

efforts of the defence. By the evening of that day I felt that the crisis was past and the situation beginning to turn in our favour. 7 Armoured Division had begun to disembark in 10 Corps' area on that day and a Regimental Combat Team of 45 Division also landed and came into Army reserve.* These moves were part of the original programme and the emergency moves on which we had decided were also beginning to show their effect. Before I left on the 15th I signalled to General Eisenhower to the effect that although I was not actually happy about the situation I was happier than I had been twenty-four hours earlier. The troops were tired but on the whole in good heart. I informed him that I had issued certain instructions, details of which I would give on my return next day. I also said that I had asked for 1,500 British Infantry replacements from Philippeville to come as early as possible. I asked him to inform Admiral Cunningham and Air Marshal Tedder that our air bombing and ships' gunfire had been great morale raisers to the troops.

The Germans in their counter-attacks had been working under definite limitations of time. They had, deliberately, as good as broken contact with Eighth Army in order to fling the troops coming up from Calabria against Fifth Army, but they could not ignore Eighth Army's advance beyond a certain date. By the 15th they decided that they had failed; on that day reconnaissance elements of 5 British Division were at Sapri, about fifty miles south of the VI Corps position, with patrols forward, and by the 16th the whole division was concentrated in the area Lagonegro-Sapri-Maratea with a brigade at each place. On the same day patrols of 5 Reconnaissance Regiment made contact with patrols from VI Corps five miles west of Vallo and the Canadians were in a position to threaten Potenza. The enemy had already begun to withdraw in front of VI Corps, and with that confession of his inability to destroy our bridge-head our hold on the mainland of Italy could be considered firm.

PART II.

THE WINTER CAMPAIGN

Planning.

On 21st September I issued instructions to both Army Commanders giving the broad basis of our plan for future operations. The situation at that date was briefly as follows. Fifth Army had just advanced VI Corps, on its right, northwards to follow up the German withdrawal which was taking the form of a great wheeling movement, pivoting on the Salerno peninsula; 10 Corps was regrouping and reorganising after the heavy fighting of the past week and was preparing to launch a direct attack on the Naples plain through the gorges north of Salerno. Eighth Army was halted in the Potenza area, having made contact with Fifth Army on its left and 5 Corps on its right; it was now necessary to pause after the rapid advance to the assistance of Fifth Army while the administrative "tail" of the fighting troops could be

brought up and the new axis of supply established through the Heel ports. 5 Corps Headquarters had landed at Taranto on 18th September and on the 22nd a special force under command of Headquarters 78 Division, and including elements of that division and of 4 Armoured Brigade, was due to land at Bari for mobile operations against Foggia. 1 Airborne Division had reached a line from forward of Bari to near Matera, where they were in contact with 1 Canadian Division; all the area south-east of this line, including the ports of Bari, Brindisi and Taranto, was clear of the enemy. The Italian fleet and air force had surrendered in accordance with the terms of the armistice in so far as they were not prevented by the action of the Germans but the Italian army had been eliminated except for a few poorly equipped formations in the south and the troops in Sardinia and Corsica. Mussolini had been rescued from his prison on the Gran Sasso but this, though irritating, was not considered likely to add to our difficulties in Italy, an appreciation which proved wholly justified. The "Quadrant" conference at Quebec had broken up and I was informed of its main decisions regarding the Mediterranean on 18th September. No change was made in the allotment of forces to the theatre; this involved the withdrawal to the United Kingdom of eight good divisions, to be replaced in part by French divisions as the latter's equipment progressed, reduction of the bomber strength by about a hundred and seventy aircraft by December 1943 and a considerable withdrawal of troop-carrying aircraft and assault shipping and craft.

My plan of campaign had to be based on these considerations. It had to be flexible and general in terms and as I put it to my Army Commanders it was rather a general directive on the method of conducting the coming operations and an indication of the bounds of our advance. Our object I defined as "the seizing of certain vital areas which contain groups of all-weather airfields, ports and centres of road communications. On these firm bases the Armies can be regrouped, reorganised and balanced, and from them strong offensive operations can be developed to destroy the German forces in the field. Light mobile forces and patrols will be operating ahead of these bases against the enemy continuously. This advance screen harasses the hostile rearguards, obtains information of all natures, and aids us to keep the initiative".

I indicated four phases into which our advance could be divided. The first was the consolidation of our present position on the line Salerno-Bari; the second was to give us the port of Naples and the airfield centre of Foggia. The third aimed at securing Rome and the airfields round it and the important road and rail centre of Terni. For the next phase I indicated as eventual objectives the port of Leghorn and the communications centres of Florence and Arezzo; but this was well in the future, dependent on the enemy reaction, the strength of our own forces, how our ports and communications were functioning and so on. Throughout the advance I planned "to take full advantage of our control of the sea and skies to put ashore small but hard-hitting mobile forces behind the enemy so as to cut him off". In the event I was only able, for reasons which will appear later, to carry out two of these amphibious operations, at Termoli and Anzio.

* The arrival of the craft bringing these reinforcements apparently suggested to the Germans that we were re-embarking; their broadcast propaganda claimed a "Second Dunkirk".