

with Livergnano, a village only twelve miles by road from Bologna. Fighting continued for Livergnano itself from the 10th to the 15th. On the same day 34 Division, which had been relieved on the left of the Corps by 1 Armoured Division, took over a new sector between 91 and 85 Divisions, to strengthen the attack east of Route 65.

The climax of the assault was reached between 20th and 24th October. On the 20th 88 Division attacked and seized the great *massif* of Monte Grande and Monte Cerere. On the 22nd the same division captured La Costa, only four miles from Route 9 and on the 23rd 34 Division captured Monte Belmonte, about ten miles east of Route 65 and nine miles from the centre of Bologna. That same night 78 Division stormed Monte Spaduro for which the Irish Brigade had been struggling since the 20th. This was Fifth Army's finest effort of the winter campaign. For the Germans it was a real crisis, for a relatively small advance would put the Allies on Route 9, behind Tenth Army; the front would be split and even an immediate withdrawal might lead to disaster. The only course was to hope that we might be so exhausted by the struggle in the mountains as to be incapable of that supreme effort. As he had done at Cassino, Vietinghoff decided to hold on in that hope and to make the parallel still closer and strengthen the hope he brought across from opposite Eighth Army the two divisions famous for the defence of Cassino, 90 Panzer Grenadier and 1 Parachute Division. With the arrival of the remainder of 29 Panzer Grenadier Division the three best divisions in Italy barred the way to the plain. Assisted by torrential rains and winds of gale force, and by Fifth Army's exhaustion, the German line held firm. On 27th October I agreed to General Clark's assumption of the defensive.

To be robbed of a decisive success after so long and sanguinary a struggle was the more bitter in that the price already paid would have been heavy even if paid for victory. I cannot sufficiently express my admiration for the way in which the troops of Fifth Army, in spite of the most arduous and exhausting conditions, in mud and snow, returned again and again to the attack on one mountain position after another, regardless of the heavy and continuous losses which thinned their ranks. Casualties had been mounting steadily during the long-drawn-out offensive, more particularly in II Corps, and, as with Eighth Army, a serious replacement crisis had arisen. On 9th October General Clark informed me that by 1st November, at the present rate of wastage, he would be eight thousand infantry short for his United States divisions which would mean a shortage of seventy-five men per rifle company. He had already asked General Devers,\* Deputy Supreme Commander, if he could be allotted replacements from the pool scheduled for Seventh Army, which was in the theatre. General Devers did not feel able to comply with this request and on 15th October, as a last resort, I signalled personally to General Eisenhower to ask him if he could allot Fifth Army three thousand replacements from the resources of the European Theatre of Operations. This was rather a roundabout method, as

replacements for Seventh Army, i.e. France, were then sailing from Naples and it would have been quicker to have diverted them northwards than to fetch fresh ones from France. General Eisenhower at once undertook to examine the matter urgently and replied on the 21st that he was proceeding to despatch our three thousand men immediately by air. It was a fine example of General Eisenhower's ready grasp of the big strategic picture and his willingness to cut through red tape to assist a friend in need. It also illustrates the advantage the Allies drew from our command of the facilities of air transport.

#### *Eighth Army's Advance from the Fiumicino to the Ronco.*

On 1st October General McCreery assumed command of Eighth Army in succession to General Leese, who had been appointed to command Allied Land Forces in South-eastern Asia. It was a well-deserved promotion for one who had worthily carried on the traditions established by General Montgomery and who had made his mark on the campaign in Italy by his handling of large forces in the Liri valley battles. General McCreery had commanded 10 Corps since the first landings at Salerno. That operation might be said to typify the kind of task in which he had ever since been engaged, the achievement of vital results with limited resources, by hard fighting in difficult terrain where a scientific adjustment of means to ends called for constant changes of tactics and all the craft of generalship. The first crossing of the Garigliano, and the operations east of Arezzo, are further examples of his successful use of the strategy of deception. I was well acquainted with General McCreery's qualities as a scientific soldier with a gift for the offensive from the time when he had been my Chief of Staff for the Alamein campaign and onward to final victory in Tunisia, and was therefore particularly pleased to have him as one of my Army Commanders.

The plan for the continuance of the advance on the Adriatic sector called for a full-scale offensive by 5 Corps and 1 Canadian Corps on an axis parallel to and north of the Rimini-Bologna road; weather permitting this was to be launched on the night of 6th/7th October. The weather did not permit; rain was continuous and of extraordinary violence, paralysing any movement in the plains. In the higher ground on the left the effect was not so serious and 10 Indian Division was able to exploit its bridgehead over the Fiumicino and to capture on 7th October Monte Farneto. This started a series of manoeuvres which were to characterize the next period: ground was gained on the left flank in order to turn from there the series of river lines. It was natural that this policy should commend itself to General McCreery, for he had recently been operating with very small forces in these mountains while commanding 10 Corps, and had found them less of an obstacle to an advance than the continuous water lines of the deceptively attractive plains. The Germans were also surprised by our successes here and moved across 29 Panzer Grenadier Division to this sector from north of Route 9. It was not left there long, however, for on 14th October it began to transfer to the central front to meet Fifth Army's attack on Bologna. The result was that by the 16th both

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