

time: "I cannot in all honesty say that I should welcome any more German divisions just at the moment but from the broader point of view no doubt it is for the common good."

Break-out from Anzio.

With the arrival of 36 Division there were now seven divisions at Anzio plus the Special Service Force and a Combat Engineer Regiment. The perimeter was held by four divisions and the Engineer Regiment and in reserve were 1 Armoured, 3 and 36 Infantry Divisions and the Special Service Force. 1 and 5 British Divisions, holding the left flank, were put directly under command of Fifth Army; they were to revert to command of my headquarters after the capture of Rome. I issued the orders for the operation on 21st May; this was not three days' warning but it did give General Truscott the two nights he had asked for and proved quite adequate. The plan of attack by VI Corps envisaged two phases: first a penetration of the enemy defences to seize a firm base on an arc of about a mile radius round Cisterna, and secondly an advance through Artena on Valmontone. The first phase was the task of 1 Armoured and 3 Infantry Divisions and the Special Service Force; when it was completed 36 Division, the freshest formation in the bridgehead, was to pass through and advance to a line running across the valley below Velletri, supported by 1 Armoured Division. Then, reinforced by 3 Division, it was to advance on Valmontone. The enemy force opposing numbered five divisions. Almost all the armour in Fourteenth Army had been sent to the main front* leaving only the assault guns of 3 Panzer Grenadier Division and a handful of Tigers and Panthers. The Hermann Goering Division was on its way but its leading elements had got no further than Viterbo the day the attack began. The last hope would have been 29 Panzer Grenadier Division but that, released at last from its fruitless guard over Civitavecchia, had been rushed down to Terracina where it went into action against II Corps on the 22nd. Once again Kesselring's mobile reserves had been misdirected.

VI Corps' attack began at 0630 hours on 23rd May, half an hour later than the attack on the "Hitler" line. For the last ten days the Corps artillery had fired heavy concentrations on the German lines and gun positions at widely differing times; this was to accustom the enemy to being fired on heavily without an infantry attack following, and to encourage him to reveal his defensive fire plans; it also showed us, as might have been expected, that he was particularly alert at dawn. General Truscott decided therefore to attack an hour after dawn, when vigilance had relaxed. The result was complete local surprise. The enemy defences, though they had been under development since early March, proved less formidable than those of the "Hitler" and "Gustav" lines; the minefields, however, were numerous and well laid and caused unusually high losses in tanks. The attack continued to gain ground on the 24th and by evening Cisterna was completely surrounded; it fell on the 25th. The German 715 and 362 Divisions were by these

actions practically eliminated as effective units, particularly the former. On the same day as Cisterna fell II Corps advanced from Terracina and made contact with the bridgehead. Our forces were reunited at last; more important still was the advance of 1 Armoured Division which had broken out northwards from the salient driven into the German defences and was advancing towards Velletri and Artena.

Fall of Rome.

I had now got my Armies into the position I wanted. Now that VI Corps had made contact with the rest of Fifth Army it was no longer an isolated bridgehead, a threat in the enemy's rear, but the spearhead of the extended left flank of my group of Armies. To use old-fashioned military parlance, I was now employing the "oblique order" beloved by Frederick the Great, with my left advanced *en potence* and my right, 5 Corps, refused. In my centre I had a very strong and concentrated force, 1 Canadian and 13 Corps under Eighth Army, with which, while my left held the enemy by forcing him to fight for Rome, on whose retention he set much value, I intended to drive forward on an axis parallel to the extension of my left, break through the enemy's centre thus weakened and pursue up the centre of the peninsula, east of Rome. This would enable me to carry out the classical manoeuvre of parallel pursuit, for at the same time Fifth Army would continue to press hard against the extreme right of the enemy, continually forcing back his seaward flank. There were, therefore, topographically considered, two objectives; to capture Rome and to pass a force east of Rome up the axis of the Tiber where it flows southwards from the mountains of Umbria. These two objectives I allotted to the two Armies, the former to General Clark and the latter to General Leese. This allotment of tasks had, in fact, been made before the battle began and the operation had proceeded so closely in accordance with my original plan that there was no need to vary it.

General Leese issued orders to implement his part of the plan before the attack on the "Hitler" line went in. After the breach of the "Hitler" and "Caesar" lines his intention was to exploit to Rieti and Terni. This would mean that he would have to pass very close to Rome on the east, between the city and Tivoli, in order to get on to the two best routes to his objective, Routes 3 and 4, the ancient Via Flaminia and Via Salaria; if Fifth Army were already in or approaching the city it might be difficult to avoid traffic congestion, for the days when all roads from all parts of the civilised world converged on the Forum have left their mark still on the road-net of modern Italy. Fortunately the same reasons had provided plenty of bridges over the Tiber, but I foresaw that we should have to take forceful measures about road priorities.

The main advance up the valleys of the Liri and the Sacco was entrusted to 13 Corps, right, and 1 Canadian Corps, left. The Polish Corps, weakened by its high casualties and the shortage of replacements, was to be withdrawn as soon as it had completed the task of clearing Piedimonte and the slopes of Monte Cairo. I intended to use it later on the Adriatic sector, taking the place of 5 Corps, after it had had a little time for rest and reorganisation. 10 Corps, reduced by the withdrawal of two

* The last detachment of 26 Panzer Division had left for the main front just before VI Corps attacked; it was consequently of no use to either sector at the moment it was most needed.