

were issued on 31st May. VI Corps was to attack on 1st June to secure the Alban Hills in its sector and advance to cut the enemy's withdrawal routes through Rome. 5 British Division, under Army command, was to advance on the left of VI Corps to drive against the Tiber and destroy any forces which were turned southwards by this thrust. II Corps was to secure the high ground north of Valmontone, seize the northern part of the Alban Hills and pursue any enemy attempting to withdraw northwards across its front. The Germans were still resisting desperately and still apparently with the same orders, to keep us out of Rome at all costs. Even now, with Fifth Army on the Alban Hills and their centre disintegrating under Eighth Army's blows, they continued to hope that the situation might yet be stabilized; captured enemy documents show that as late as 2nd June von Mackensen was still ordering resistance to the last and making plans for the redistribution of his forces with apparent confidence in the possibility of success. It is a striking example of German reluctance to yield ground even in the most serious circumstances, carried this time to a disastrous extreme.

II Corps, once more with its old divisions, 85th and 88th, reinforced by the 3rd, made the greatest advance on 1st June. On that day they finally crossed Route 6 and on the 2nd they captured Valmontone and advanced almost up to Palestrina. VI Corps met very heavy resistance on the 1st but succeeded in capturing Velletri which had defied us so long. On the 2nd there was still no sign of weakening in the enemy determination to resist. That night, however, the Hermann Goering Division, though reinforced at last by 334 and part of 26 Panzer Divisions, had reached the limit of its endurance and turned to full retreat. It withdrew with all speed to the Aniene river, east of Rome, which it held with a light screen; 334 Division, whose losses had been particularly heavy, was taken out of the line entirely and sent north to re-form. It was now time for the Germans fighting south of the Alban Hills to pull out as well or risk destruction against the Tiber. By the afternoon of the 3rd both II and VI Corps were pressing forward on Rome by all the roads that lead to the city. 4 Parachute Division, from the extreme right, was left as a rearguard behind which the remainder slipped away through the city, over the Tiber bridges and precipitately north.* The parachutists were able to delay II Corps long enough, in an action at Centocelle, to frustrate the attempt to drive southwards towards the Tiber and link up with VI Corps. At 1915 hours on 4th June the first elements of 88 United States Division entered the Piazza Venezia below the Capitol.

So Rome fell to the Allied Armies in Italy two days before the Anglo-American invasion was launched against the shores of Normandy. It was but the latest of many captures of Rome in history but it was the first time since

Belisarius captured it fourteen centuries ago that the Eternal City had been taken by an invading army from the south.

Influence of Operations in France on the Italian Campaign.

The fall of Rome preceded the invasion of France by two days. It was very gratifying to have provided a heartening piece of news so appositely, but before long the progress of operations in France began to exercise an influence which was most prejudicial to our exploitation of the victory in Italy. I must recapitulate a little to explain the connection. At the Quebec conference in August, 1943, it was decided that the forces in the Mediterranean were to contribute to the invasion of France by effecting a lodgement in Southern France, in the area of Toulon and Marseilles, as a diversion to the invasion of Normandy. This was confirmed after the Cairo conference in December of that year. The assault, given the code-name ANVIL, was to be in the strength of at least two divisions, the date in May; it was an assumed prerequisite that our forces in Italy should have reached the Pisa-Rimini line. It will be remembered that OVERLORD was at that time planned for May. It was decided, however, at a conference held in Algiers in February, 1944, that there was no hope of getting enough craft to mount ANVIL in May and, at the beginning of March, the date was advanced to early June, thus making it once more simultaneous with OVERLORD whose date had also been postponed. Three divisions were now to be released from Italy for the assault. But the serious shortage of craft still continued and on 10th April the Combined Chiefs of Staff laid down that ANVIL would probably not take place before mid-July; it was intended to use craft released from OVERLORD.

I was not directly concerned in these plans, which were discussed between the Combined Chiefs of Staff and Allied Force Headquarters, except in so far as the troops for the Southern France operation would have to come from my command. It was, of course, distracting to have this uncertainty weighing over us but it was at least satisfactory, after April, to know that I should be able to plan my operations for the capture of Rome without having to lose three divisions at short notice. However I still had to look ahead and, since March, I had been pressing for guidance on what the long-term plan for Italy should be. I got this on 22nd May in the form of the following directive from General Wilson:

"Your task will continue to be the destruction of German forces in Italy.

(a) In carrying out this task you should bear in mind the importance of the capture of the Ancona area since its ports and airfields may be of considerable importance in any operations which may be taken across the Adriatic.

(b) It is also my intention, subject to conditions at the time, and further subject to the provisions that your operations will continue to have overriding priority in the allocation of resources until you have captured Rome, to prepare and mount an amphibious operation at the earliest opportunity, in any case not later than mid-September. This operation might take the

* The German offer to declare Rome an open city belongs rather to a history of propaganda than to a military history. The offer was broadcast at a time when Allied troops were already in the outskirts of the city following hard on the heels of the enemy retreating through it. In the circumstances the enemy undertaking "to carry out no troop movements in Rome" was both belated and insincere. The most significant point about this announcement is that it showed the Germans had not expected Rome to fall so soon.