

*Disposition of Opposing Forces**

When the attack opened the forces under Kesselring's command totalled twenty-six German divisions and two Italian; they were fairly well up to strength, for drafts in June, July and August amounted to some sixty thousand. There had been certain changes in the order of battle. At the end of July the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, which had been active in the Mediterranean theatre ever since it was formed, and first saw service in Tunisia, had been withdrawn to the East Prussian front. To replace it Kesselring received, in August, 98 Infantry Division which had been re-forming in the Zagreb area after its severe losses in the Crimea. In August two more mobile divisions, 3 and 15 Panzer Grenadier, were withdrawn for the western front; the two infantry divisions to replace them did not arrive until September. The Allied invasion of Southern France added two more German divisions to the order of battle in Italy, 148 Infantry and the 157 Mountain† Divisions. These were originally in Nineteenth Army but the rapid advance up the Rhone cut them off from their parent formation and they fell back on the Maritime Alps, coming under Kesselring's command. This invasion had, in its early stages, had the effect of weakening the forces opposing us. On getting wind of the preparations for the assault, which it was impossible to conceal, Kesselring decided that the blow was about to fall on the Ligurian coast. He therefore hastily moved 90 Panzer Grenadier Division to Genoa. It arrived there on 13th August, but when the real invasion came, two days later, it was re-directed to the Franco-Italian frontier.

In the two armies opposing us on the main battle front there were nineteen divisions. Tenth Army held the eastern half of the line, from the Adriatic to the inter-army boundary just west of Pontassieve, with LXXVI Panzer Corps left and LI Mountain Corps right; these Corps Headquarters had recently exchanged sectors. LXXVI Corps, from the sea to the area of Sansepolcro, had three divisions forward and two in reserve, all infantry and one, the 71st, at only half strength. 278 Infantry Division, on the seaward flank, after fighting a continuous withdrawal all the way up the Adriatic coast since June, had been badly shaken by the Poles in the heavy fighting from Ancona to the Metauro. Of the two divisions in reserve 162 (Turkoman) Infantry Division was not of high quality but the other was the famous 1 Parachute Division. This was resting in the rear of 278 Division on the coast and it was intended that the latter should withdraw through it for a badly needed rest in a quieter sector of the line. The mountainous sector of LI Corps, from Sansepolcro to Pontassieve, was held by five infantry divisions, mainly those which had suffered most in the retreat from Rome, such as the 44th, 114th and 334th. There was one infantry division, the recently arrived 98th, in Army reserve near Bologna. Fourteenth Army, from Pontassieve to the coast, had eight divisions, also divided between two Corps, I Parachute left and XIV Panzer right with the inter-Corps boundary at Empoli. The former had 4 Parachute and two infantry divisions, the latter 26 Panzer, 16 S.S.

Panzer Grenadier and one infantry division. Army reserve consisted of 29 Panzer Grenadiers, north of Florence, and 20 Luftwaffe Field Division, which had now finally absorbed the remains of 19 Division, on the coast between the western end of the "Gothic" line and Viareggio.

It is more difficult to adduce these dispositions as a definite proof of the success of our cover plan than in the case of the spring offensive but they do show a tendency to concentrate on the defence of the central sector rather than the east coast. Particularly significant is the fact that, of the three divisions in Army reserve, one was near Bologna and a second, the only mobile reserve, was between Florence and Bologna.* The enemy's order of battle on the east coast was not impressive except for the parachutists and the event soon showed that it would need heavy reinforcements if this sector of the front was to be held. It also showed, unfortunately, the inevitable limitations of any cover plan: the two sectors which alone it was logical to threaten were, on the German side though not on our own, so closely connected by good lateral communications that reserves intended for the one could very rapidly be diverted to the other.

In northern Italy the Italians were now coming a little more into the picture. Marshal Graziani, Commander-in-Chief of the Fascist Republican Forces, was given command of a mixed Italo-Germany "Army of Liguria" of two Italian and two and a half German divisions. With these he was responsible for the coast from the French frontier to Spezia; the more important sectors, on the French border and covering Genoa and Spezia, were held by German troops. After the Allied invasion of France this command was increased by the addition of the two divisions from Nineteenth Army and 90 Panzer Grenadier Division, raising the Army of Liguria to a total of seven divisions. It played, however, a purely defensive rôle throughout. In the north-east, under Army Group command, the Germans had a reserve mountain division and one infantry division, the 94th, which was re-forming after its serious losses.

Against these forces we had twenty divisions and eight brigades. Eighth Army accounted for eleven divisions, all but two of which were in the three attacking Corps. On the right was the Polish Corps with 3 and 5 Divisions and an armoured brigade along the Metauro from the Adriatic on a front of about seven miles. Next, on a narrow front of just over two miles, covered by a screen of Polish units, was the Canadian Corps with 1 Infantry and 5 Armoured Divisions, supported by a British tank brigade. To the west, covering about twenty miles of front, was 5 Corps, the strongest of the attacking Corps, with two infantry divisions, 46 and 4 Indian, in the line and 1 Armoured and 4 and 56 Infantry Divisions, plus two armoured brigades, in reserve. 10 Corps covered lightly, with 10 Indian Division and a mixed brigade group, the area stretching from the upper Tiber valley to the Army boundary on the Pratomagno. In Army reserve was 2 New Zealand Division, to

* 20 Luftwaffe Field Division was not a very important reserve and its location is irrelevant to the problem. 90 Panzer Grenadier Division, before its move to the north-west, had been resting west of Bologna.

* Appendices "G" and "H".

† Later renumbered 8 Mountain Division.