

town, Monte Lignano and Monte Gavino, and 6 Armoured Division on their left along the lower western slopes of Monte Lignano. Maximum artillery support was given from half an hour before midnight and at dawn the fighter-bombers joined in the battle. The enemy guns were for the most part silenced by the weight of this attack but the infantry in their strong positions still resisted firmly. The New Zealanders on the high ground made little progress in daylight and 1 Guards Brigade, lower down, were checked after an early advance. Nevertheless the balance of the day was in our favour; the New Zealanders were firm on Monte Lignano, which they captured before dawn, and 6 Armoured Division had driven a threatening wedge into the centre of the enemy's positions. That night the Germans broke contact everywhere. In the plain our armour went through and 16/5 Lancers entered Arezzo at 0945 hours on the 16th. On their left 2 Lothians, after a dashing advance at full speed, were rewarded by the capture of an intact bridge over the Arno.

Last light on the 16th saw the end of the battle for Arezzo; Florence was our next objective. The former was to be the administrative base and the latter the operational base for the attack on the "Gothic" line. I ought to mention here that we had been considerably hampered administratively by the stubborn German defence of Arezzo; it had been nominated as Eighth Army's main roadhead and eventual railhead and, in anticipation of its capture, the roadheads at Terni and Narni had been only lightly stocked. Railheads had been opened north of Rome in the general area of Orte and Civita Castellana at the end of the first week in July and we were pressing on with the construction of the line to Arezzo. We calculated that when that area was opened and developed we should be able to maintain a total of thirteen and a half divisions from Florence forwards. In the meanwhile the Germans, by delaying us for ten days in front of Arezzo, had gained that much more time for the completion of their "Gothic" line defences.

While Eighth Army was thus having to put forward its best efforts in the centre of the peninsula we were pressing attacks on both flanks to win the vital ports of Ancona and Leghorn. The Poles on the Adriatic captured Osimo on 6th July, inflicting severe losses on 278 Division; so severely was this division weakened that Kesselring began to move over 1 Parachute Division to its support.* General Anders then began preparations for the final attack on Ancona. IV Corps on the left was driving on Leghorn, which it planned to take by an enveloping movement from the east. The French, on Fifth Army's right, had celebrated 14th July by capturing Poggibonsi, on the direct route from Siena to Florence. The time for their relief was now, however, rapidly approaching; on 22nd July their sector was taken over by 8 Indian Division and in part by the New Zealanders, coming under command of 13 Corps. It was with very real regret that I saw the departure of the French Corps. They had most worthily upheld and reinforced the reputation of French arms in the country where Bayard and Gaston de Foix had first brought

them fame. A marble tablet in the ancient city of San Gimignano, captured by 4 Mountain Division on 13th July, recalls their great advance from the Garigliano.

The Germans, having now made us deploy and fight hard for the two ports and Arezzo, initiated a programme of gradual withdrawal to the Arno based on a series of phase lines known by girls names in alphabetical order.* Their forces were now well balanced and there was little chance of seriously disrupting this programme. On 16th July Arezzo fell, on the 18th IV Corps reached the Arno east of Pisa, on the same day the Poles captured Ancona and on the 19th the Americans entered Leghorn. The Poles had had heavy fighting at Loretto and Filottrano; it took six days of fluctuating attack and counter-attack to clear the latter and the main attack was delayed thereby till the morning of the 17th. IV Corps had to beat off a final counter-attack on Rosignano on 10th July, and for the next two days progress to the east of the town was still slow. From the 13th to the 15th the advance was more rapid as the Germans fell back to their next delaying positions. 91 Division was the first unit in IV Corps to reach the Arno, capturing Pontedera on 18th July, but on the left 34 Division was held further south in the hills behind Leghorn and first entered the city at 0200 hours on the 19th. The Germans had devoted greater efforts than ever to render the port unusable. The dock area was heavily mined and booby-trapped, all the quays had been cratered and the harbour entrance was almost wholly blocked by sunken ships. By 23rd July 34 Division had captured the southern part of Pisa. All bridges over the Arno had been destroyed and the enemy was firmly posted on the north bank all along the Corps front. Leghorn harbour remained under fire from long-range artillery.

Fifth Army's sector was now reduced to a front of four divisions with IV Corps left and II Corps right; by the 23rd it ran along the Arno from the mouth to Empoli. The two Corps in the centre of Eighth Army's front meanwhile continued to press on up the mountainous centre of the peninsula to seize the bases for the attack on the "Gothic" line. 13 Corps was now directed on Florence and 10 Corps therefore took over the area due north of Arezzo and advanced on Bibbiena by the parallel axes of the upper Arno and the upper Tiber. Between these two rivers is a great roadless *massif* known as the Alpe di Catenaia and west of the road from Arezzo to Bibbiena is the equally roadless, longer and slightly higher *massif* of the Pratomagno. 19 Corps now had two Indian infantry divisions, 4th and 10th, and an armoured brigade and on its extreme right two armoured car regiments, 12 Lancers and the Household Cavalry, operating in the tangled country between Gubbio and Fabriano. On 17th July 4 Indian Division captured the Alpe di Poti, north of the Arezzo-Sansepolcro road and on 18th July 4/10 Baluchis of 10 Indian Division cleared Monte Cedrone, west of Citta di Castello in the Tiber valley, a strong position which had delayed our advance here since the 13th. Citta di Castello fell on the 22nd. 4 Indian Division now took

* He may also have been influenced in this by our deception plan which indicated the Adriatic sector as the area of our intended attack on the "Gothic" line.

* The ones with which we were most concerned were, from south to north, "Irmgard", "Karin", "Lydia", "Maedchen", "Olga" and "Paula".