

of the axis of the assault divisions was a notable feat of staff work. Progress on the first day was rapid, for the enemy was now falling back to the "Caesar" line, and though resistance stiffened on the 27th we were still not in contact with the main defences and were able to advance to within two miles of Lanuvio and Campoleone station. Next day we came up against the "Caesar" line proper and in three days of desperate fighting we were unable to breach it. The defences were not on a very elaborate scale but the country was difficult, broken and abrupt and the enemy had perfect observation from the summit of the Alban Hills. Gallant attacks by 34 Division against Villa Crocetta, between Lanuvio and Velletri, on the 28th, 29th and 30th, failed to make a breakthrough and were halted with heavy losses. Further to the left 45 and 1 Armoured Divisions, attacking at the same time, also came up against an impenetrable line of defences after they had captured Campoleone station.

Fifth Army regrouped again, intending once more to shift the main weight of the attack on the "Caesar" line. The troops were tired and one more offensive might exhaust them for a time; but it was evident that the enemy, too, was tired, and one more blow might drive him from his positions. It was decided to make another effort in the Valmontone direction. On 29th May II Corps took over the command of the right sector of VI Corps' front, with 3 and 85 Divisions; the latter came up on the 30th. Speed was essential to prevent the enemy from settling down in the "Caesar" line, for now that the right of the line was holding well Kesselring was bringing up every possible reinforcement to the danger point north of the Alban Hills, covering Valmontone. On our side 88 Division was moving up to II Corps and the French, who were approaching Carpineto on the 30th, would soon be ready to intervene. General Clark decided, however, not to wait for this additional strength, nor for Eighth Army to come up, and all preparations were in hand for a renewal of the attack, when a sudden turn of fortune, rapidly put to account, changed the whole aspect of the operations.

36 United States Division, the strongest and freshest in VI Corps, had been employed between the two thrusts on Lanuvio and Ardena and had gradually advanced until by 30th May it had a firm hold on the Ardena-Velletri road below the steep crest of Monte Artemisio, at the south-eastern extremity of the Alban Hills. Patrolling boldly forward it discovered that the Germans, drawn off by the fighting at Lanuvio and the threat to Valmontone, had left Monte Artemisio unguarded. The opportunity was instantly seized and on the night of the 30th one regiment of the division moved off silently in column of battalions through vineyards and thick woods up the mountain. The new moon cast a faint light, some dogs barked but no enemy were encountered. By dawn the summit, Hill 931, and the high ground known as Maschio di Lariano had been occupied. A second regiment followed and the third drove in behind Velletri and cut the escape route for the garrison of that town to Nemi. By the evening of 31st May the whole division was firmly established on the heights and had brushed aside hasty counter-attacks by the Hermann Goering Division. The "Caesar"

line had been pierced at a vital point and the last defences of Rome broken.

The American success in the Alban Hills and the desperate position of Fourteenth Army did not alter Kesselring's determination to offer a continued and most stubborn resistance in the centre of his line where Eighth Army were fighting their way up the valley of the Sacco. Arce held out until the night of 28th May but to the south the Canadians were able to make better progress towards Frosinone. 5 Canadian Armoured Division, having got itself firmly established across the Liri at Ceprano, pushed forward on the 29th on two axes north and south of Pofi. Two rivers, the Fornelli and the Maringo, cut across this line of advance and both formed serious obstacles. Pofi was captured that night after a heavy dive-bombing attack. Next day the armoured division made contact with the French in Ceccano and on the right moved up to Route 6 at a point some five miles short of Frosinone. On the 30th 1 Canadian Infantry Division, which had relieved the armoured division, captured Frosinone, which stands on a steep escarpment commanding the junction with the road leading north through Subiaco. On the same day 10 Corps captured Alvito and were threatening Sora on the Arce-Avezzano road. 13 Corps, between the Canadians and 10 Corps, was advancing with difficulty on Alatri; in this sector also contested river crossings over the many tributaries of the Liri were the principal enemy delaying tactics.

It was during this period that the crisis of Fifth Army's attack in the Alban Hills was reached and on 31st May, in order to give them more freedom of action, I shifted the inter-Army boundary north to leave Route 6 to Fifth Army. Eighth Army were thereby directed further northwards in conformity with the movements of the enemy whose withdrawal was now much more northerly, up the Arce-Avezzano and Frosinone-Arsoli roads. 10 Corps was pursuing up the former, with the New Zealanders in the lead, and 13 Corps up the latter, with 8 Indian and 78 Divisions. The Canadian Corps was to move up Route 6 through Ferentino to the Army boundary and prepare to pass 6 South African Armoured Division through in pursuit through Rome. Should the enemy succeed in stabilizing on the "Caesar" line 13 Corps would join in a concentrated attack to the north of the Canadians. Ferentino fell on 1st June and the Canadians pushed on to Anagni, which was captured on the 3rd. By this time the fall of Rome was clearly imminent and Eighth Army turned its best efforts to get forward 6 South African and 6 British Armoured Divisions to lead the pursuit. It was not an easy task, for the South Africans had to pass through the whole Canadian Corps and then found Route 6 blocked by the French Expeditionary Corps and II Corps. In spite of these irksome difficulties it was inspiring to have these two fresh armoured divisions with which to press the pursuit of a fleeing enemy. As I signalled the night Rome fell "If only the country were more open we could make hay of the whole lot. However you may rest assured that both Armies will drive forward as fast as is physically possible."

Fifth Army was ready to exploit 36 United States Division's success and the final orders