

rigid division between the lines of communication of the two Armies had not been adhered to and there were already bases and depots both in Apulia and the Naples area which allowed us the requisite flexibility at the cost, well worthwhile as it turned out, of a certain duplication. The administrative plan for the spring offensive was that Fifth Army should be maintained on its existing west coast axis; Eighth Army should have two axes, one for the Army, less the Polish Corps, on the west and one for the Poles on the east, and 5 Corps, which was to be under direct command of my Headquarters, should have an independent axis of its own on the east coast.

Orders for the regrouping were issued by my Headquarters on 5th March; the change of Army boundaries took effect from 26th March. I need not describe the actual steps by which we carried out the various reliefs but in order to understand their effect it will be useful to anticipate by giving our dispositions on the main front as they were on 11th May, when the operation began.*

In the sector from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the confluence of the Liri and the Gari Fifth Army had two Corps in line: on the left II Corps with 85 and 88 Divisions, and on the right the French Expeditionary Corps with four divisions, 1 Motorised, 2 Moroccan, 3 Algerian and 4 Moroccan Mountain Divisions and three Groups of Tabors of Goums.† In Army reserve on this part of the front was 36 Infantry Division. Eighth Army's sector extended from Fifth Army's right boundary to a line running from the highest peak of the Maiella, through the summit of the Gran Sasso and so generally north-west. The striking force was on the left. From the Liri to Cassino town was 13 Corps with four divisions, 6 Armoured, 4, 78 and 8 Indian Infantry, and behind it, ready to pass through or come into line on its left as the situation should demand, was 1 Canadian Corps with 1 Infantry and 5 Armoured Divisions and 25 Tank Brigade; on its right, poised and concentrated for the attack on Cassino, was the Polish Corps with two infantry divisions, 3rd and 5th, and an armoured brigade.‡ 10 Corps held the right of the Army's front, the mountainous centre of the peninsula, with a miscellaneous group of forces based mainly on 2 New Zealand Division; it included a parachute brigade, two armoured car regiments and an Italian brigade group. In Army reserve was 6 South African Armoured Division which was not yet complete in the country; its motor brigade was under command of 10 Corps at the time the battle opened. On the Adriatic coast was 5 Corps, under direct command of my Headquarters; it consisted of 4 and 10 Indian Infantry Divisions and was intended to play a containing rôle only.

Plans for the Offensive

A conference of the two Army Commanders was held at my Headquarters in Caserta on 2nd April and I explained my plan for the

battle. Eighth Army's task I defined as "to break through the enemy's main front into the Liri valley and advance on Valmontone"; Fifth Army's "to secure the Ausonia defile and advance *via* Esperia to the south of the Liri valley" and "to break out of the Anzio bridgehead and advance on Valmontone." Timing was also discussed. The programme of reliefs, in particular the move of 10 Indian Division from the Middle East, was taking a little longer than was expected and we now estimated that it should be possible to complete all preparations by 3rd to 5th May. I had originally calculated that, in order to give the best support to the western invasion, our attack should precede it by fifteen to twenty-one days; I was unaware at the time of the date chosen for OVERLORD but I was given to understand that a date for our attack in early May would suit General Eisenhower. It would also suit well with the phases of the moon. For the sake of troop movements at night it is always most useful to have a good moon and it would be full on 8th May. I eventually decided on a tentative D-day of 10th May.

There was a good deal of discussion as to the relative timing of the assault on the enemy's main line and the break-out from Anzio. There was much to be said for making all attacks simultaneous but the main disadvantage of this was that it would mean splitting our air effort between the bridgehead and the main front. My original idea was to lead with the Anzio attack so as to threaten or, if possible, sever the enemy communications between Rome and Cassino and thereby make easier the task of the assault up the valley. I decided against it, however, because the enemy's mobile reserves around the bridgehead, for reasons which will appear later, were strong and there was a possibility that an attack there might get held up short of its objectives and, secondly, because the enemy seemed to expect us to make our major attack there and I wanted to surprise him; as long as he remained in that frame of mind he would tend to regard our attack on the main front as subsidiary only. It was decided, therefore, to lead with Eighth Army's assault on the valley and Fifth Army's into the Aurunci. The force at Anzio was to be ready to open an attack on or after D plus 4 at twenty-four hours notice. I modified the original proposal to put another infantry division into the bridgehead; instead the remainder of 1 United States Armoured Division would be moved in (as late as possible to avoid unnecessary losses from shelling in the rear assembly areas) and 36 United States Division would initially be held in Army reserve, ready either to support the main drive or to move to the bridgehead at short notice.

The prospects of an operation against Elba were also discussed at the conference. This operation (codename BRASSARD) had been for some time under consideration at Allied Force Headquarters. If it could be carried out without subtracting from the resources for the main attack the capture of the island would have important results in the disruption of the enemy's seaborne traffic and would also greatly assist our cover plan. General Wilson was prepared to use 9 Colonial Infantry Division (French) from Corsica. His Chief of Staff attended the conference and promised to examine the possibilities of the attack urgently. On 7th April, however, I was informed that,

* Appendix "E".

† A Goum equals roughly a company and a Tabor a battalion, both on the large side. The total of goumiers was about 12,000. They are native Moroccan troops under French officers and N.C.O.s and are particularly skilled in mountain warfare.

‡ The Polish divisions were only two brigades strong, however, so that the Corps amounted to one armoured and four infantry brigades.