tiber valley to Sansepolcro. It was necessary, therefore, to reinforce 13 Corps and strike at Arezzo by the natural route, from the south-west. The nearest reserves were in 1 Canadian Corps which had 2 New Zealand Division under command; they had not been needed for the pursuit so far and had been left in the Liri valley for ease of administration and in order to give them time to rest, reorganise and prepare for the attacks on the "Gothic" line. The most readily available formation was the New Zealand Division at Frosinone and I decided to bring this up; to give it time to arrive the attack would have to be postponed until the 15th.

This decision was reached on 9th July and for the next four days the enemy attempted, by a series of counter-attacks on different points of 13 Corps' front, to gain the initiative and re-establish his positions where they had been endangered. These were all repulsed with heavy losses and on our side an attempt to increase our hold on Monte Lignano, the main bulwark of the defence south of Arezzo, was also unsuccessful. In the meantime 10 Corps was able to make a gratifying and unexpected advance. 4 Indian Division was employed west of the Tiber, where a large mountain mass, culminating in the three thousand five hundred foot peak of Monte Favalto, blocks all access from the Tiber valley to Arezzo; there were no roads across this *massif* in either direction and shortage of bridging material meant that the divisional routes of access were severely restricted. Trusting in this inaccessibility the enemy held the ground here relatively lightly. But 4 Indian Division had already a fine reputation in mountains and recent training had polished up its knowledge; with 1/9 Gurkhas in the lead it pushed resolutely into the tangled mass of ridges and peaks and by the 13th Monte Favalto was in our hands. The Army Commander, taking advantage of this, ordered the division to press on north across the Arezzo-Sansepolcro road, capture the Alpe di Poti and threaten Arezzo from the east. It was a difficult task, as the Indians had completely outstripped their road communications, and before this threat could be fully developed the Germans had been forced out of Arezzo; but the capture of Monte Favalto was undoubtedly a strong contributing factor in that success.

13 Corps' attack on Arezzo was launched at 0100 hours on 15th July. The New Zealand Division attacked in the hills south of the

* 78 Division, which had been engaged almost continuously since Sicily, was due to leave for the Middle East in the normal programme of rotation; 46 and 56 Divisions were returning from the Middle East to replace it.