



HISTORY  
OF  
THE

SEVENTH ARMY DIVISION

"FAMOUS"

*Attack! Attack! Attack!*

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\* Due to an apparent printing mistake, an unknown number of pages are missing between page 85 and 86 as well as between 99 and 100. Both the 1949 and 1979 editions have this same mistake. These years are the only known editions. If the missing pages are discovered, please contact the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Association.



On Guard in Italy—"The Red Bull"

*The Story  
of the Famous  
34<sup>th</sup>  
Infantry Division*

BY  
Lt. Col. John H. Hougen

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by  
LT. COL. JOHN H. HOUGEN  
1949

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Reprinted By  
THE BATTERY PRESS, INC.  
P.O. Box 3107, Uptown Station  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219 U.S.A.  
Tenth in the Divisional Series  
1979  
ISBN: 0-89839-024-9

Digitally republished by  
34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Association

2017

## FOREWORD

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Stories of wars and of battles, since time immemorial, have been told in the names of generals and lesser commanding officers. That pattern has been followed in the telling of the story of the Red Bull Division, and necessarily so, for, to recount the deeds of thousands upon thousands of individual soldiers becomes an impossible task. Moreover, the Division records do not contain a recital of the outstanding achievements of individual soldiers of the 34th. But, in the writing of this narrative, the gallant soldier has always been uppermost in mind. He is the one who, in the last analysis, wins the wars yet gets little of the praise. In this book, the G-I may relive again many of his own emotions and experiences. He and his combat leaders alone, know the true life of the dough-boy.

It is the G-I who will tell you that no one knows the true meaning of war until he has seen or experienced the life of the dough-foot. His is a never-

ending, relentless commitment to giving and taking in the sober, raw business of killing. Sometimes an enemy you do not see, but again one who is in full view and with whom you must perchance, join in mortal, hand-to-hand combat. You get your man or he gets you—a circumstance that calls for eternal and tireless vigilance.

There is utterly no romance in the life of the dough-boy. His day is never done. He snatches what sleep he can—the enemy permitting. His bed is the cold, open, damp ground or the narrow confines of a fox-hole—often his best friend. He lives and wallows in mud, in rain, cold and snow, fighting both man and the elements. And he is there to view the awful carnage of the battlefield—a picture which is better left untold. All this, and no audience to cheer him; no glamor; no romance; just the sheer business of man-hunting and being hunted by man in return.

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## DEDICATION

This book in no way constitutes a tactical, military history of the 34th Infantry Division; rather, it is an attempt to relate in sequence and in story form, its great achievements. And, in the telling of this story, the author has relied mainly on the historical records of the Division, the records of II, IV and VI Corps, as well as those of the Fifth Army, all supplemented by material derived from sources set forth in the bibliography appended to this book. Every effort has been made to abide by the records.

The author wishes to express his deep appreciation to Major General Charles W. Ryder, Major General Charles L. Bolte, Brigadier General Fred-eric B. Butler, and officers of the 34th Infantry Division Association for their generous assistance in reviewing the manuscript before it was submitted to the publisher, and also for invaluable material furnished. In addition, a debt of gratitude is owing to the scores of former officers and men of the Division, who submitted material and information which was not to be found in the official records, and without which, this all too brief account of a great Division, would have been far less complete.

This book is dedicated in grateful and reverent memory to all those gallant men, wearers of the Red Bull insignia, who paid the supreme sacrifice in World War II; to those who fell on the beaches, the muddy plains, the burning deserts and the rugged, cold wind-swept Atlas Mountains of North Africa, who fell at Algiers, Medjes el Bab, Gafsa, Pichon, Maktar, Sened, Faid Pass, Kasserine, Sidi Bou Zid, Kef el Ahmar, Hadjeb el Aioun, Fondouk and Hill 609; it is dedicated to those who died at sea; to those who fell on the Italian beaches of Salerno, who fell at the Walls of Ancient Benevento and at the three intrepid crossings of the swollen streams of the Volturno; to those who gave their all in the bitter days of Montaquilla, Monte Pantano, in the savage fighting at San Vittorio, Cervarò, Torcchio and in the

tragic days of immortal Cassino; to those who died on the beaches and in the dismal canals of Anzio-Nettuno, in the break-through to Cisterna and Lanuvio and in the triumphant entrance through the gates to Eternal Rome; to those who fell in the rapid course up the Italian Western Shores near Civitavecchia, Cecina, Livorno and Pisa; to those who died in the long, relentless struggle over the tortuous passes of the foreboding Apennines; and to those who gave their lives in that final, heroic and triumphant sweep through the Valley of the Po and, to Victory!

This book is further dedicated to the forebears of the 135th Infantry Regiment, the 168th Infantry Regiment and the 151st Field Artillery, whose path to death and glory in the War between the States, stands among the highest achievements in the annals of all Wars; to the forebears of the 133rd, 135th, 168th Infantry Regiments and the 109th Engineers who fought in the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection, to give to Cuba and the Philippines freedom and security in the World.

It is dedicated too, to those of the 34th Infantry Division who fell on the field of honor in World War I, in the Lorraine Sector, at Champagne, at the Marne, St. Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne in France, where the 151st Field Artillery Regiment and the 168th Infantry Regiment added their luster to the brilliant rainbow hue of the famous 42nd Division.

And lastly, this book is dedicated to all those men of honor, living and dead, who ever wore the Red Bull patch, including the gallant Nisei, those Americans of Japanese descent, who, as the 100th Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, fought under the banner of the 34th, and whose heroic deeds played an enduring part in preserving our sacred heritage and who proved to the world, as they themselves have said, that "Americanism is a matter of mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry."

# INTRODUCTION

Here is the story of a fighting Division, whose roots reach deep into the historical traditions of America. It is the story of a citizen soldiery which, when called to duty in the Indian Wars, and Civil War, the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection, World War I and World War II, played a brilliant and enduring part in the cause of human liberty and democracy. It is the story of heroic achievement on far-flung battle lines, but it is a dramatic and tragic story too, of noble and supreme sacrifice made by men of zeal and patriotism, men who fought to preserve for posterity this priceless heritage we call America.

The 34th Infantry Division was and is a National Guard Division composed of citizen soldiers, men recruited from all walks of life; from the farms, the factories, the mines, the forests, the offices and the professions. In times of emergency, citizen soldiery has always constituted the indispensable pool to be drawn upon by the Nation, and so it will always be whenever freemen of America shall be called upon to defend their sacred Homeland.

The National Guard of the United States, a purely voluntary organization, was called early to Federal duty in 1916-1917 and again in 1940. In both wars, its achievements ranked second to none. Who has not heard of the famous 42nd Division that climbed the heights to glory in the First World War? Who has not heard of the achievements in World War II of those National Guard Divisions which served in the Pacific Theatre of Operations: 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 37th, 38th, 40th, 41st, 43rd and lastly the "Americal" which was made up of Units from the 26th Infantry Division, the 164th Infantry Regiment of our own

34th, and the 132nd Infantry Combat Team of the 33rd Division of Illinois?

And what more heroic achievements than those performed in the Mediterranean and European Theatres by the 26th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 34th, 35th, 36th, 44th and 45th Divisions? But what is less known is the fact that two National Guard Divisions in the last War had more days in actual combat than any other Divisions of the Armies: our own 34th, credited by the Department of the Army with the greatest number of days in combat of any unit of the Army, followed next by the 32nd Division.

The 34th Infantry Division as a whole, is credited with 517 days of actual combat. However, one or more units of the Division were in actual combat for 611 days.

When called to the colors in World War I, the components of the 34th Infantry Division, then known as the "Sandstorm Division", but wearing a white bovine shoulder-patch, came from the States of Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Nebraska.

When the Red Bull Division was called to the colors on February 10, 1941, its components came from the four North Central States of Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota.

No one is unmindful of the fact that, once the Division was committed to battle in World War II, casualties and replacements occurred in such kaleidoscopic and rapid progression as to result in the 34th becoming a polyglot and a cross-section of complete American life, until all States and territorial possessions and the sons of all nationalities, marched shoulder to shoulder in the common cause of a free and democratic World.

The First World War had resulted in a co-mingling of men of the South with men of the North, but, on a grander scale, in World War II the gallant descendants of the Grey and Blue shared, in the 34th, a common heroic sacrifice on the path to everlasting fame. And, so, when the furious onslaught over the final walls of the Apennines in April, 1945, swept us to Victory in the Valley of the Po, the Red Bull Division was truly an All-America Division; Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota, still the heart of the Division, but men from all Sections, North, South, East and West now claiming the 34th as their own. In the crucible of bloody combat, the light of a new kindred spirit was born which shall burn as a beacon to a Union of States and people that shall redound to the welfare of a Nation firmly united and steadfast in the common cause of a safe and free America and dedicated to a hope for peace in a war-torn World.



No romance in the life of the Dough-Boy.  
Drawing by Major Rudolph von Ripper

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Wounded being evacuated from the Anzio Beachhead, Italy, April 1944

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## Chapter I INDIAN WARS

While forebears of components of the 34th Division cannot be very clearly identified as having participated in the Indian Wars, the records do reveal that many men who were later to comprise the 3rd and 4th Iowa Infantry Regiments, and the First Regiment Minnesota Volunteers, parent organizations of the 168th and 135th Infantry Regiments, respectively, guarded the frontiers and engaged in the quelling of serious Indian uprisings.

The restless expansion of the white man, pushing ever westward, was meeting with the open hostility of the red man, then desperately striving to maintain the heritage that was his. Whatever the judgment of history on this unfortunate and tragic phase of the winning and settling of the West, the Indian Wars in Minnesota from 1859-1864, remain "the most

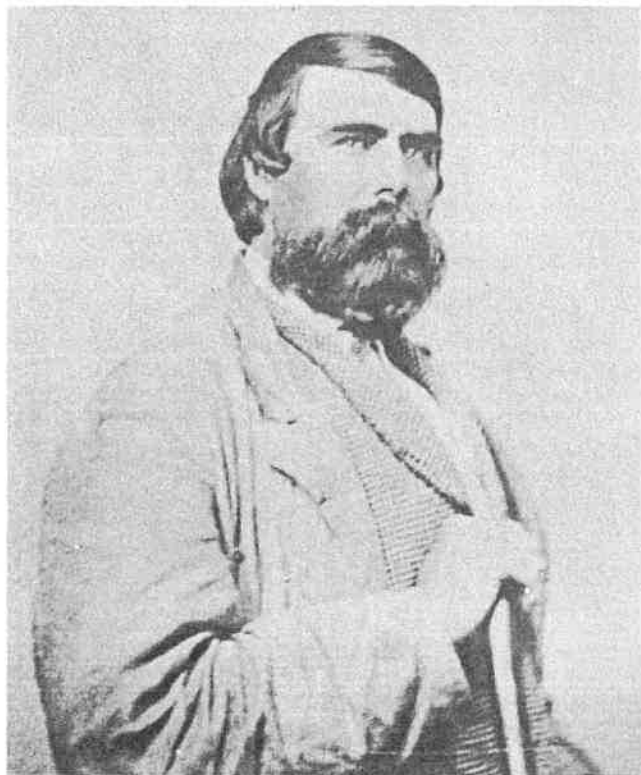
bloody and the most important Indian Wars that ever occurred since the first settlement of the Continent, and which extended over five years of active operations." And it was in this War that a considerable number of men of the First Regiment, Minnesota Volunteers in the early phase, played an important part, though almost completely, of course, the Units were recruited from communities in South Central and South Western Minnesota.

The Council Bluff Guards, organized in 1856, defended against the Sioux, Ponca, and Pawnee Indians, whose raids of the Elkhorn Valley and the Massacre at Spirit Lake had spread terror throughout the land. And it was individuals from these Guards who were later to play a part in the Civil War.

## Chapter II

# THE CIVIL WAR

## THE 136TH INFANTRY REGIMENT



Colonel William Colville, famous in the history of the 135th Infantry Regiment, served throughout the entire Civil War with the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry. His exploits at Gettysburg are known to every man of the Regiment. He it was who originated the Regiment's slogan "To the last man", his battle-cry when he ordered the 262 men of the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry to attack the charging columns of the Confederate Army.

The forebears of the 135th Infantry Regiment were the first to respond to President Lincoln's call for 75,000 volunteers. News of the fall of Ft. Sumter had reached Washington on the evening of April 13, 1861. On the morning of April 14th, hearing of Lincoln's call, Alexander Ramsey, the first Governor of Territorial Minnesota, then by coincidence in Washington, called on Mr. Cameron, the Secretary of War and offered 1000 men as the Nation's first contribution. Ramsey reduced the offer to writing, which Cameron immediately carried to the President who promptly accepted. With this accomplished, Governor Ramsey wired Lieutenant Governor Ignatius Donnelly who immediately issued the call for volunteers.

The call was for one Regiment of ten Companies with orders to immediately report to the Adjutant General at St. Paul. The response was immediate and, by the 29th of April, ten Companies were mustered into the Service as the *First Minnesota Regi-*

*ment*, with Colonel Willis A. Gorman in Command.

While space does not permit the enumeration of names of volunteers, it is interesting to note that the Adjutant of the Regiment was Lt. William B. Leach, father of Major General George E. Leach, the latter to distinguish himself on the fields of France as Commanding Officer of the 151st Field Artillery Regiment in World War I and later, for a while, to assume peace-time Command of the 34th Division. Major General Leach was to serve as the Chief of the National Guard Bureau from 1931 to 1935.

The name of Col. William Colville too, has come down through the years as a legend and inspiration. In a sense, he is the father of the 135th. He it was, who, at Gettysburg was to Command his men in the fateful encounter with the order to attack "To the Last Man", a slogan that has emblazoned the banner of the 135th throughout all the years.

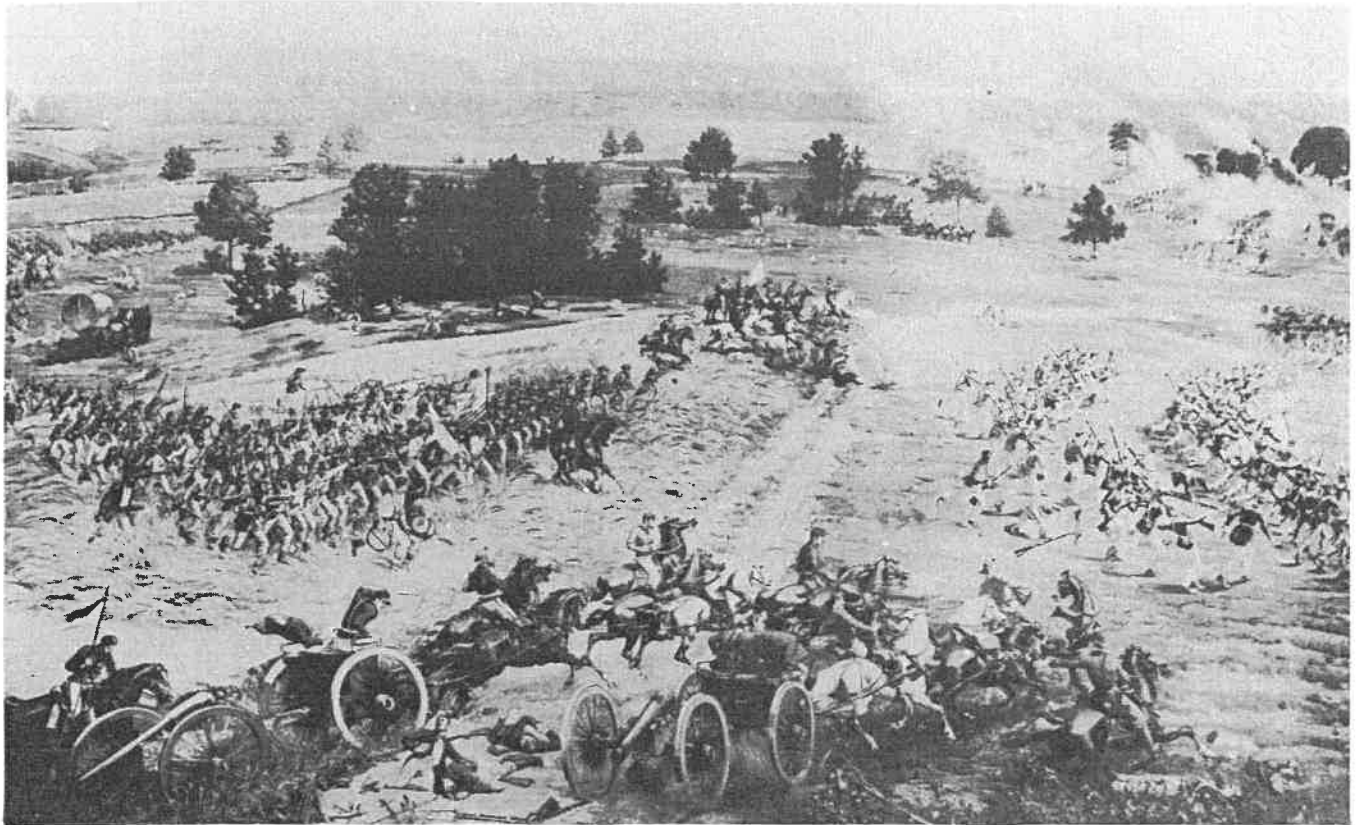
The term of enlistment was for three years. It is doubtful that these volunteers envisioned the hard, bitter, seemingly endless months which were to be their lot in the days to come. A great and colorful ovation was extended the troops before they departed on orders to Washington on June 21, 1861. Travel was by boats down the Mississippi to La Crosse, Wisconsin, then the terminus of the railroad which was slowly piercing its way into the great Northwest.

It was a triumphant procession as the train moved Eastward through Chicago, Ft. Wayne, Pittsburgh, and Harrisburg; speeches and patriotic demonstrations were accorded them everywhere; coffee, sandwiches, and the proverbial doughnuts were served at all stops by comely and enthusiastic ladies. Everywhere, the greatest curiosity was manifested in these brawny pioneers from the West. The Chicago Tribune of that day described them in the most glowing terms:

"Gallant Minnesota deserves high credit for her noble sons and their appearance yesterday. They have enjoyed in their make-up that rare and excellent process of selection and culling from the older states, which has thrown into the van of civilization the hardy lumberman and first settlers in the wild. There are few Regiments we have ever seen that can compare in brawn and muscle with these Minnesotans, used to the axe, the rifle, the oar and the setting pole. They are unquestionably the finest body of troops that has yet appeared in our streets."

But the Regiment was to experience a less enthusiastic reception as it passed through the border State of Maryland and entered into Washington whose unpaved, muddy streets were crowded with struggling wagons, cannons and caissons, as a vast Army was hurriedly assembling for the defense of the Capitol City.

On July 3, 1861, the Regiment set up camp at Alexandria in the Old Dominion State of Virginia, some six miles South of Washington. Here they settled down to drilling, picket duty, reconnaissance



The charge of the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry against the Confederate Troops under Hill and Longstreet. Panorama by Heisser.

missions and general orientation courses to fit them for the ordeal which lay ahead. The story of the daily lives of these men will have a familiar ring to every G.I. who served in the last two World Wars: orders against visiting communities or disturbing private property; continuous griping about food consisting of salt pork and hardtack, and complaints against mud, rain, and shelter; beefing always against the miserable pay of eleven dollars a month to the privates and comparably low pay to all ranks; always awaiting the arrival of the "Sutler" who was the PX Officer in those days; purloining supplies; and familiar escapades, such as raiding army liquor caches and concealing the grog in canteens and burying barrels of the stuff in the ground, and then, escaping courts martial because their Colonel's sense of duty yielded to his understanding and devotion to men he knew would prove themselves when put to the test of battle.

And these men were destined soon to be committed to combat. The accounts of that day tell of the same eagerness, nervous tension, hurried letters home, careful inspection by each man of clothing, packs and weapons, but withal, that saving grace of humor, which, even in the face of impending death, manifested itself when the 34th went into line for the first time in Tunisia—the same spirit that has characterized the soldier of America in all wars.

Then came Bull Run. The Union Forces were at first successful, but the trap set by the Confederates closed in. The position becoming untenable, the North withdrew to defensive positions. The Union Army had not only been repulsed but had met with

defeat.

In its baptism of fire, the forebears of the 135th Infantry Regiment had proven their calibre as fighting men. In the initial attack and, in the ensuing retreat, they had performed in the best of military traditions. For this, the Regiment received official commendations from two Division Commanders. And this fighting reputation was to endure until the end of the Regiment's tour of duty. Leaving its dead comrades behind, the Regiment returned to its muddy camp at Alexandria from where the troops marched to Washington the following day, there to receive their first pay envelopes, an occasion which banished much discontent and afforded much needed diversion.

This book will not permit of a detailed account of all engagements in which the First Minnesota Regiment was to participate. At Ball's Bluff and in the Valley Campaign in Virginia, the North was again to meet disastrous reverses. After the Peninsula Campaign and at Yorktown, the Regiment again returned to their "dog-tents" at Alexandria where they dug up the Sutler's whiskey, buried one year before, consuming it as a counter-measure against cold and exposure and as a lilt to deteriorated morale.

In this phase of the campaign the men from Minnesota had encountered crude implements of a more modern warfare. Percussion shells, of course, were in use, but the resourceful Confederates were now employing observation balloons, were blowing bridges with explosives and were using "torpedoes" as ground mines. Here too, the Minnesotans saw

their first macademized roads which were playing no small part in the movement of Confederate troops and supplies.

Bloody, though less disastrous days followed at Fair Oaks where the Regiment was highly commended by a party of French military observers; and in the "Seven Days Battles" during which the Confederates employed a sort of "Anzio Express" consisting of heavy guns mounted on flat cars. Further reverses came at Harrison's Landing where, before commitment, Lincoln and his Generals reviewed the troops.

By September 1, 1862, the Army of the Potomac under General Pope had met with disaster and the Capitol City of Washington being in imminent danger of capture, the Union Forces were recalled from the Peninsula. Officers and men of the Regiment complained bitterly that "The campaign planned and managed by Stanton and Halleck, had ended in disgraceful and utter defeat".

Then followed Antietam, Loudon Valley, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, each a story in itself, through the bitterly cold Winter and Spring of 1862-1863. During this period, replacements had been arriving from Minnesota to fill in the seriously depleted ranks of the Regiment.

General Lee, flushed with his victories, was boldly bypassing Washington, striking through Maryland and into Pennsylvania. Occasional skirmishes and some hard fighting followed, but the main bodies of the opposing armies paralleling their movements Northward, were maneuvering towards Gettysburg, soon, by chance engagement, to become the scene and setting of what would prove to be the decisive battle of the war. And it is in this famous engagement where the First Minnesota Volunteers was to gain immortal fame.

On this fateful day of July 2, 1863, the outcome of the Civil War stood precariously in the balance. The Confederate Forces under Longstreet and Hill forced the Third Union Corps under Sickles, into disorderly retreat. At that moment, General Hancock, with his dashing horsemanship, galloped up and ordered the First Minnesota Regiment, then reduced to 262, to charge the advancing Confederates. With levelled bayonets, these gallant sons of Minnesota threw themselves at the vastly superior forces of the South, their savage attack halting the advance long enough for reinforcements to arrive and to save the day.

And when the bloody engagement was ended, nearly every officer of the Regiment lay dead or wounded on the field. This amazingly intrepid band of 262 suffered casualties to the number of 215. The tribute paid the Regiment by General Hancock finds few parallels in history:

"There is no more gallant deed recorded in history. I ordered these men in there because I saw I must gain five minutes' time. Reinforcements were coming on the run, but I knew that before they could reach the threatened point the Confederates, unless checked, would seize the position. I would have ordered that Regiment in if I had known that every man would be killed. It had to be done, but I was glad to find such a gallant body of men at hand willing to make the terrible sacrifice that the occasion demanded."

After three days, the historic battle of Gettysburg had been won and the tide of the great War had

now turned in favor of the North. But the Regiment, reconstituted by new recruits from Minnesota, was to see further action: A short tour of duty at Brooklyn and a return to the scene of combat with further fighting at Bristow Station, and Mine Run.

Then, the fighting days of the Regiment were over. Orders to return to Minnesota and for de-activation came to these tired troops on February 5, 1864—troops that had engaged in "more than twenty major battles." Brigadier General Charles P. Adams in his farewell message to these embattled volunteers paid a stirring and enduring tribute:

"You were the first three-years' regiment in the volunteer service. Then you were a thousand strong, but stronger in your love of Country and devotion to its flag."

"The blood of more than seven-hundred of your companions has crimsoned those heroic fields, and more than two hundred fifty of them have passed from the smoke and clangor of battle strife to their eternal bivouac beyond the skies."

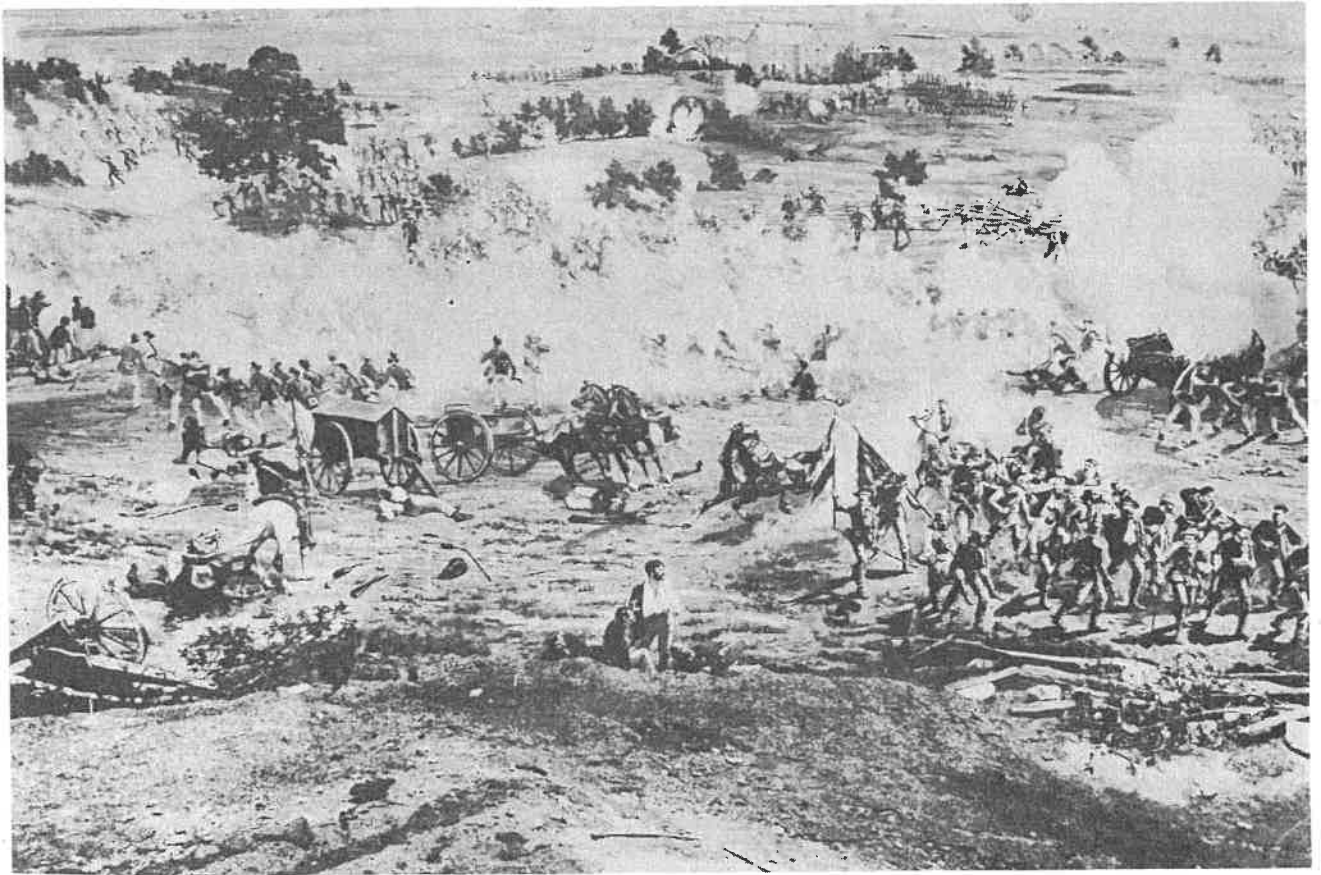
This, then is the story of the Regiment to which the 34th Infantry Division and, in particular, the 135th Infantry Regiment turn with pride, and from which so much inspiration was to be derived.



Col. William H. Gorman, Commanding Officer of the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry which fought in the famous engagement at Gettysburg and elsewhere in the Civil War.



Squad of the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry after the Battle of Fair Oaks, Virginia 1862. The First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry served for two years in the Civil War Campaigns in Virginia. Picture is taken from Brady's Album Gallery.



Another scene of the Charge at the Battle of Gettysburg of the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry. This charge is credited with saving the day.

# THE 151ST FIELD ARTILLERY

Curiously, none of the narratives relating to the famous 151st Field Artillery make mention of its Civil War background. Yet, the records of the Department of the Army quite clearly disclose that the first Minnesota Heavy Artillery Regiment was the parent organization of the 151st.

In response to "the last bugle call of their country's cause", the Regiment, organized in 1864 and, under the command of that great hero of Gettysburg and the Eastern Campaign, Colonel William Colville of the old First Minnesota Volunteers, proceeded to Chattanooga to defend that city then in a virtual state of siege, as a result of the defeat suffered by the Union Army at Chickamauga.

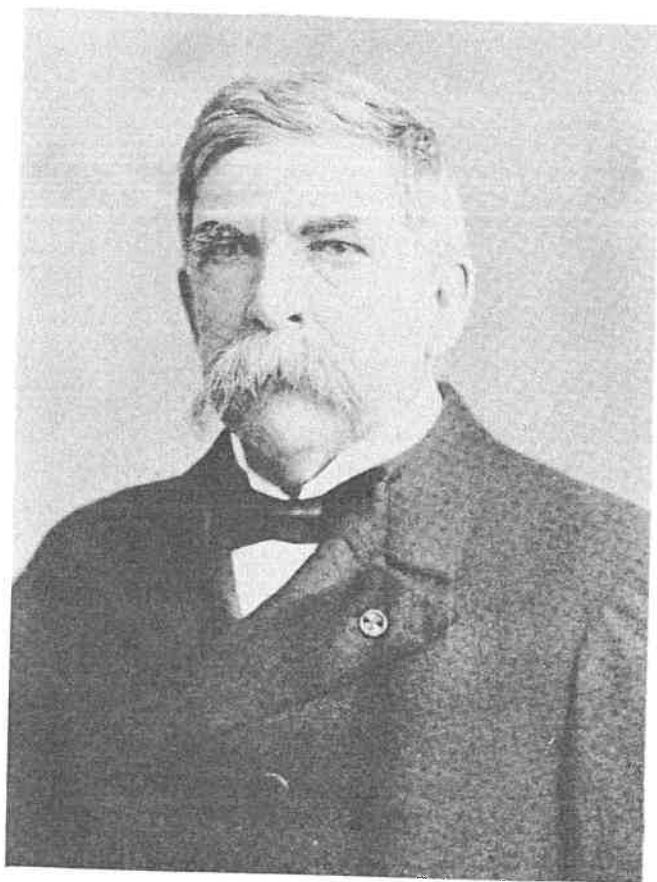
The men of the First Minnesota Heavy Artillery were selected with great care, the Governor of Minnesota personally participating in the selection. Many of the former heroes, both officers and men, of the famous First Minnesota Volunteers who had performed so heroically in the Eastern Campaign, joined this new organization. Their defense of

Chattanooga, that key city of the South, performed an invaluable service in securing the vast area which Chattanooga commanded, as Sherman proceeded toward Atlanta and on his march to the Sea.

Whether the 151st Field Artillery carries a battle streamer of the Civil War or not, the records seem clearly to establish that the 151st is entitled to such decoration. The Department of the Army records state that the First Field Artillery was organized in the year 1900. As such, it was to serve later on the Mexican Border, but in 1917 it was re-designated as the 151st Field Artillery.

In passing, it should be said that the contributions made by Minnesota, then the youngest state in the Union, to the Civil War, were most noteworthy. From a population of approximately 250,000 people, that frontier state furnished over 25,000 volunteers, one tenth of the State's population, and the record these several units made in the war to preserve the Union, will always remain one of the proud achievements in American History.

# THE 168TH INFANTRY REGIMENT



Major General Grenville M. Dodge, Commander of the 4th Regiment, Iowa Volunteers during the Civil War. General Dodge not only led the 4th Regiment in numerous engagements in the War between the States but was chosen by President Lincoln to construct railroads during General Grant's campaign in the West.

The official histories of the 168th Infantry Regiment make scant mention of the Civil War background of this famous Regiment. The meager records of the Army, however, clearly establish that Company "L" of the 168th can trace its origin directly to Company "B" of the Fourth Regiment, Iowa Volunteer Infantry. This is amply substantiated by Major General Granville M. Dodge who commanded the Fourth Regiment for a substantial part of the Civil War.

General Dodge was one of Iowa's most outstanding officers to serve in the War between the States, rising rapidly, by field promotions, to the rank of Major General. Not only was he a brilliant combat commander, but his knowledge of railroad construction was such that Lincoln called him away from troops long enough to supervise the construction and repair of railroads in the Western Campaign. For this, as well as for his fighting record, General Dodge received numerous citations, awards and decorations.

On the 26th of February, 1915, General Dodge wrote a significant letter to the Council Bluffs "Non-Pareil" in which he set forth from personal knowledge, the origin and succession of the Fourth Regiment, Iowa Volunteer Infantry. In 1865, following the Indian raids in the Elkhorn Valley and the massacre at Spirit Lake, the Council Bluff Guards was organized by volunteer enlistment. They were immediately assigned the task of guarding against, not only Indians, but marauding white bandits who roamed the West plundering and robbing the settlers. The Council Bluffs Guards should not be confused with its successor, the Dodge Light Guards which was organized in 1887.

The Fourth Regiment was mustered into the service in August, 1861 at Camp Kirkwood, Council Bluffs, the rolls of Company "B" carrying the names of a very substantial number of old Council Bluffs Guard. It was committed to action in early

February, 1862, with the original mission of quelling guerrilla bands in Iowa, Minnesota and Kansas.

Then followed more momentous events: the battle of Pea Ridge in Arkansas, the siege and capture of Vicksburg and the taking of Jackson. General Hooker credited Co. "B" with the final storming and capture of Lookout Mountain.

Following the capture of Chattanooga, the Fourth Regiment, including Co. "B", went on with Sherman to Atlanta and on his march to Savannah and the Sea; thence, on the drive northward, participating in the final phases at Columbia, in the capture of Richmond and in the Grand Review at Washington which marked the close of the terrible civil strife. The Fourth Regiment, having covered itself with

glory, was mustered out of the service on the 24th day of July, 1865.

The volunteer record of Iowa is a proud one, indeed. Traditionally, that State has been one of the outstanding volunteer states in every national emergency. For its share in the Civil War, the tribute paid Iowa by Carl Sandburg, that great biographer of Abraham Lincoln, should be a matter of pride to Iowa and the Nation. When Lincoln made his greatest call for volunteers, Sandburg says: "Iowa was the first state to fill her quota with the call for 600,000 men; she had put every man into the field by voluntary enlistment, and all for three years of the War."

## Chapter III

# THE 34TH INFANTRY DIVISION IN THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

In the War for the liberation of Cuba, which was later to result in the liberation and independence of the Philippines, the volunteer forebears of the 133rd, 135th, 168th Infantry Regiments and the 109th Engineers were inducted into the Federal Service between May 7, 1898 and June 2, 1898.

The 49th Iowa Volunteer Infantry, progenitor of the 133rd Infantry, was dispatched to Cuba December 22, 1898, there to assist in restoring and maintaining order. Its task completed, the 49th returned home on April 5, 1899, the troops mustering out of service on May 13, 1899.

The 135th Infantry, then the 13th Regiment Minnesota Volunteers, entered the Federal Service on May 7, 1898 at St. Paul. It left San Francisco on June 26, 1898 arriving in the Philippines on July 31, 1898. The unit participated in the capture of Manila and later, during the Insurrection, took part in the Campaign of Luzon and at San Isidro.

The 168th Infantry Regiment, then the 51st Iowa Infantry Regiment, was mustered into the Federal Service at Camp McKinley, Des Moines, Iowa, on the 30th of May, 1898. For prolonged service on board transports, this Regiment holds a record rarely equalled, excepting perhaps by the Norsemen who sailed from Norway for a conquest of Southern Italy in the early centuries of the Christian era. Leaving San Francisco on November 3, 1898 the troops remained on board the transport "Pennsylvania" from that date until they finally disembarked at the Harbor of Cavite on February 3, 1898, a period of three months.

Upon arrival in the Philippines, the Regiment found that the War with Spain was virtually ended but the grave problem of coping with the Insurrection had become a reality. But these troops took part in the occupation of San Roque and in engagement at Guadalupe Church, East and West Pulilan, Calumpit, Santo Tomas, San Fernando, Calulut and Angeles. Not only were substantial battle casualties sustained, but disease took its relentless toll. Constant battle with the elements, rain and mud, and

the casualties visited on the troops by malarial mosquitoes, by vicious flies and other insects, are reminiscent of the days in Tunisia, to say nothing of the abject isolation of the men, a circumstance that spells so much for or against morale.

The Insurrection having been quelled and substantial order restored, the Regiment departed the Philippines for home on September 6, 1899 on the transport "Singapore". On arrival at San Francisco, the 51st was deactivated at that place on the 2nd day of November 1899. The streamers and standards earned by the Regiment were destined to become the proud possession of the 168th Infantry Regiment.

Two artillery units of the 34th were also called to the colors in the War for the liberation of Cuba, the 125th and 185th Field Artillery Regiments.

The Third Minnesota Infantry was the forerunner of the present 125th Field Artillery. The unit was mustered into the active military service during the Spanish-American War, on April 29, 1898, assembling at Camp Ramsey, St. Paul, Minnesota, whence it proceeded to Camp Hollis, (Chicamauga), Georgia remaining there for the duration of the War, deactivating on October 1st, 1898. Before disbanding, however, the Third Minnesota was assigned to duty in Northern Minnesota in the threatened Insurrection of the Leach Lake Band of Indians. A few casualties were sustained in the unfortunate Sugar Point engagement.

The 185th mustered in on May 7, 1898 and was assigned to Jacksonville, Florida. Its services not being required for the Cuban Campaign, the Regiment was deactivated on November 30, 1898.

The 109th Engineers, who were to play such a noteworthy role in World War II, participated too in the War against Spain and in the Philippines Insurrection as the 1st South Dakota Infantry, United States Volunteers. Mustering into the Service in 1898, they are credited by the records of the Department of the Army with action at Manila and at Malolos.

## Chapter IV

# THE MEXICAN BORDER

In 1916, the swash-buckling Pancho Villa, that Mexican Robin Hood, but lacking the finesse of the legendary hero of the Sherwood Forests, was challenging the sovereignty of the United States with sporadic raids across the Rio Grande. To meet the situation, President Wilson assigned troops to the Mexican Border, by proclamation June 19, 1918.

National Guard Units from Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska and South Dakota, which were later to be designated as the 34th Infantry Division, left for the turbulent border where they were stationed near Llano Grande and Brownsville, Texas. Here they

engaged in border patrol duties and in intensive training for eight and a half months though no part of the Division accompanied Black Jack Pershing on his punitive expedition into Mexico. While this tour of duty was uneventful and resulted in no combat experience, yet it did serve to whip these units of the Guard into fairly effective organizations and resulted in a training that was to stand in good stead when the Division was to be called into the Federal Service to meet the challenge of Germany in her first attempt to conquer Europe and the World.

## Chapter V

# WORLD WAR NO. I

The Division was mustered out of the border service, commencing in December, 1916, the final units returning home in March, 1917.

Everyone seemed to sense that the call to duty would soon again be sounded for, the ominous clouds of war which already enveloped Europe, threatened to encompass America. Anticipating the call, the National Guard of the five states instituted intensive recruiting campaigns bringing all units up to war strength.

The call came by Presidential Proclamation on March 25, 1917 and the organizations that responded were the same that had served on the Mexican Border. On August 25, 1917, the Division, soon to be named the 34th Infantry Division, arrived for training at Camp Cody near Deming, New Mexico. Camp Cody was named in honor of the Iowa-born hero of the plains, Buffalo Bill Cody. Here it was that the Division adopted the insignia consisting, at first, of a white bovine skull superimposed upon a Mexican water-jug. That insignia was highly symbolic of the surrounding country; a dry, desert-like area, devoid of surface water and with scattered skeletons of long-horned cattle which had died of thirst because of drought or fallen prey to hungry coyotes. In later years, the white skull was to be changed to the now famous "Red Bull".

The 34th became known as the "Sandstorm Division" and appropriately so, for the area was a sun-blazed plain of sand with only sage, cacti, mesquite and distant mountains to relieve the white monotony. Despite the lack of surface water, there was, nevertheless, a plentiful supply of underground water drawn from wells drilled by the Army. But the winds were constantly whipping up sand-storms that proved the bane of existence to these Northern Troops; sand in eyes, sand that cut the faces and, worse of all, sand that forever lodged in the food of the men.

For twelve months, the Division engaged in the most intensive kind of training, preparing itself for duty as combat troops. Much reorganization was required, but at the close of the year at Cody, men of the 34th were a hardened, sun-browned lot, pre-

pared and ready for action.

On August 27, 1918, the first troops left for Camp Dix, New Jersey from where they departed on the S.S. "Cretic" September 17th, arriving at Liverpool on September 29, 1918, thence, to Le Havre, France arriving there on October 3rd, the final units reaching the Continent on October 24th. Here it was that the Division was to experience a great and bitter disappointment; instead of being committed to combat as a unit, it was utilized as a replacement pool. At first, the Division was skeletonized with the thought in mind of its being reorganized and committed to battle later, but with the end of the War in sight this plan was abandoned and the Division, as such, practically disappeared through the process of replacement. The remnant units returned home at various periods commencing January 6, 1919, and completing demobilization at Camp Grant, Illinois on June 30, 1919.

The 168th Infantry Regiment and the 151st Field Artillery, did not serve with the 34th Infantry Division. It was their lot to serve with the famous 42nd Infantry Division whose gallant record in World War I will always remain an outstanding achievement in the military annals of American History. Both were to participate in many major engagements from Lorraine, through Chateau Thierry to the Argonne. The 151st Field Artillery was commanded by Colonel George E. Leach (now Major General, retired.) Under his great leadership, this artillery unit was cited as one of the outstanding artillery regiments of the War. The 168th Infantry Regiment was commanded at first, by Colonel Ernest R. Bennet and, from September 3, 1918 to May 17, 1919, was commanded by that gallant and beloved soldier and officer, Colonel Mathew W. Tingley (now Lt. General, retired).

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**Major General George E. Leach**, retired, one time commander of the famous 151st Field Artillery Regiment which fought in France in World War I under the banner of the 42nd Rainbow Division. General Leach served as Commanding General of the 34th Division relinquishing command upon reaching retirement age. For his gallant service in World War I, General Leach holds the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, French Legion of Honor, French Croix de Guerre with three palms and a star, Commander of the Crown of Italy, the Norwegian Knights of the Cross of St. Olaf and the Medal of Merit of the State of Minnesota.



**Brigadier General Charles H. Grahl**, Adjutant General of the State of Iowa, a veteran of the 42nd Rainbow Division in World War II. His work over the years has contributed invaluable to the success of the National Guard and the building and maintaining of the 34th Infantry Division.

## Chapter VI

# THE INTERIM BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS

The interim between the two World Wars posed the difficult problem of reorganizing and maintaining the National Guard. Public interest in national defense had gradually reached a low ebb. People were looking towards peaceful pursuits with little thought of future wars.

In the face of this attitude, a comparatively small group of patriotic volunteers set themselves to the enormous task of reorganizing the National Guard.

The Nation owes a debt of deep gratitude to the pioneers in this work: to the unit commanders, the non-commissioned officers and the enlisted men who gave their time and energy for only nominal compensation. Theirs was a patriotic contribution and when the call came to meet the threat of War in 1940, the Army again turned to the National Guard as the one reserve component then ready to respond. True, much had yet to be done to put these men into combat shape, but the Guard of the several states presented existing organizations, a matter of the greatest significance to the Army and the

Nation in this critical period.

Space will not permit a calling of the roll of men of the 34th Infantry Division during this interim who assisted in the reorganization and maintenance period, but the outstanding work of some of these leaders should be known to every man who served in its ranks. Leaders who had experienced actual combat in World War I gave the greatest impetus to this reorganization period. Among these, and most outstanding was Lt. General Mathew W. Tinley, whose tireless efforts not only held the 34th Division together but made of it a highly creditable organization. General Tinley's name will always be a symbol with the 34th Infantry Division and the work he performed will endure for years to come.

The story would be incomplete without mention of the contributions made by that iron-grey eagle, Major General Ellard A. Walsh, a veteran with the Division in World War I, whose genius for planning and organization remains unsurpassed in the Army. His personality and driving force resulted in build-

ing up recruitments, construction of armories, and the establishment of Camp Ripley in Minnesota, which was to prove such a valuable training ground in the period preceding World War II. He was and will remain for a long, long time to come, the symbol of the National Guard of the Union. Throughout all these years, as even today, General Walsh has enjoyed the assistance of two most capable officers; Brigadier General Joseph E. Nelson and Colonel Raymond Rossberg.

Major General George E. Leach of the 151st Artillery fame, a great hero in World War I, devoted the years in the interim to assisting in rebuilding the Guard. His great experience and forceful personality left an imprint upon the 34th Division that was and is everlasting in character. They called him, in those old days, the little Colonel; and so he was, and so, he will always be, in the hearts of those who served with him.

Not the least of those who contributed towards the rebuilding and the maintenance of the National Guard during this great and important interim period, was Brigadier General Charles H. Grahl of Iowa, who, as Adjutant General of that State, with wisdom and foresight contributed most invaluable service. General Grahl had served with the "Rainbow Division" in World War I. He knew, and had visualized, the needs of his Country and he knew, what few men then knew, that the National Guard was an important factor in meeting the eventualities which lay ahead.

General Grahl is one of the reasons why Iowa will continue to remain in the forefront of those

gallant volunteers who spend their efforts in time of peace as well as war, preparing for defense of their Nation.

Brigadier General Angus Fraser served as Adjutant General for the State of North Dakota for many years. He too, contributed his experience and his energy to the rebuilding of the 34th Infantry Division. He was followed by Brigadier General Heber L. Edwards who carried on with the effective program set up by General Fraser. Out of North Dakota came the gallant 164th Infantry Regiment which served so heroically at Guadalcanal in the Pacific area. The 34th is proud to be able to say that the 164th Infantry Regiment had, for years, been a part of the Division. Its exploits in the Pacific are proudly regarded as an achievement, that will forever reflect glory on the Red Bull Division.

We owe a tribute also to the name of Colonel William Hazel of South Dakota who, as Adjutant General of that State played an important part in this reorganization and maintenance period. The 147th Field Artillery, which had previously been a part of the 34th Division departed early for the Pacific and performed magnificently in that field. From South Dakota came the 109th Engineers, 109th Signal Battalion and part of the 109th Quartermaster Regiment, those gallant units which performed so heroically in Tunisia and Italy.

But for the foresight of these men, and many others, both officers and enlisted men, whose names cannot be enumerated here, the 34th Division would not have been ready to respond to the Nation's call in the Second World War.

## Chapter VII

# CLAIBORNE DAYS

The invasion of Poland by Germany in 1939 immediately alerted the attention of every man of the 34th Division to the inescapable fact that a crisis was close at hand. Men knew what that event portended—that soon all of Europe would be drawn into the tremendous holocaust of a second great World War; they knew that its implications would reach out ever farther until finally it would engulf America as it had done some twenty-two years before.

In the Fall of 1940, the 34th Infantry Division, together with many other components of the National Guard and of the Regular Army, were assembled on great maneuvers at Camp Ripley, Minnesota. Serious minded men gathered there by the thousands; a feeling pervading that now again, as at Cody, this training would eventually, somehow, be placed to the test.

In a Democracy, preparing for war is a fumbling, groping effort and, at this critical time, the purposes of the Government seemed greatly confused, indeed; nine times, the 34th Infantry Division was alerted for induction into Federal Service until men and officers became confused in their own individual lives. Offices were closed, men quit their jobs, while others discontinued their schooling, all in anticipation of immediate call to the colors. But the real call did not come until the tenth of February, 1941 though the alerts started as early as October,

1940.

These volunteer men of the 34th responded on that day, reporting at their several stations in the states of North and South Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa, the Division then being composed entirely of troops from those states.

For a while, the selection of a training camp remained uncertain, but, with the announcement of Camp Claiborne as the choice, the troops moved southward to Louisiana by rail and by truck-convoys, the last elements of the Division arriving on the 5th of March, 1941. The camp, then still in the process of construction, was located some nineteen miles south of Alexandria in an area of beautiful, rolling, pine-covered country, though the camp, itself, had been quite denuded of much of its trees and other vegetation. Rows upon rows of pyramidal and side-walled tents, typical wooden mess halls and office structures were spread over the area in orderly and impressive array. Coming from the cold North, the men had looked forward eagerly to the warmth of Central Louisiana but, instead, they were greeted by incessant rains, raw, penetrating winds, and a camp which was a veritable sea of ankle-deep mud. Colds and other forms of respiratory afflictions set in, and the hospital, with its twelve-miles of corridors, soon played host to a goodly number of disillusioned boys.

But, to offset these discomforts, each tent was pro-

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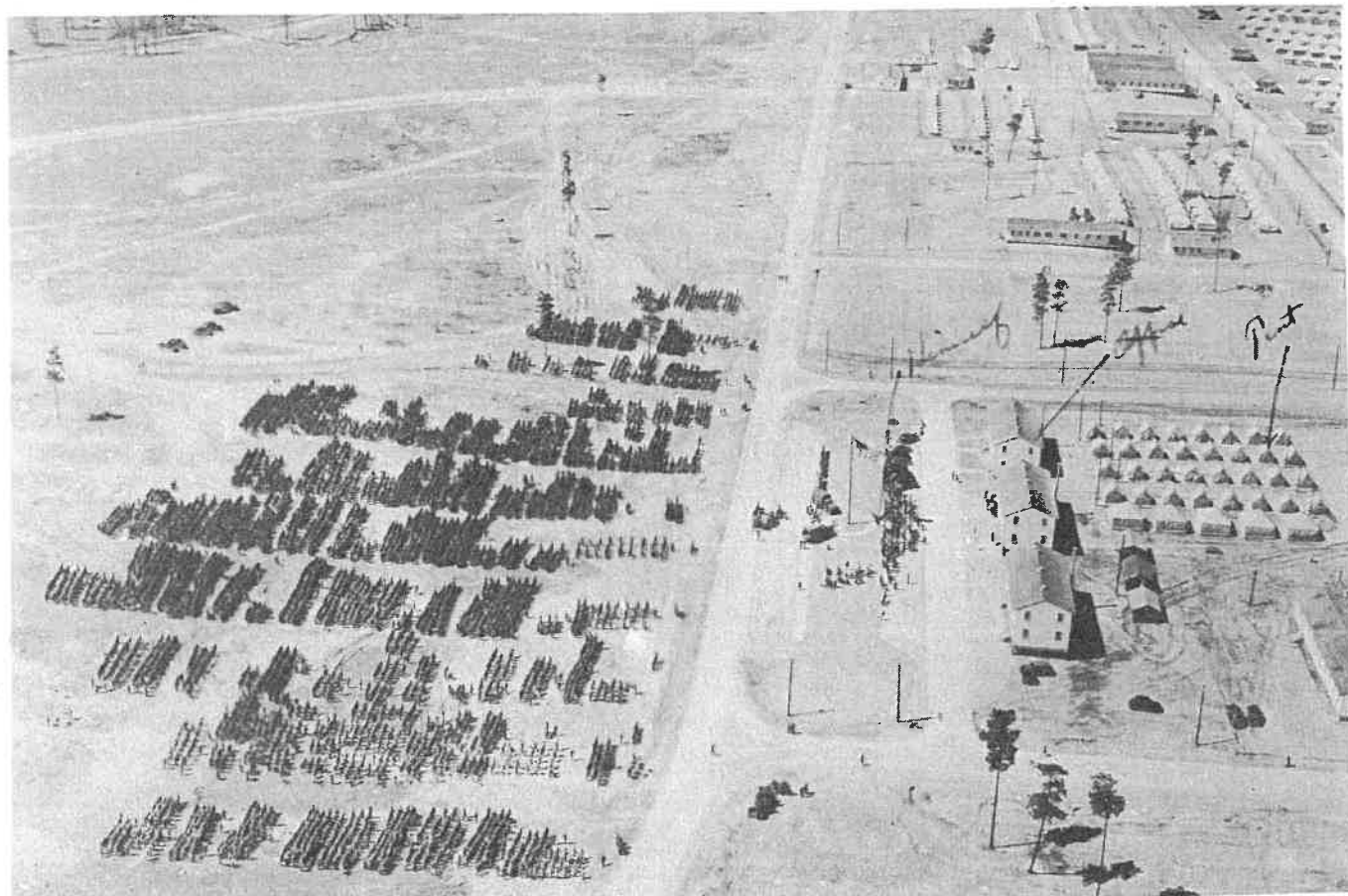
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Lt. General Walter Krueger, General George C. Marshall and Major General Ellard A. Walsh, Commander of the 34th Infantry Division, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, June 1941.



Major General Ellard A. Walsh, Adjutant General of the State of Minnesota, veteran of World War I, recognized leader of the National Guard for years. He commanded the 34th Infantry Division at Camp Claiborne from February 10, 1941 to October 30, 1941.



Ceremonies dedicating Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. March 8, 1941.



gagements later in the Pacific. The importance of this phase of the Division's training cannot be over-emphasized. Faults in tactics, supplies, and movement of troops came to light, but the general lessons learned were later to be put to actual test in virtually all corners of the globe.

In the very early phase of the Louisiana Maneuvers, General Walsh was forced, because of illness, to leave the Division, the command then passing to Major General Russell P. Hartle on August 5th, 1941. Possessed of a strong and forceful personality and with a natural military bearing, General Hartle quickly impressed the officers and men of the Division. His influence was felt from the highest to the lowest echelon and his profound knowledge of military tactics served to make the 34th one of the outstanding Divisions during these great maneuvers. The General was a graduate of St. John's College at Annapolis, Maryland, and, in his attendance at the several Army schools, including the Army War College, and the Command and General Staff School, and at the Infantry School, he was an honor student. In addition, General Hartle completed, with honor, the advanced course at the Naval War College. He was singularly prepared and equipped to lead combat troops. And, he was destined to take these first American troops overseas.

At the conclusion of the maneuvers, the Division returned to Camp Claiborne, there to resume intensive training. Even before, but chiefly during this period, many replacements came to the Division through the Selective Service System, to fill vacancies left by personnel that had reached the age limit then prescribed by the Army. In the meantime, the year's training for which the Division had been called, was wisely extended by Act of Congress.

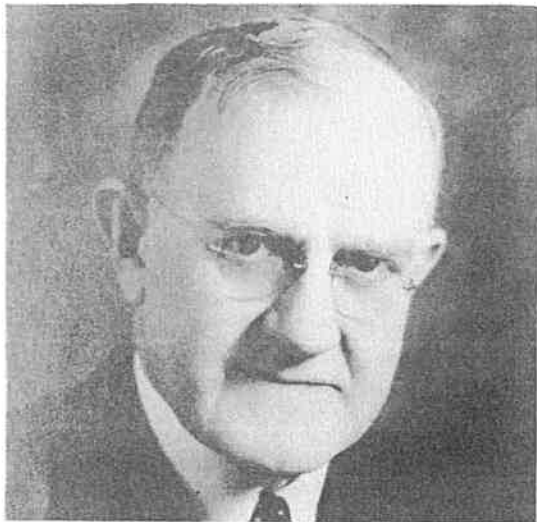
By now, events in Europe and in Asia had grown graver, a feeling pervading the Camp that some

untoward incident would surely occur to draw the United States again into the vortex of another world-wide conflict. It came suddenly and with terrific impact, with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Most of the men were resting in Camp on that beautiful Sunday, others were on recreation trips to various parts of Louisiana, when suddenly the news of that nefarious event blasted forth over the radio. Immediately, Claiborne became a scene of intense excitement and confusion; men understood that now, at last, an incident had occurred which everyone for so long had anticipated. At once, the call went out for all men to report to stations; arms, equipment, and supplies were hurriedly put in order for early, expected movement. Units of the Division were at once dispatched to duty guarding installations in Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

Because of its outstanding performance in the maneuvers, and, because of its advanced state of training, the 34th Infantry Division was now to be chosen as the first American contingent to cross the waters and to enter the European arena.

Mysteriously, orders come to move the Division to the East Coast. Widely dispersed troops were recalled to Claiborne and during the first week of January, 1942, the 34th started to move by rail and truck to Ft. Dix, New Jersey.

At Ft. Dix, our men were quickly to realize that Claiborne, was a soldiers' paradise, indeed, for "Dix" was confusion worse confounded. In bitter, nine degrees below zero weather, men were assigned quarters, many in tattered tents with no lights or stoves, to say nothing of cots or other facilities. The 34th Division at Ft. Dix was the victim of a Nation, even at that late date, wholly unprepared for war. Ft. Dix will live forever in the memory of those men as a stark example of total inefficiency and, as an example of what unpreparedness can mean to a Nation suddenly confronted with war.



**Lt. General Mathew A. Tinley**, retired, a veteran of the Spanish-American War, served on the Mexican Border in 1916-17, Commanded the 168th Infantry Regiment in World War I with the 42nd Rainbow Division, Commanded the 34th Infantry Division, retiring in 1940. General Tinley holds Croix-de-Guerre with five bronze stars, French Legion of Honor, the Distinguished Service Medal and Honor Medals from the States of Iowa and Minnesota.



**Lt. General George S. Patton, Jr.** with his two pearl-handled pistols talking to Col. P. C. Bullard, when the two visited Headquarters of the 34th Infantry Division during the Louisiana Maneuvers, September 1941.



Mr. Thomas E. Dewey and group. 34th Division Headquarters, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana.



Dance at Service Club, 34th Division, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana.

## Chapter VIII

# 34TH DIVISION MOVES OVER-SEAS

Rumors persisted of early departure to places of uncertain destination, though the nod was usually given towards Ireland. Everything was in the utmost confusion, neither the camp facilities at Ft. Dix being in a state of preparation to receive troops nor the Port of Embarkation in Brooklyn being organized for efficient handling, loading and the sending of armies across the seas. Orders came for the first contingent of the 34th to move by trucks and trains to the Brooklyn Port on the 14th day of January, 1942, there to board transports for an unknown destination. And so, less than one year from the date of induction, these men from Iowa, Minnesota, and South Dakota, augmented by selectees, hardened by weeks of training at Camp Claiborne, now thoroughly indoctrinated in army routine, became the first units to sail for European Service in World War II.

The original contingent to leave on this historic occasion was comprised of the First Battalion, plus Service Company, Anti-Tank Company and Headquarters and Headquarters Company of the 133rd Infantry Regiment, the First Battalion, 151st Field Artillery, a detachment of 109th Medics, a detachment of 34th M.P.'s, Division Headquarters Company, and the Division Forward Echelon. The troops were under the command of Major General Russell P. Hartle and his Chief of Staff, Colonel (now Major General) Norman E. Hendrickson.

The troops boarded the British Transport H.M.T.S. "Strathaird" on the afternoon of January 14th, in supposed secrecy, but, peculiarly enough, the secret seemed to be more closely kept from the troops themselves than it was from the general public for around the bars and restaurants of New York, talk had the 34th destined for Ireland. On the morning of the 15th, the "Strathaird" sailed out to sea, all men restricted to quarters below deck with no opportunity to bid a last farewell to the Statue of

Liberty.

In early 1942, the German U-boat campaign was at its height. To avoid the Nazi wolf-packs of the sea, the ship proceeded under convoy, zigzagging its way across the rough, bitter, cold North Atlantic. Walls of huge, rough waves tossed the "Strathaird" about like a cork. The men grew ill by the hundreds and the English diet of constant fish and mutton, augmented the illness of the sea.

After days of this perilous and sometimes terrifying rough voyage, the convoy was approaching the shores of Ireland. There, in the Irish Sea, the "Strathaird" was met by British corvettes under the command of Captain N. V. Dickinson, D.S.C., R.C. who dramatically radioed the following message to General Hartle:

"See Acts 27, Verse 22, for 'but only,' read 'nor!'"

A hasty reference to the Bible by General Hartle revealed the significance of this message, and the words of comfort conveyed, thereby:

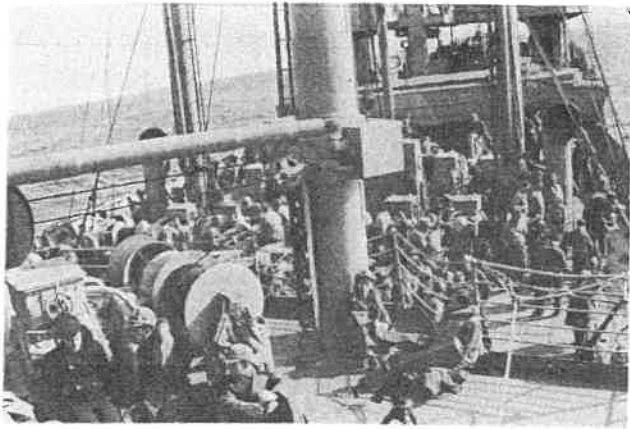
"And now I exhort you to be of good cheer. For there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, NOR of the ship."

The General, or maybe his Staff Chaplain, quickly scanned the Scripture for an appropriate response radioing to Captain Dickinson the Biblical reference:

"Psalms 107, verses 23 to 30."

And never was a more suitable reply made to an historical message:

23. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;
24. These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.
25. For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.
26. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.



Scene aboard U.S.S. Barnett enroute to Ireland, 1942.



Colonel Fred Clark, Who commanded the 133rd Infantry in Ireland.



34th Division Chow Line, North Ireland. Left to right: Private Herbert Berd, Hudson, Minnesota; and Warten Pederson, Grand Rapids, Minnesota. March 16, 1942.

27. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.
28. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses.
29. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.
30. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven."

Without incident, the "Strathaird" docked in Belfast Harbor on the 26th day of January, 1942. The honor of being the first American Soldier to step on foreign soil in World War II was given to Pvt. William H. Henke of Hutchinson, Minnesota. He was followed by General Hartle. As the troops poured on to the pier they were promptly overwhelmed by newspaper correspondents, photographers, news-reel cameramen, and cheering citizens of Belfast. The British Red Cross was present to serve tea and sandwiches and the general cordial reception accorded our men was one never to be forgotten which augured well for a happy future relation with the people of Ulster.

The 133rd units were at once established in the vicinity of Limavady and the 151st Field Artillery was assigned to an area in the vicinity of Castle-rock, while Headquarters for the 34th was established at Ballymena. General Hartle, who was to command all troops scheduled to arrive, set up Headquarters at Wilmont House, a beautiful estate at the outskirts of Belfast.

The Second contingent of the 34th Division under the command of Brigadier General Gordon C. Hollar and Colonel (now Major General) Ray C. Fountain, Chief of Staff, left Brooklyn on the 19th day of February, 1942, arriving at Belfast on March 1st. Its experience was identical with that of the First Contingent: rough seas, lurking submarines, alerts, dropping of depth bombs, and sea sickness, no end. Twenty-one ships moved out in this great convoy, the escorts consisting of one aircraft carrier, a cruiser, two destroyers and the battleship New York. Units comprising this convoy and ships to which they were assigned were:

- Division Headquarters..... "U.S.S. Barnett"
- Second and Third Battalions of "U.S.S. Barnett"
- the 133rd Infantry Regiment... "Duchess of Athol"
- 168th Infantry Regiment
- less 1st and 2nd Battalions... "Duchess of Athol"
- 109th Engineer Battalion.... "S.S. American Legion"
- 109th Ordnance Co..... "Duchess of Athol"
- 109th Medical Battalion..... "U.S.S. Fuller"
- 34th Reconnaissance Troop
- First Platoon..... "S.S. Betelgeuse"
- 34th Signal Co..... "S.S. Neville"
- 34th Military Police Co..... "S.S. Neville"
- 34th Quartermaster Co..... "Duchess Athol"

Arriving at Halifax on the second day, the "S.S. American Legion" developed engine trouble which forced her to remain behind, the 109th Engineers returning to the United States, temporarily quartering at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts.

On the fourth night out at sea, the convoy was greeted over the ward room radio of the "Barnett" with the infamous voice of that traitor, William Joyce, better known as "Lord Haw Haw," who, speaking from Germany, gave our exact position at sea, gave our destination as Ireland, and named the locality in Ulster where Division Headquarters were to be located. He promised an air-raid at Easter

which never materialized, though a German observation plane did pass over Belfast at noon on that beautiful Holy Day.

On April 30, 1942, the third and final Division contingent set sail for Belfast arriving there on May 10th. In this huge convoy were the 135th Infantry, the 125th and 185th Field Artillery Battalions aboard the "Acquitania" and the 109th Engineers, one Platoon of Company "K", 168th Infantry, and the 175th Field Artillery Battalion on the "USAT Mexico." No incident occurred to disturb their fairly peaceful zigzagging voyage over the now quieter waters of the Atlantic.



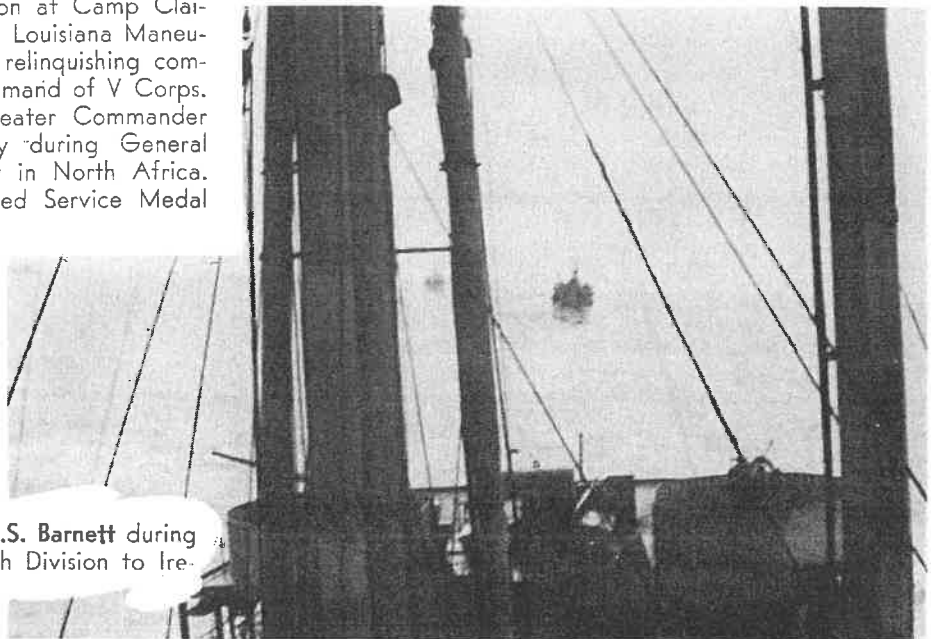
**Major General Russell P. Hartle**, retired, who assumed command of the 34th Infantry Division at Camp Claiborne, August 5, 1941, during the big Louisiana Maneuvers. He took the Division to Ireland relinquishing command on May 6, 1942 to assume command of V Corps. Later, he was appointed Deputy Theater Commander for E.T.O., serving in that capacity during General Dwight D. Eisenhower's tour of duty in North Africa. General Hartle holds the Distinguished Service Medal and the Legion of Merit.



**34th Division mess duties, North Ireland, 1942.**



**The 1st contingent of the 34th Infantry Division left New York January 14, 1942 and were the first American troops to reach the European Theater. They landed in Ireland January 26, 1942.**

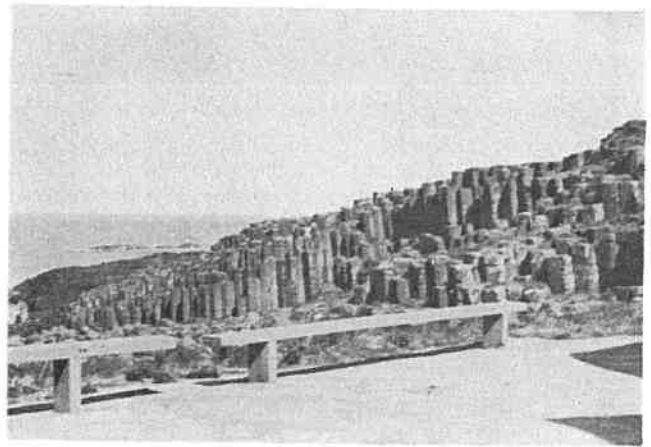


**Picture taken from the deck of the U.S.S. Barnett during the voyage of the 2nd contingent 34th Division to Ireland, February 1942.**





Tomb of St. Patrick, Downpatrick, North Ireland.



The Giants Causeway, North Ireland.

## Chapter IX

# DAYS IN IRELAND AND SCOTLAND

Ireland was truly the Emerald Isle. On the same parallel with Hudson Bay, yet Ireland in mid-winter presented a rolling, picturesque area of rich, deep green. The temperature was far milder than that experienced at Fort Dix; but perpetual fogs, cold, and penetrating winds prevailed, with a spate of rain that oozed constantly from heavy clouds.

The winter days were short in Ireland: dawn came at 8:30; at 10 o'clock, the fullness of day; the afternoons were short, twilight at three o'clock with night completely closing in as early as four o'clock.

As the spring and the summer wore on, these American troops were to see the quiet, tranquil beauty of Ireland: the country-side, a riot and profusion of colors—rhododendron in unbelievable masses, and variety of colors; azaleas as bright as those seen in Louisiana, and lilacs everywhere; endless miles of bridal wreath hedges; white-washed, straw-thatched picturesque houses, the walls of which were covered with single and double petaled roses—whites, reds, and pinks in glorious array.

And the long summer days: diamond ball, tennis, even golf played until almost midnight, with scarcely more than two hours between the darkness of the night and dawn.

The strange old life of Ireland, mixed with the modern, was a new experience for the American soldier. The ancient methods of farming surprised our men; tiny donkeys moving tremendous loads over the highways and by-ways; men and women working in the flax fields and in the grain fields with old scythes and flailing of the grain in the farm yards. Belfast and Londonderry presented peculiar mixtures of the ancient with the modern; endless street cars and trucks, and drays hauled by the most magnificent horses in the world, heavy of shoulder and lean and sinewy of rear, straining their muscles with every step as they hauled their heavy loads through the cobbled streets.

To our troops, spread over the length and breadth of Ulster, the warmth of the Irish hospitality was soon to be experienced. Men were invited into homes, to civic occasions, the vivacious Irish girls

alleviating in no small degree the discomforts of an impossible climate and the longing of men to be back home again.

Here are Irish names that will live forever in the memory of the men of the 34th: Ballamoney, Port Ruch, Fort Ballantary, Giants Causeway, Ballyclaire, Strabane, Fintona, Killadees, Enniskillen, Fermanagh, Lough Erne, Bangor, Lurgon, Armagh, Omagh, Down Patrick, Carrikfergus, Cookstown, Randalls-town, Caleraine, Lough Neagh, Tynan Abbey and Caledon, the last being the estate of the famous General Alexander, and occupied as Regimental Headquarters by the 133rd.

Ulster had felt the impact of the war in the early defense of Britain, the Nazi blitz having been visited twice upon the beautiful city of Belfast. Here, members of the 34th viewed, for the first time, the colossal destruction wrought from the air by a relentless foe. In one area of Belfast, some thirty-two blocks lay in absolute and abject rubbish. Only a few moments were consumed in visiting this great destruction upon the city but the stories lingered on in the minds and hearts of the Irish who passed them on repeatedly to the American soldiers.

Other effects of the war upon Ulster were brought acutely to the attention of the men of the 34th; tight, rigid rationing of food and clothing; the life of austerity, strange and unfamiliar to the Americans; protective balloons hovering at great heights over the cities, and in the night time, searchlights reaching and screening the skies; everywhere, evidence of economizing on transportation and fuel; automobiles and trucks propelled by gas fed from huge bags hovering over vehicles. Here, in Ireland, the members of the 34th saw an embattled people grimly determined to fight to the end.

Under the direction of General Hartle, rigid training and maneuvers became the order of the day. More troops were arriving, among them the crack First Armored Division which was destined to be the constant fighting companion of the 34th throughout the entire war. Training consisted of artillery practice on the northern moors of Ireland. The Division

engaged in combat problems with the First Armored Division. Later, units of the Division were to experience simulated warfare under actual fire, in the vicinity of Carrickfergus.

During these training days in North Ireland, and on two occasions, the King and Queen visited the 34th Infantry Division. In April, they visited our Headquarters at Ballymena where, after reviewing British troops, they received both British and Americans at a reception at St. Patrick's Barracks. On the 25th of June, 1942, as special guests of General Hartle, they witnessed a demonstration by the 168th Infantry Regiment, under the command of Col. (now Brig. General) Folsom Everest. Perhaps the outstanding event of that day, certainly the one that impressed our boys the most, was when Queen Elizabeth, seated by General Hartle, rode in a bouncing jeep over the rough terrain. Their Majesties surprised the Americans with their democratic air and with the stories of their courage and fortitude, which so epitomized the spirit of Britain during these terrible war days. It was noteworthy that the King and Queen moved about freely, completely without guards or plain clothes men, a decided contrast with the retinue of guards attendant upon our President whenever and wherever he moves.

#### THE FIRST RANGERS

Early in June 1942, General Hartle appointed his Aide, Captain William Darby, to organize the First Rangers, that gallant troop of men who were to gain immortal fame and whose deeds are destined to live forever in history.

Over 80% of the personnel selected for the First Rangers were chosen from the 34th Division. They immediately departed for Scotland's West Coast in the region of that rugged country surrounding Inverary. Here, these men, under the careful guidance of combat-experienced Scots and Englishmen, went through some of the most gruelling training ever experienced by men preparing for war; long and arduous hikes including mountain climbing, practice landing from boats in night and day exercises; simulated combat, the entire training being directed to make each soldier, not only a fearless fighting individual, but one who could be depended upon to care for himself under any and all circumstances, be he alone or with his organization.

The record of the First Rangers is scarcely without parallel in American History. It served as the spear-head in the landing at Oran and fought the gallant fight at Arzeu. It landed on the beaches of Sicily, sustaining great casualties. It landed again on the beaches of Italy, and, at the break-through at the Anzio Beach-head, one battalion in the vicinity of Cisterna, was wiped out. Later, it went to France, there to write its name in glory on the flag it so heroically defended. Colonel Darby, then with the 10th Mountain Division, died on the fields of Northern Italy in the very closing days of the War. Posthumously, this man, revered by everyone who knew him, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and promoted to the rank of Brigadier General.

#### PREPARATION FOR INVASION

But plans were in the making for a forward movement of invasion. In the latter days of June, General Hartle who had been serving in the combined capacity of Commanding General of the 34th



Queen Elizabeth visits British and American troops at Ballymena, Ireland, summer, 1942.



Units of the 36th Division parading before their Majesties, the King and Queen of England, North Ireland, June 25, 1942. Note the World War I type of helmet worn by the 34th in those days.



Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, accompanied by Major General Russell P. Hartle at the 34th Infantry Division maneuver demonstration held in North Ireland on June 25, 1942.



The King of England asked many questions about the American Army field range. Major General Hartle and a Major explain in detail. Northern Ireland.

Division and Commanding General of the Fifth Army Corps, relinquished his command of the 34th to Major General Charles W. Ryder. General Ryder, characteristically, immediately took the troops through a series of rigorous maneuvers but, shortly thereafter, left mysteriously with his Staff for London to plan for the North African Invasion, the Division temporarily passing to the command of Brigadier General Albert C. Stanford, Division Artillery Commander.

In the meantime, the 168th Infantry Regiment and the 175th Field Artillery had been sent to Inverary in Scotland for intensive training. Here it was, that the Commandos, composed of men from the 168th, the 175th F. A. and the Division Guards, were organized and placed under the command of Captain (now Colonel) Mark Martin. They patterned their training after that of the First Rangers. Later, in Africa, these Commandos were to write on the pages of the Division's history a record of gallant and outstanding achievement.

Days of training in Ireland and Scotland were coming rapidly to a close. Everywhere, rumors persisted that the troops would soon be on the move. The time for departure was soon at hand. The training had been hard, severe, but the men were restless and eager for the unknown ventures which lay ahead.

Just before leaving Inverary, things occurred to the Command of the 168th Infantry Regiment which caused a rift of anger and despair to pass deep into the ranks. Officers of long standing with the Regiment, some of whom had been reared with it since boyhood, the services of others reaching back to World War I, were suddenly removed from Command, though they had carried the training of troops from the maneuvers of 1937 and 1940, through the year's training at Claiborne, including the great Louisiana maneuvers of 1941; through the many months of training in Ireland, and now, had completed the combat training in Scotland. And this was the third time within a year that officers of the



General Ryder enlightens their Majesties on American Army equipment. Northern Ireland.

Regiment had been removed and replaced.

Colonel Folsom Everest was relieved of command of the Regiment shortly before departure from North Ireland for training in Scotland. This officer had come up through the ranks of the Regiment, had served in France in World War I, had been in command of the Regiment for several years before induction and, shortly before being relieved of command, had received special commendation for the efficiency of the Regiment and, in particular, for its showing in field exercises in Ireland, witnessed by their Majesties, the King and Queen of England.

And now, in the concluding days of combat training in Scotland, Colonel (now Brigadier General) Philip Bettenburg, who succeeded Colonel Everest, was relieved as Regimental Commander. Major (now Colonel) Carl Goldbranson and Major John C. Petty were removed as battalion commanders; while Lt. Colonel Fred Oliphant was relieved as Executive Officer.

Replacement officers were sent over by Washington authorities. The strange thing about this policy was that the officers who took over remained with the Division just long enough to make the landing at Algiers. Not so strange, however, excepting for Major Petty who was killed in action at Sened Station, all replaced officers went on to higher responsibilities.



Elements of the 34th Division passing in review before the City Hall at Belfast immediately upon landing in Ireland, January 26, 1942.

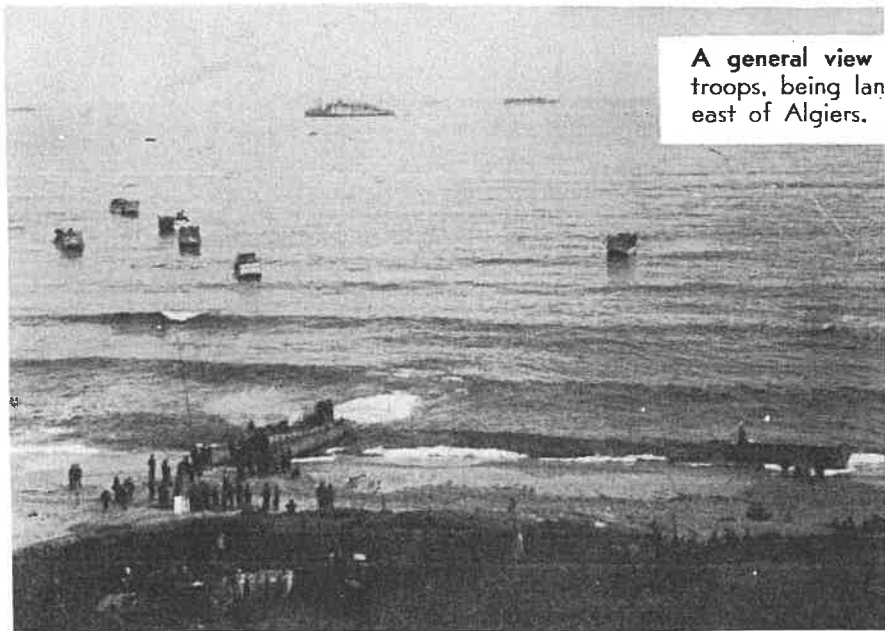


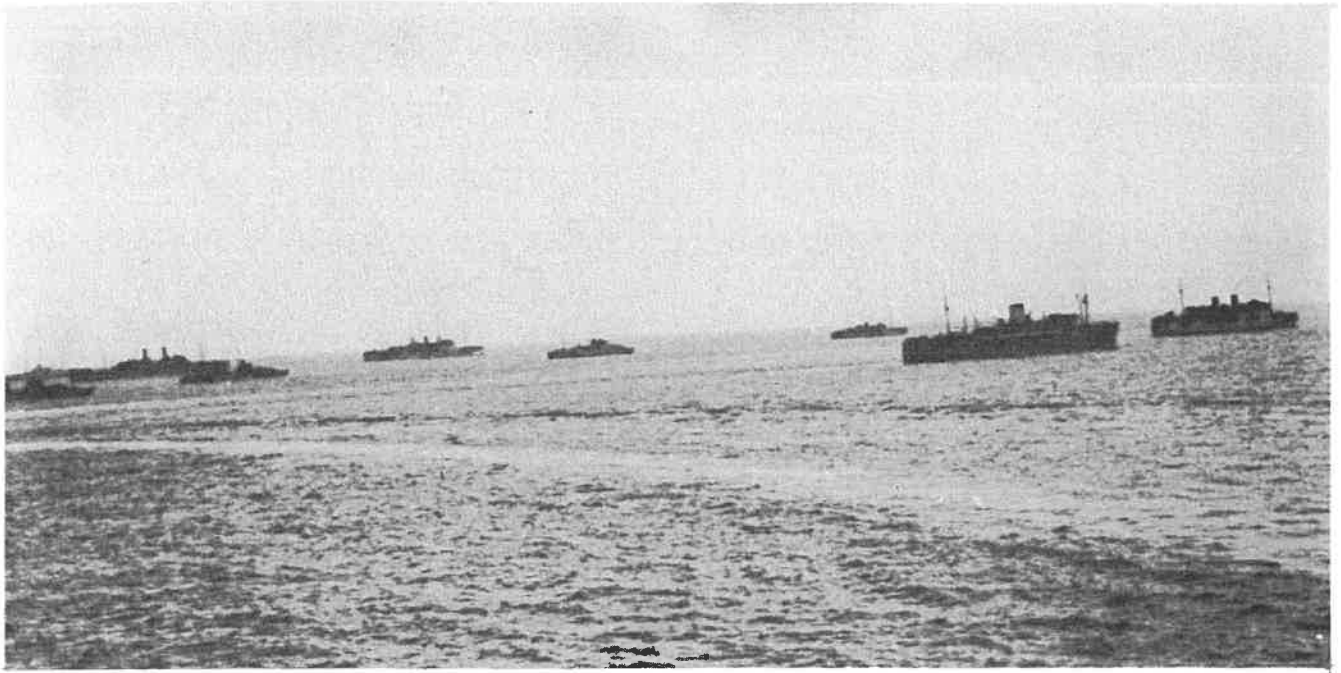
**Brig. Gen. Charles W. Ryder:** Left to right: Maj. Gen. Russell P. Hartle, Commander of USANIF; the King and Queen of England; John G. Winant, American ambassador to Britain; Herbert Morrison, British Home Secretary and Lt. Gen. H. E. Franklyn, Britain Forces, review U.S. troops in Northern Ireland. June 25, 1942.

**Ordnance Office,** left to right: T/Sgt. R. C. Riches; Lt. R. R. Jacobson, Ordnance officer and M/Sgt. P. J. Swanson. Ordnance Section of the 34th Division at Omagh, Northern Ireland. November 5, 1942.

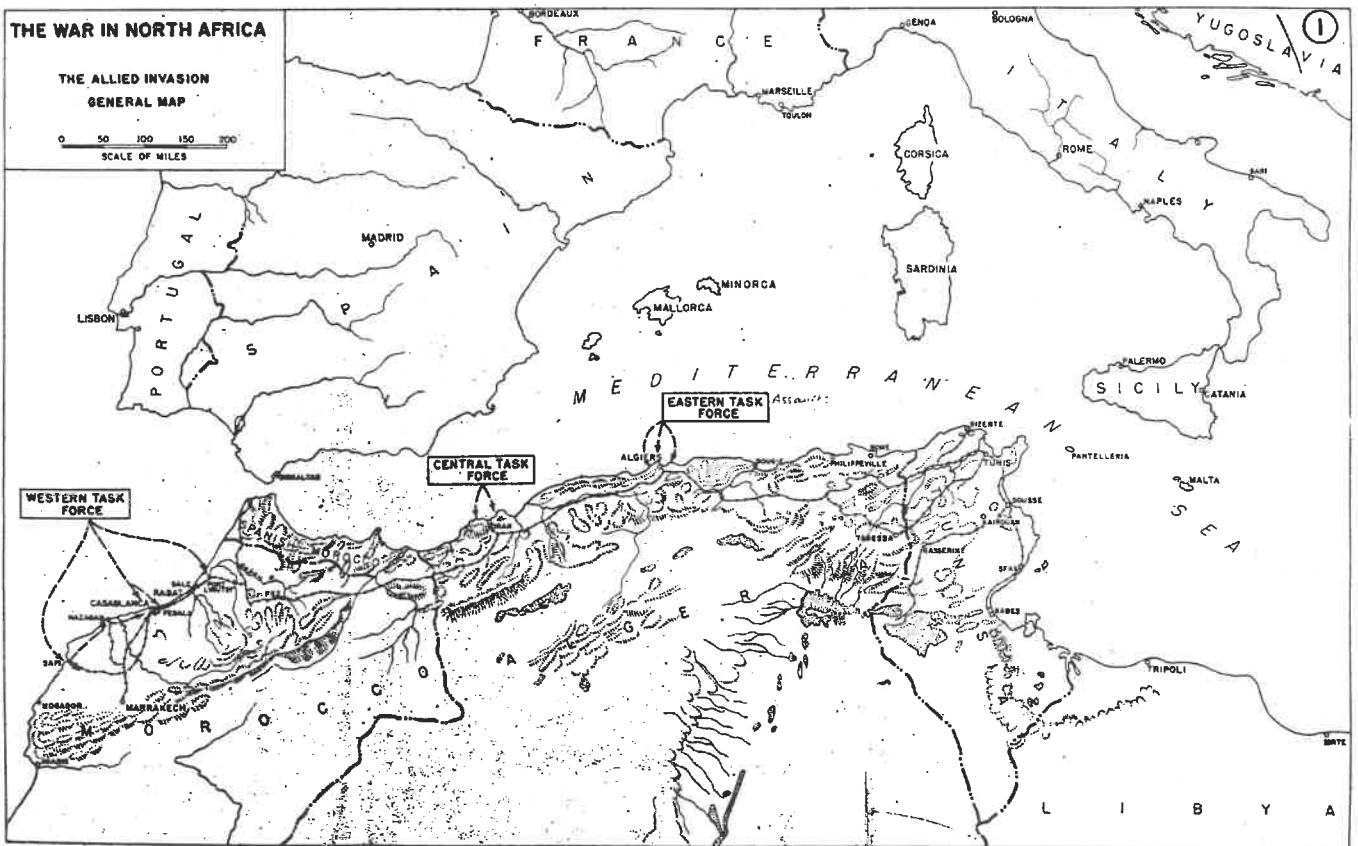


**A general view** showing R.A.F. and American "Task" troops, being landed at SURCOUF about twenty miles east of Algiers.





Operation "Torch" enroute to Africa, November, 1942.



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# Chapter X

## THE ATTACK ON NORTH AFRICA AND THE LANDING AT ALGIERS

The grand strategy of the North African Campaign had doubtless been worked out by the combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington, following the historic meeting of Churchill with President Roosevelt in that city in early 1942. The plan provided for three widely separated but coordinated missions; the capture of Casablanca, on the Western Coast; the capture of Oran, on the Central Coastal Sector; and the capture of Algiers farther to the East. The first of these missions was to be executed by the "Western Assault Force", under the command of Lt. General George S. Patton, Jr.; the Central Mission, assigned to the "Central Assault Force" under the command of Major General Lloyd R. Fredendall; and the "Eastern Assault Force" under the command of our Division Commander, General Charles W. Ryder, was committed to the task of capturing Algiers, the most easterly port.

No attempt will be made here to recite the story of the Western and Central Assault Forces. Nor shall any attempt be made to detail the part played by the British, whose fleet assumed the major role in the Mediterranean operations and whose infantry, artillery and commandos all played a conspicuous role. This story has only to do with the "Eastern Task Force" and, in particular, with the part played by the 34th Infantry Division in the assault on the colorful port of Algiers.

In the latter days of October 1942, the greatest armada in all history was in the making. Over eight hundred ships including escorts, constituted this tremendous flotilla as it converged, a part, against the Western shores of Morocco, and the balance, on the Straits of Gibraltar. It is doubtful that any such great mass movement by sea has ever occurred in history attended, as it were, with such great secrecy.

The operation in which the "Eastern Assault Force" took part was tactically known as "Torch". This "Force" was directly under the command of Major General Charles W. Ryder and the "Force" itself was comprised of the following tactical units:

The 39th Combat Team, composed of troops from the 9th Division under the command of Brigadier General Benjamin F. Caffey, who later was to become Assistant Commander of our Division, and to play a most important role with the 34th throughout the Tunisian, and the early phases of the Italian Campaigns.

British troops, with the Eastern Assault Force were:

78th Division; Battery 456; Battery 457; I Commandos; VI Commandos.

The units of the 34th Infantry Division of the "Eastern Assault Force" consisted of the following: 168th Infantry Regiment under the command of Colonel John "Iron Mike" O'Daniel (now Major General). Company "C" and the 2nd Platoon, Co.



Colonel Lester A. Hancock, Regimental Commander, 135th Infantry.

"D", both of the 109th Medical Battalion. 175th Field Artillery under the command of Lt. Col. Joseph Edward Kelly. Co. "C" of the 109th Engineers under the command of Captain John B. Webb. Detachment of Military Police under the command of Major Lester M. Brown. The 168th Commandos under Captain Mark Martin (now Colonel).

The Division left the British Isles with the mighty fleet in the latter days of October 1942, all destined for North Africa. To insure, in any eventuality, a command for the Division, General Ryder, with Colonel P. C. Bettenburg, Deputy Chief of Staff and other Staff Officers, boarded the ship "Bulolo"; while Major General Ray C. Porter, Assistant Division Commander, and Colonel Norman E. Hendrickson, Chief of Staff and other Staff Officers, sailed on the "Karen".



The Third Battalion of the 135th Infantry Regiment had been in intensive combat training in the vicinity of Carrickfergus, North Ireland. On the 21st of October 1942, part of the battalion boarded the British Destroyers, "Malcolm" and "Broke", the balance boarding the British Cruiser "Sheffield" on October 26th, both to join the Grand Armada.

The great convoy, which included the "Eastern Assault Force", left the shores of England and proceeded far out to sea, sailing through the quiet waters of the Straits of Gibraltar. At midnight 5th-6th, November 1942, the mission, by now, having been made known to all. The night was dark, but the huge form of the mighty historic rock of Gibraltar, which had guarded these Straits for centuries, stood out in faint relief.

On the early morning of November 7th, the "USS Stone", carrying a part of the 39th Infantry Combat Team, was torpedoed. Whether the blow had been struck by submarine or aircraft was never to be known. Seven hundred men aboard immediately took to life-boats and pushed for the shores of Algiers, but the lashing waves swamped the landing-boats. Fortunately, no lives were lost, for the men were picked up by British destroyers in a most magnificent feat of rescue accomplished in the face of high winds and waves. The convoy proceeded eastward plying cautiously through perilous waters. All ships of the "Eastern Assault Force" save the "U.S.S. Stone" arrived at the designated assembly area some eight miles off the harbor of Al-

giers at approximately 0100 hours on November 8th.

The plan of attack was now to unfold. It called for landings at four separate beaches, each beach tactically being broken down into sub-beaches. How the several missions were executed may be briefly summarized as follows:

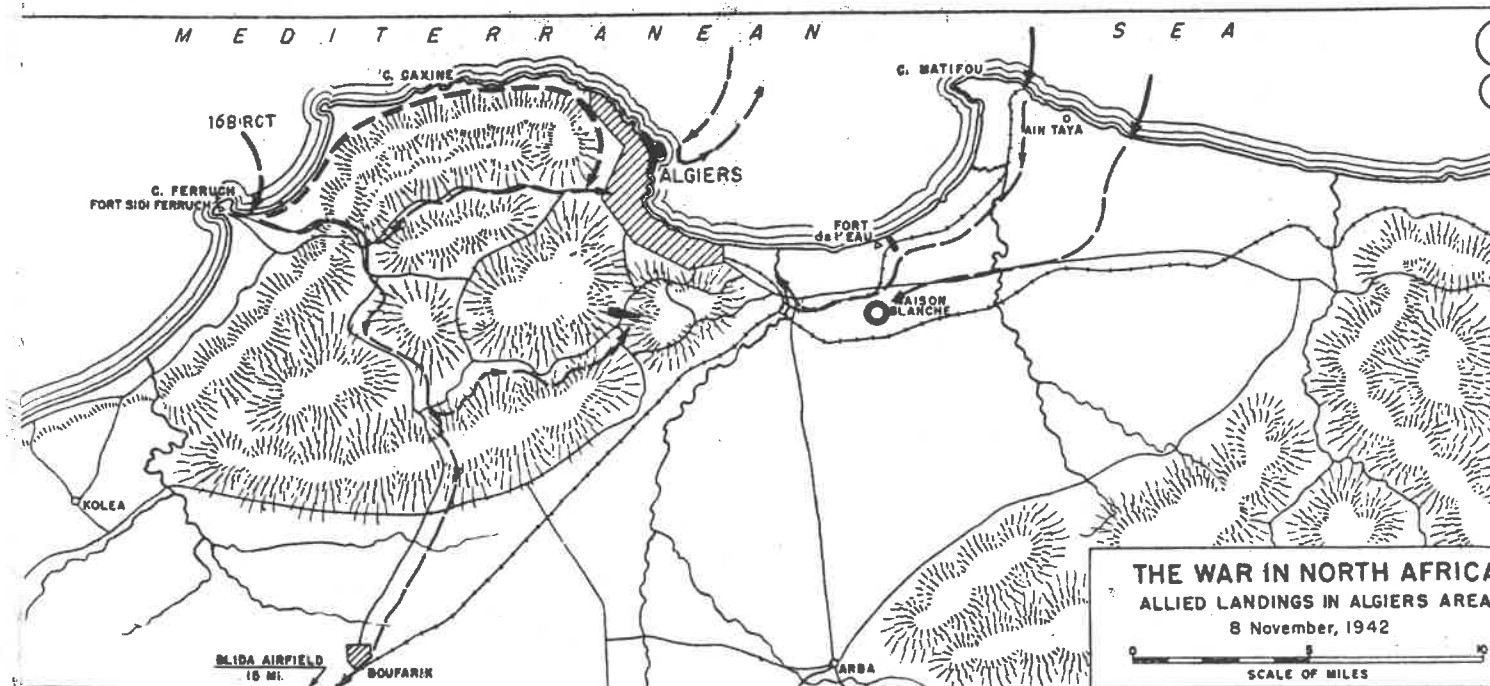
#### "APPLES BEACHES"

The 11th British Brigade landed on "Apples Beach" without opposition, on schedule, immediately moving into its assigned area in the vicinity of Kolea. The Brigade's orders were to capture Blida Airfield, but this had already been accomplished by the British 1st Commandos. Upon arrival at the Blida Airfield, the Brigade was received in a friendly manner by the already surrendered French.

The 36th British Brigade Group was to follow the 11th Brigade in this beach-head but, since the mission had already been accomplished, it was withdrawn and sent to other fields of activity farther East.

#### "BEER BEACHES"

The 168th Combat Team, with elements of the British 1st and 6th Commandos attached, was scheduled to land on "Beer Beach". The first wave, one battalion in strength, landed successfully at 100 hours, 8 November 1942, and advanced inland. Subsequent assault waves, because of inexperience of personnel handling the landing craft, landed some 15 miles away from the beachhead. The first wave landed without opposition and advanced toward Algiers, but having lost its support





No doubt, Lt. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower is not taking orders from Admiral Darlan. Left to right: Lt. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Admiral Darlan, Maj. Gen. Mark W. Clark, Algiers, French Morocco, November 13, 1942.



Front view of the bier of the late Admiral Darlan, as people pass to pay homage. The Admiral lies in state at Government General Building, North Africa, December 26, 1942.

because of the error in landing the rest of the troops, was forced to stop. The lost elements after marching about 20 miles, arrived on the scene late, but by late afternoon all were attacking El Biar on the high ground overlooking Algiers.

#### "SCRAMBLE BEACHES"

VI Commandos (British), who were assigned this beachhead, landed as per schedule, immediately capturing Fort Anglais and Fort Independence, but were forced to call upon the Air in the taking of Fort Dupere.

A detachment of the VI Commandos had become separated, on the landing operations, from the main body. It attempted a landing at Admiraute, which proved impossible because of rough weather; all the boats being sunk, though, fortunately with light casualties.

#### "CHARLIE BEACHES"

Combat Team 39 under Brigadier General Caffey, met no opposition in landing on this beachhead. Troops of the 1st Commandos (British) were attached to this team, but General Caffey was forced to call upon naval bombardment to capture Fort Lasalles, located on Cap Matifou. The 39th Combat Team captured the Airfield at Maison Blanche. However, Fort de L'Eau succumbed only after the unconditional surrender of the French at Algiers.

One transport, the "U.S.S. Leedstrom", was torpedoed by the enemy submarines, with considerable resulting casualties.

#### "TERMINAL FORCE"

The Third Battalion of our 135th Infantry Regiment, under the command of Lt. Col. Edwin T. Swenson, aboard the British destroyers, "Malcolm" and "Broke", was assigned the enormously difficult task of breaking the boom barring the way into the harbor of Algiers. The mission was to capture all installations which controlled the dock area. It was assigned the further task of preventing sabotage to ships in the harbor. The story of the "Terminal Force" can best be told in the vivid words of Lt. Col. Swenson:

"As we neared the port, the search lights on the Ilet de Marine and the battery Des Arcades, began to search the harbor to seaward. At first, they seemed to be illuminating the area to assist us in finding our way into the harbor. But the search lights were turned off and we proceeded on a course which we thought to be in the correct direction. Any thought that we were being helped by the French on shore was dismissed when the battery Des Arcades opened fire on the "Malcolm". On approaching the boom, it was realized that we were heading outside of the Jette De Mustapha. The two destroyers turned seaward to organize a second attempt. Again we missed the boom partly because of heavy fire from the batteries of the Des Arcades and Jette Du Nord. Again the "Malcolm" missed the boom, receiving several hits from the shore batteries which caused fire to break out amidships. So severely was the "Malcolm" hit, she was forced to



retire from the engagement.

"I then ordered the "Broke" to make a third attempt which again resulted in failure, the batteries on the shore intensifying their fire. Daylight was dawning and the opportunity for a surprise attack had passed. We proceeded in for the fourth attempt, batteries pounding as we approached, the "Broke" returning fire. Again it seemed that we would miss, but with increased speed we cut through the boom with scarcely a sensation of striking it and proceeded toward the quay. We berthed alongside the Quay De Falaise on Mole Louis Billiard. Here we were greeted with terrific machine-gun fire from small vessels anchored within the port. We returned the fire silencing the guns on the French vessels.

"The troops aboard the "Broke" were quite shaken by the severe bombardment, but they soon disembarked and proceeded to their previously assigned positions. Small arms fire was directed at us from various directions from the city and it became apparent that there was considerable sniping. Despite this, the situation at first looked favorable, but soon things became confused; artillery fire came down on the area, the third round breaking through the bow of the "Broke", cutting off our radio communications with the ship. Because of the intense fire being poured into the area, escape back to the "Broke" was completely cut off. In a few moments, the "Broke" sustained five additional direct hits, whereupon she signalled by siren her intention to leave port immediately.

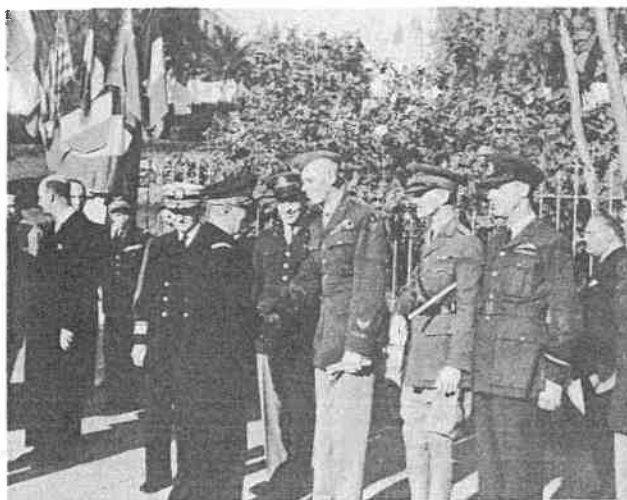
"The fire grew intense. I organized an inner and outer perimeter defense. Soon our planes bombed out French artillery emplacements so that artillery fire was now coming from only one direction. I felt we could hold out until the combat teams arrived in Algiers from the east and the west as planned, but we listened in vain for the help that arrived too late. The situation grew graver and graver. Soon armored vehicles were reported approaching our position on the dock. I gathered up the anti-tank grenades and put men in favorable positions to fire, as light tanks approached our position, but all tries were misses. Three enemy tanks were encircling our area pouring a cross-fire upon us with 37mm machine guns. We moved to new positions of cover when two more tanks were seen approaching, the five then maneuvering into position to open up fire through all openings which would surely have annihilated us. I knew something had gone wrong with the advance of the Combat Teams and the Commando Force. I knew in a few moments we should be under fire which could not be silenced, nor could we hope to hold out. Difficult as it was for me to make the decision, I ordered surrender rather than sustain additional casualties."

Any other decision by Col. Swenson would have resulted in useless loss of life with nothing gained by the additional sacrifice continued resistance would surely have entailed.

Senigalese troops commenced to strip our men of personal belongings, rings, watches and money but, upon vigorous protest interposed by Colonel Swenson, a French lieutenant ordered the articles returned. The troops were marched to military barracks in the city of Algiers, the officers being taken to the Admiralty office for identification and questioning. All wounded were evacuated and hospital-



This was a German Headquarters in the pass at Fondouk.



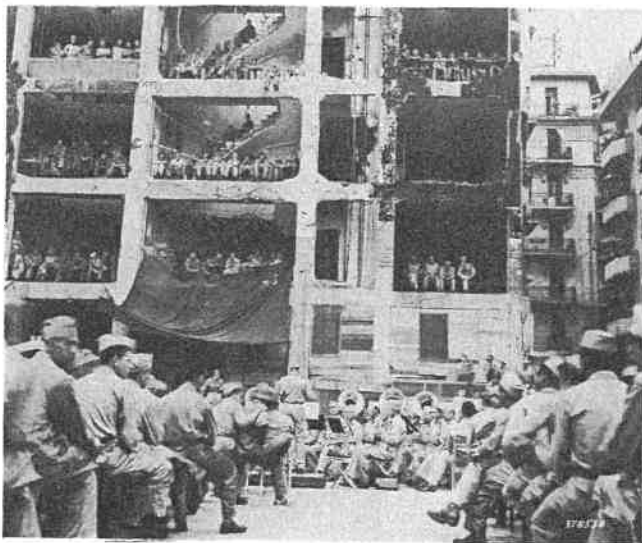
Admiral Darlan shaking hands with Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder, during ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in Algeria, North Africa. Behind Darlan, Sir Andrew Cunningham. Behind General Ryder, Brig. Gen. L. L. Lemnitzer. Right of Gen. Ryder, Brig. Gen. Scott and Air Vice Marshall Saunders. December 1, -942.

ized. After two uncertain days as well-treated prisoners of war, all men and officers were released on November 10th.

#### THE SURRENDER OF ALGIERS

The 168th Combat Team having taken Sidi Feruch, General Ryder and his Staff went ashore at 1430 hours in the afternoon of November 8th, quickly locating the command post of Brigadier General Ray C. Porter. Late that afternoon, the 175th Field Artillery trained its batteries upon fortified positions in the city of Algiers. Word passed back to the Command Post, that the French were seeking an Armistice. The bombing of the city and shells from our artillery and from our ships off the harbor, doubtless influenced the French in their wise move for a cease fire order and a request for negotiations.

At that juncture, the mysterious Robert Murphy, President Roosevelt's personal envoy, arrived upon



G.I.'s being entertained at Algiers, North Africa. July 25, 1943.

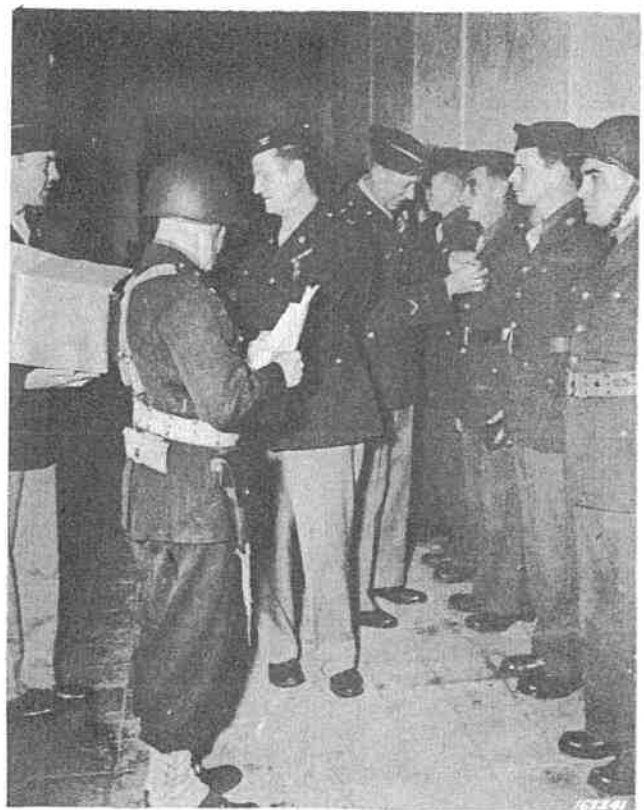


The Tomb of the Unknown soldier being decorated in Algeria, North Africa. December 2, 1942.

the scene. Thoroughly familiar with North Africa, he had been working with the French underground movement, his negotiations making possible the spectacular landing of Lt. General Mark W. Clark who, though he lost his trousers and fifteen thousand dollars in a hair-breadth escape to waiting submarine, had, nevertheless, achieved a diplomatic victory in winning over the anti-Vichy French to the cause of the Allies.

The French, adept as they are in the game of cloak and dagger, had doubtless had Mr. Murphy under constant surveillance, for they promptly placed him under arrest with the first news of the attack on North Africa. With negotiations for an Armistice in the making, the French released Mr. Murphy permitting him to participate on terms for the pending truce.

In response to the French proffer, General Ryder accompanied by his aide, Major William Prout and by Mr. Murphy, John Knox and Colonel Ray C.



Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder, 34th Division, awarding the Silver Star Medal to Pfc. Charles H. Sterner, Company K., 168th Infantry Division, Wilton, Iowa, for gallantry in action rendered during assault on Algiers, North Africa. December 26, 1942.

Fountain (now Major General in command of the re-constituted 34th Infantry Division), proceeded to Fort L'Empereur, located on a high slope overlooking the city of Algiers, there to confer with the French High Command on terms of settlement.

General Ryder, Mr. Murphy and Colonel Fountain were escorted by the French into a great conference room of the Fort, an imposing room filled with trophies of the hunt and the battlefield. Here, they were greeted by General Juin and his Aides. General Juin was the Commanding General of the French Army for all of North Africa, one of the most important French figures on the scene. Immediately, he launched into a plea for the cessation of hostilities and negotiations for terms of an Armistice. Mr. Murphy, who spoke fluent French, served as the American spokesman for the group, while Colonel Fountain acted as Secretary. General Juin was informed that the Americans, while unable to agree to final terms for an armistice would, nevertheless, agree to cease firing provided the French Army, Navy and Air Force would do likewise. While the negotiations were proceeding, three terrific explosions took place nearby which later proved to be shells thrown into the city by the British Fleet. The firing was timely and had a marked effect upon General Juin who agreed immediately to an armistice for Algiers and vicinity. This was extended to include troops in Algeria. Agreement was reached for American troops to occupy the city immediately. Anything further was to come from Darlan.

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General Ryder and his group then returned to the command post of the 168th Combat Team where they informed Colonel O'Daniel of the agreement to cease firing pending negotiations. This done, the American emissaries left for the appointed conference with Admiral Darlan which was held at the Hotel St. George, a beautiful structure high on the hills of Algiers, and which was later to constitute General Eisenhower's Headquarters. General Juin ushered the three American representatives into the presence of Admiral Darlan and his staff of some fourteen French Army and Navy officers. Again, Mr. Murphy acted as spokesman for the American emissaries, Colonel Fountain resuming his role as Secretary. The negotiations resulted in an impasse for the reason that final approval of any armistice agreement by the Americans required the approval of General Eisenhower, then in Gibraltar. Moreover, Admiral Darlan made it plain that the terms, insofar as the French were concerned, called for final approval of the Vichy Government in France. Darlan did finally agree to permit the Allied Naval Force to move into the harbor of Algiers although at that very moment our troops were entering the city itself. Further, Darlan stated he could make no commitment with reference to the occupation of Tunisia by the Allied Force. Later we were to learn that the Vichy Government had in the meantime, authorized the Germans to enter Tunisia, that most easterly of the French North African possessions and which was of the utmost vital importance in the campaign plans of the Allies.

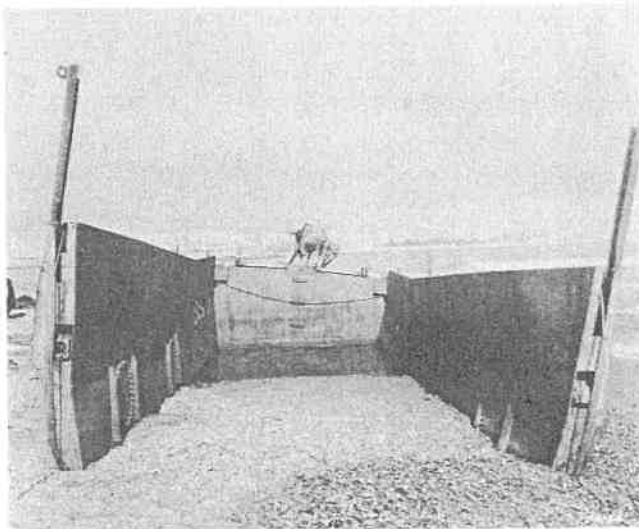
The conference broke up with an agreement to resume again the following day at 1100 hours, November 9th. Because of delay in obtaining directions from General Eisenhower's Headquarters, the American negotiators arrived late at the appointed

meeting only to find that Darlan, in a fit of impatience, had left for the day.

News finally came from Gibraltar that General Mark W. Clark was arriving on the scene as special emissary for General Eisenhower. He was met at the Maison Blanche airfield by Colonel Fountain who escorted him to Mr. Murphy. It was General Clark and Mr. Murphy who concluded the agreement of surrender with Darlan. Our troops were already in occupation of the city.

By now, Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers were in the possession of the British and the Americans. The diplomatic phases of dealing with the French in North Africa were highly sensitive. Because Darlan's influence prevailed over the entire North African area, military expediency necessitated negotiating with him. Following the signing of the armistice at Algiers, the Admiral broadcast an order calling upon all French Forces in North Africa to cease resistance.

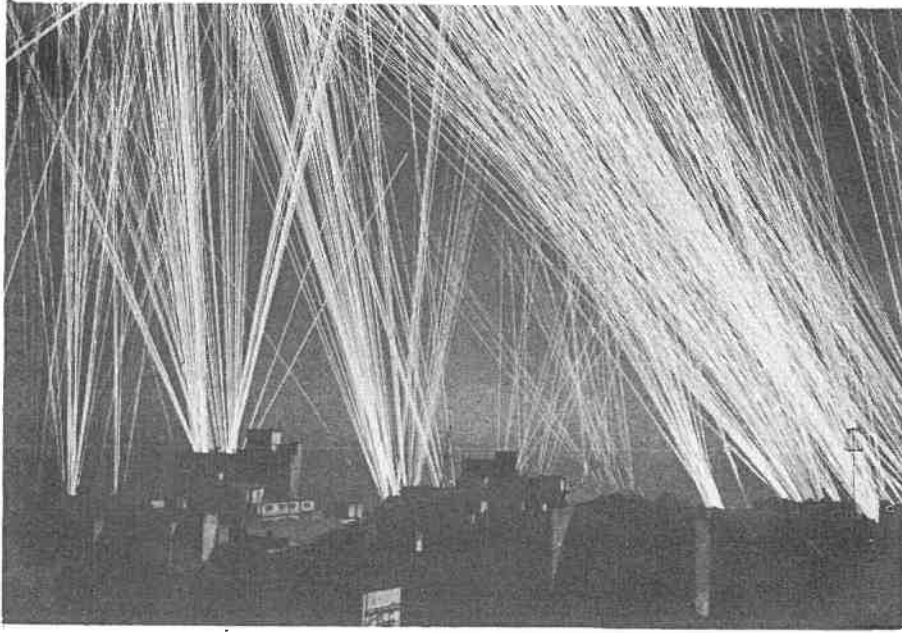
It must be remembered that the Allied Forces were insufficient to occupy and control this vast area extending as it did, for two thousand miles across the Africo-Mediterranean front. While much ground work had been done by Robert Murphy and his associates and General Clark, yet it soon became apparent that not all of the French and Arabs were too friendly to the Americans and British. In the landing operations, the command was placed in the Americans, it being believed that America, as the traditional friend of France, would be received with warmer cordiality than the British who had so recently destroyed the French Fleet in the harbor of Oran. Despite this, relations with the French remained uncertain and proved a great handicap throughout much of the Tunisian Campaign which was to follow



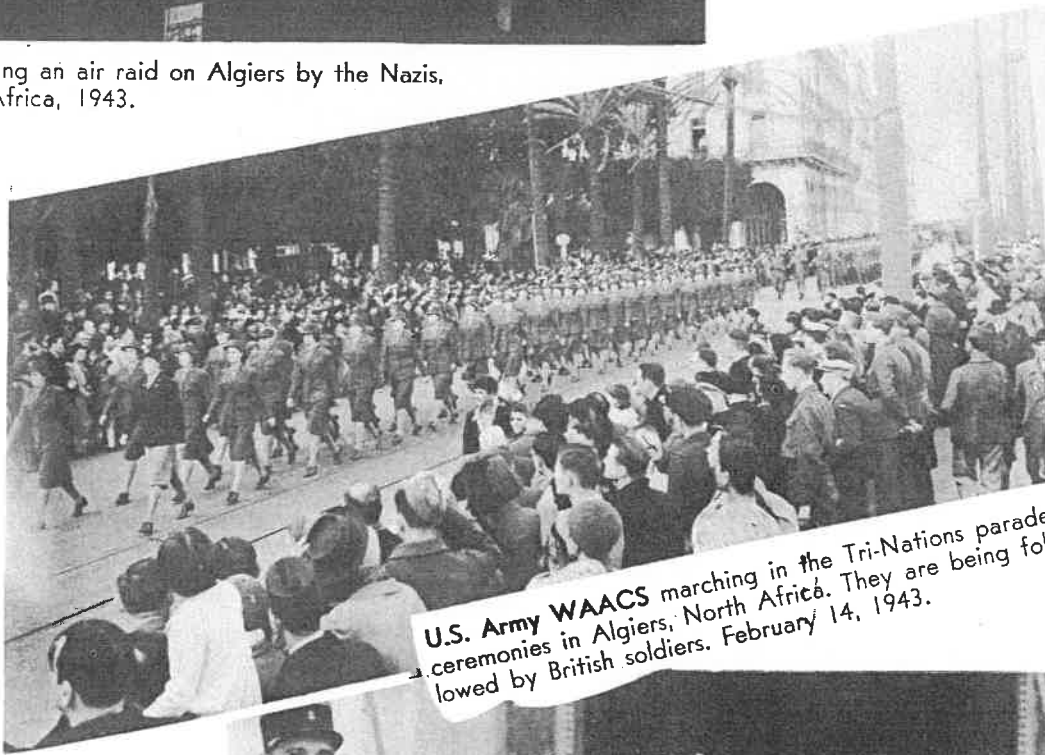
A Landing barge on the beach between Algiers and Maison Caree, North Africa. Algiers, North Africa. February 15, 1943



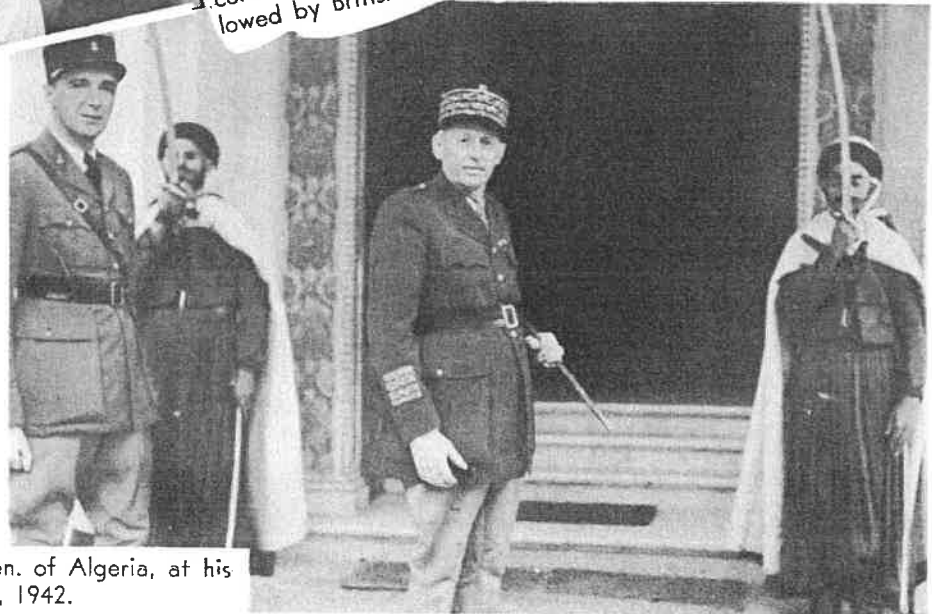
General Dwight D. Eisenhower (Left) and General Giraud saluting as the Spahis pass in review, prior to General Giraud's presenting General Eisenhower with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, Algeria, North Africa. May 29, 1943.



Ack-Ack fire during an air raid on Algiers by the Nazis, Algeria, North Africa, 1943.



U.S. Army WAACS marching in the Tri-Nations parade ceremonies in Algiers, North Africa. They are being followed by British soldiers. February 14, 1943.



Governor General Chatel, Gov. Gen. of Algeria, at his Palace in North Africa. December 5, 1942.

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# Chapter XI

## The Tunisian Campaign

### THE RACE FOR TUNISIA

The race for Tunisia was on. Lt. General Kenneth Anderson, Commander of the British First Army, arriving from Gibraltar, assumed command of all land forces including the British, Americans and French. The race towards the east was intensified. It was a race directed against an enemy now pouring into Tunisia by the thousands, by water and air, to hold the bridgehead and to save Rommel who was fleeing westward across the Libyan deserts. Northern Tunisia is a country of high mountains with narrow plains between the ranges affording very little scope for armored action. To the south lay enormous salt-water areas and sheer desert. Roads to the scene of the impending conflict were narrow, twisting and altogether inadequate. The race too, was against early expected, heavy winter rains which would soon turn the area into a veritable sea of mud, presenting almost insurmountable obstacles to movement of troops and supplies.

As early as November 15th, 1942 the gallant 175th Field Artillery Battalion was detached from the 168th and left Algiers for Tunisia. This Battalion, under the brilliant leadership of Lt. Colonel Joseph E. Kelly who had on his Staff, Lt. Col. Edwin R. Bo-

day, later to take Command of the 151st Field Artillery, and Major Arthur J. Peterson, Battalion Executive, was to see more days of combat throughout the War than any other unit of the Division.

Allied Headquarters were set up at the Hotel St. George in Algiers, with General Dwight D. Eisenhower in chief command of the Mediterranean Theatre. General Ryder moved to Oran to await the coming of the balance of the Division and to lay plans for the all-out campaign for Tunisia.

In early December, 1942, the remaining Division troops in Ireland crossed the rough Irish Channel, moving into a staging area in the vicinity of Liverpool. Headquarters were established at "Marbury Hall" near Chester, a magnificent estate which had reputedly served as the home of the forebears of the famous theatrical Barrymore family. Transport and supply ships rendezvoused in the Mersey River, were boarded by the troops on December 22nd.

On Christmas morning, 1942, the convoy weighed anchor in a heavy fog which concealed most of Liverpool and Birkenhead as the ships passed out to sea. After eight days, but without event, the strongly escorted convoy approached the Straits of Gibralt-



Lt. Col. Donald L. McGregor, Division Special Services Officer.



Major William P. Terry, Medical Officer

tar New Year's night. It was an unforgettable night, a black night with stars by the countless myriads hanging low in the canopied sky. The Rock of Gibraltar was there but its shadowy form only faintly visible, so black was the night. To the utter alarm, amazement and joy of the troops, the flotilla passed by the brilliantly illuminated City of Tangiers on the coastline of Spanish Morocco. To troops who had lived for one long year in the British black-out, the scene was both alarming and awe-inspiring.

Morning dawned, revealing the deep blue of the Mediterranean Sea. A beautiful panorama of African coastline lay to the southward, a rugged coastline rising sheer from the water-line, with the early morning sun casting its shimmering rays on ranges of snow-capped Atlas Mountains, high in the distance. That day, the convoy skirted the coast, about mid-day completely reversing its course in a westerly direction for some fifty miles. Either the convoy was off schedule or had been warned of lurking enemy. The troops never learned the real reason for this strange occurrence.

The night of January 2nd, 1943 will live long in the memories of the 4200 men and crew aboard the "Empress of Australia". It happened during the evening dinner hour, some thirty miles west of Oran when the ship suddenly and without warning, sustained a terrific impact to her prow and to starboard. Immediately, the call sounded out over the speaker system ordering the crew to stations and all others to quarters. It was a tense, exciting moment. Everyone suspected a torpedo, but the "Empress" had been hit squarely by one of our own ships from a separate convoy under orders to proceed to Algiers. The night was black; someone had blundered on signals and, in the confusion, the friendly ship ploughed head on into the gigantic troop carrier. The "Empress" floundered, water rushed into the lower compartments, engines came to a standstill, all lights went out and the proud ship drifted and listed helplessly, a rising wind adding to its plight.

The two convoys passed on leaving only one light destroyer to guard the unfortunate derelict. Help came from Oran, tug boats which pulled and pushed



Brigadier General Benjamin F. Caffey, Assistant Division Commander, 34th Infantry Division, throughout the North African Campaign and the forepart of the Italian Campaign. Picture taken at Tkemcen, Algeria, North Africa, January 1943.

the massive structure to the outer walls of the harbor at Mers El Kebir, and when, on the afternoon of that day, the "Empress" finally docked alongside the quay in the harbor of Mers El Kebir, she listed at the precarious angle of thirty degrees. An inspection of the ship revealed that a gap had been torn in her side running from below the water line up through five decks, wide enough in places to permit of a jeep passing through with ease.



Arab Market scene, Kahlat Gjerde, Tunisia.

# ORAN

With full packs, officers and men from all troop ships left the dock of Mers El Kebir marching some five miles into the city of Oran. Here is a city of surprisingly modern appearance overlooking, in a semi-circle, the harbor, then occupied by a few American Liberty ships. One thing above all else characterizes this city; it's a terraced city of terra cotta colors of various hues of brown and tan, with red tiled roofs, modernistic apartments and homes of daring design, beautiful in the distance but with beauty that fades with proximity. Here is a city touched with the Orient. About the docks, a motley lot of turbaned Arabs, some sleeping in the sun, curled up in tortuous positions; others awaiting their shifts as stevedores, many of them carrying a hard, mishapen loaf of coarse bread under their arms, their only food.

The uptown district of Oran is modern in appearance with a kaleidoscopic, milling mass of mixed population; Arabs, French, pseudo-French, Berbers, Spaniards and cross-breeds of all of them, with a sprinkling of refugees and Jews. Here we saw uniforms of French Colonials, British, and Americans pushing their way through the throng which everywhere over-flowed into the streets, impeding the horse and donkey-drawn traffic and the thundering army transports.

Oran must be the Singapore of the Mediterranean, for more than any other city, this is the cross-road between the Occident and the Orient of the Mediterranean with a heterogenous population that lends this port of call a cosmopolitan and colorful atmosphere. Here lives the subjugated Arab for the most part in dirt, filth and poverty, and in noticeable and significant juxtaposition with the French who control the resources of the land.

General Ryder and Lt. Col. Charles Everest met the troops as they disembarked at Mers El Kebir, the General again assuming command of the Division. That night, the Division bivouaced some eighteen miles west of Oran at the foot of Djebel Kahr or Monte de Lion, as it is called by the French, a huge high rock standing above and habitually piling up clouds for perpetual winter season rains. It rained often at Djebel Kahr when all else about was flooded with sunlight. The French name for the mountain serves to remind that this area was once inhabited by the king of beasts, for it was here that Caligula, Nero and other sporting Emperors of Rome procured lions for entertainment at the expense of slaves, gladiators and unfortunate Christians. The first night at Djebel Kahr, near the filthy French Arab village of Asse Ben Okba, was spent in wet and cold without bed rolls.



Reading from left to right: Major General Charles W. Ryder, Brigadier General Benjamin F. Caffey, Colonel Norman E. Hendrickson and Colonel Ray C. Fountain. Tiemcin, Algiers, January, 1942.



Major General Charles W. Ryder, Commanding General 34th Infantry Division from May 6, 1942 to July 21, 1944, since which latter date he has been in command of IX Corps in the Pacific. The story of "Doc" Ryder with the 34th is recited in these pages.

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## TLEMCCEN

On the 9th of January, the entire Division moved to Western Algeria, Headquarters being set up at Tlemcen, an ancient seat of Western Roman power, successively ruled by the Turks, Spanish and the French. In many respects, Tlemcen is one of the most fascinating cities in Northern Algeria; its population, an ethnological mixture of Moor and Arab; its architectural features consisting of well preserved ancient Roman walls; its buildings, Moorish but with a touch of the modern, contributed by the French. In Tlemcen, as in all cities of Algeria, the existence of a substantial number of Jews was noted, many of them refugees from other lands, but many also, unfortunate Jewish Nationals of Algeria to whom the French had denied the right to engage in commerce and business and against the children of whom, the Vichy Government had cruelly closed the doors of all public schools. While there was no evidence of concentration camps, the lives of the Jews in Algeria were filled with fear and desperate desolation.

The Headquarters' officer personnel were quartered in the Trans Atlantique, a rambling, multi-levelled, beautiful tourist hotel in a setting of palms and ewe trees. The Division working Headquarters

were located in the Caserne Bedeau, a French military barracks, while Division units were dispersed by regiments and battalions in surrounding villages or bivouaced in the hills.

For almost one month, the Division engaged in intensive training and maneuvers. Meanwhile the 168th Infantry Regiment and the 175th Field Artillery had already been committed to combat duties in Tunisia. The Second Battalion of the 133rd Infantry Regiment, which had been separated from the Division in the British Isles, was assigned to military police duty at Algiers. In addition to its duties of patrolling and guarding the city of Algiers, this organization functioned as a special guard for the Headquarters of General Eisenhower. Later, the Battalion was to rejoin the Regiment in Italy.

In the meantime, much apprehension persisting concerning a probable enemy invasion through Spain and Spanish Morocco, an anti-tank unit of the 135th Infantry Regiment was sent to guard the borderland between the French and Spanish Moroccos. The invasion never materialized, probably for want of Franco's permission to allow the Germans passage through Spain.

## THE 34TH MOVES TO THE FRONT



A Bedoin scout of the desert, Tunisia.

Days of hard training in the vicinity of Tlemcen came to an abrupt close. The main part of the Division was now to join the 175th Field Artillery and the 168th Infantry in the battle for Tunisia. The troops moved out in three serials between the 1st and 8th days of February, 1943. It must have been the longest combat truck movement in history for from Tlemcen to the scene of battle was a distance of nine hundred miles, each serial consuming six days in transition.

The three convoys bivouaced on their first nights out at Sidi Bel Abbes. Here, for over a hundred years, has been the home of the French Foreign Legion where men from all walks of life, from all nations, yes, from the levels of all social strata of all nations, have sought the privilege of serving in the ranks of the most rugged, most intrepid, the most reckless and dare-devil coterie of soldiery which ever served a cause, real or imaginary. And, this Legion had been as ready to fight against us as with us. Indeed, units of the Legion met our troops at the landing at Oran. Their decision hung in the balance, but was weighed in our favor by the daring of our initial exploit and the subtle art of diplomacy.

Sidi Bel Abbes—a swashbuckling, swaggering, horse-meat eating, but cosmopolitan little city. The presence of American soldiers hardly occasioned as much as the raising of an eyebrow. And why should it? For a hundred years men of the Foreign Legion from all corners of the globe had made its streets brilliant with uniforms of flamboyant colors. And what a cross-section of human society there were and are: lawyers, artists, scientists, neer-dawells, scions of the wealthy, princes and lesser





Lt. Col. Charles W. Raymond, Commander of the 185th Field Artillery Battalion during Tunisian and part of Italian Campaign. He was succeeded by Lt. Col. Robert D. Offer.

rank in nobility, professional soldiers, fugitives from justice or injustice, men with a criminal past hiding themselves from a relentless and unforgiving world, victims of unrequited love and the inevitable man of adventure, "seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth".

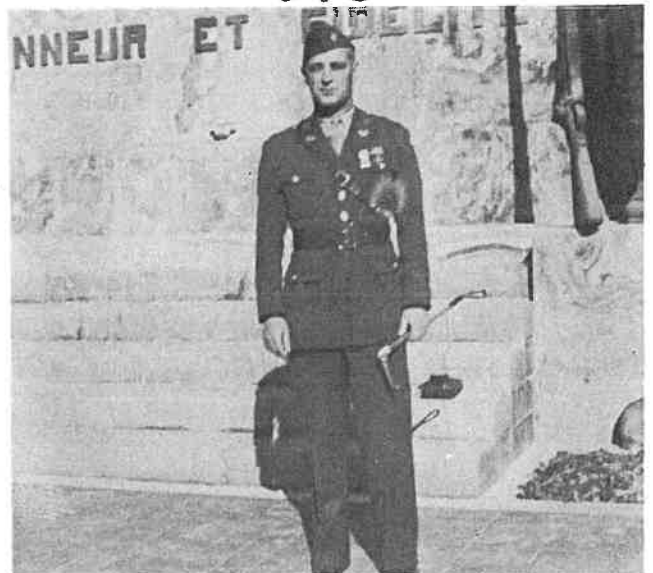
The convoys moved eastward, passing over the tortuous, twisting roads as they wound their way across the forbidding Atlas Mountains. The snow lay high in the mountains, the cold sweeping winds penetrating the bodies of men who slept on the ground or in trucks, the Division being inadequately equipped with tentage.

On this trip, men of the 34th were to learn of the misery of the Berber Arab of Eastern Algiers and Tunisia. Here they saw rugged mountains with Arab life clinging desperately to high, barren slopes. Standing at the desolate roadsides, men and children would look empty-eyed as the convoys passed, fervently appealing for food by repeatedly raising their hands to their mouths and simulating mastication. It was a heart-rending scene repeated over and over again as our trucks rolled over their precipitous course. One wretched soul left an indelible picture. He stood barefoot in the light snow which covered the mountain slope that morning, his feet red, raw and swollen. He was a thin but well-built, wirey man in his middle thirties. There he stood trembling in the sweeping winds huddled in his kaftan, his face buried deep in the peaked

hood, that crowns this garb so characteristic of the middle East and unchanged since the days of Christ. The poor wretch stepped up to the convoy with out-stretched hands. At that moment, the frigid wind whipped his garment open revealing his brown, naked, quivering body. This man symbolized more than words can tell, more than all else, the tragic plight of Joe Arab. And the troops wondered then and have wondered since, just what this man of misery was to glean from the peace, which we all were so glibly told, was to be won for all mankind.

Infantry and artillery units proceeded on to their front-line positions in the vicinity of Pichon and Fondouk, while the rear echelon occupied the small, key city of Le Kef, an ancient Roman out-post, which had later served as a fortress for the conquering Turks, the era of each being manifest in the mixed Romanesque and Moorish architecture. The Arabs predominated in this ancient citadel, and, characteristically, had made of it a veritable cess-pool of filth and depravity. The city sits on a mountain side overlooking two valleys for long distances to the east and south. The troops were quartered in an ancient fortress perched high on a stony hill rising abruptly to the north and overlooking the terraced city. They shared the area with unspeakably dirty French and Arab soldiers, a contingent of

The French XIXth Corps under which the Division was to serve during the initial phases of the campaign. The location of the old Fort, surrounded as it was by a huge ancient wall, provoked an ominous apprehension. It was a natural target for aircraft. This our boys were soon to learn. For eight consecutive days, sporadic attacks by German strafers and bombers kept the place in a constant turmoil, with heavy resulting casualties, particularly to the unfortunate French who were quartered in barracks at the foot of the hill. The rear echelon, was learning that modern warfare had broadened the front-line so as to include all elements of a combat Division.



Major John R. Derrick, Division Assistant Judge Advocate who for a while commanded the 125th Field Artillery in Ireland. Taken at Side Bec Abbes.



Town and Harbor of Algiers, North Africa, showing British warships at anchor. January 3, 1943.



Lt. Col. Harold L. Stipp, right; Sergeant Wm. Fent, center and Warrant Officer Earl Halvorson, left, in Tunisian "wade" during combat.

## EARLY PHASES OF THE TUNISIAN CAMPAIGN

General Anderson's plan had been to seize, as rapidly as possible, all ports to the east, including Bougie, Philippeville, Bone, and LaCalle, in the order mentioned. He was then to push forward with his forces as rapidly as possible by motor transport, landing craft, and troop carrying aircraft. The initial plan met with partial success. First the important port of Bone was captured by British parachutists, combining their attack with that of the Navy. On the 15th day of November, leading elements of the 36th Brigade (British) had occupied the more easterly port of Tabarca, a bare sixty miles from the coveted goal of Tunis. Simultaneously, the British 11th Brigade Group of the 78th Division struck south, occupying Souk El Arba and the Beja area.

On November 15th, the American 503rd Parachute Battalion, under the command of Colonel Edson D. Raff, dropped troops in the vicinity of Youks Les Bains without opposition and immediately assumed the offensive, two days later occupying Gafsa, at the edge of the desert. Here they engaged the Italians in scattered engagements. This Battalion also accomplished the important mission of contacting the French troops garrisoned at Tebessa from whom they received friendly cooperation.

In the meantime, the French XIXth Corps had contacted the enemy in the vicinity of Beja and Djebel Aboid, successfully driving off German patrols in the vicinity of Mateur, some twenty miles from Bizerte.

General von Arnim had, by this time, arrived in Tunisia, assuming command of all German and Italian forces which continued to pour in from the mainland of Italy and from the island of Sicily.

One factor of the greatest concern to the Allies was the uncertain attitude of the French. General Barre, as Commander of all French Forces in Tunisia, was actually negotiating for terms of an alliance with von Arnim. After several tense days, General Barre threw his lot with the Allies, persuaded, however, by a vigorous ultimatum and a few rounds of artillery fire from the guns of our own

175th Battalion.

At his juncture, General Eisenhower suggested that all troops, including the French be placed under the command of General Anderson. The suggestion met with the most bitter opposition, the French declaring that any such attempt could well cause an open rebellion. Over the protest of General Giraud and his staff, General Eisenhower, nevertheless, ordered General Anderson to assume sole, superior command.

The situation was growing hourly more ominous. Enemy strength was growing day by day. It was the Germans under General von Arnim who made the initial attack in force, directing their drive against the French, who, because of inadequate equipment were driven back to Oued Zarga, in a difficult retreat engagement which resulted in considerable casualties and loss of equipment. The enemy succeeded in occupying the important road-junction city of Mateur, a loss that was to prove costly in the months to come. The race for Tunisia was temporarily being won by the Axis forces. Because of our thin lines of communication and inferior air strength, the tactical situation demanded that the Allies withdraw to stronger positions. Accordingly on December 8th General Eisenhower approved General Anderson's plan of withdrawal, but it was ordered that the key position of Medjez El Bab, should be held at all cost.

## LOGISTIC PROBLEMS

It must be remembered that our naval forces had struck dangerously deep into the Mediterranean still under domination of the enemy, with the strong Italian Fleet an uncertain but potent factor. By now, we occupied important coastal cities which were under constant bombing by the superior German Air Force. Our lines of communication consisted of narrow roads and trails and a wholly inadequate single-tracked railway system, which, because of the exigencies of war, had been sorely depleted. Loco-

motives and rolling stock had become as run down as the Toonerville Trolley of the comic strips. The race for Tunisia became a veritable "logistic marathon", as it was frequently called at the Allied Headquarters in Algiers. In this logistic race, the Germans had the decided initial advantage, not only in preponderance of air power, but in well-developed air fields within easy striking distance and with sea lanes still open to almost uninterrupted passage.

Moreover, rains had now set in, making a quagmire of the entire front, often causing our small air force to become completely grounded and as often, rendering the movement of vehicles impossible. Indeed, in this early phase, it became necessary too often to abandon guns, tanks and other equipment, a most serious loss, for the problem of replacement presented, for the time being, an almost insurmountable obstacle. These were the factors that determined the temporary abandonment of the drive into Tunisia. But never was the plan to capture Tunisia abandoned, though the problem now involved the certainty of a bitter fight to achieve that coveted goal.

It is not too much to say that logistics constituted the most important factor in prosecuting the war in North Africa. This is not to minimize the bloody contributions made by the men at the fighting front; it is merely to point out that those heroic ground troops would have been wholly ineffectual once the streams of traffic bearing ammunition, food, and supplies should fail to flow.

Officers of the 34th Division played an important part in this logistic campaign for Tunisia. Colonel Harlan D. Bynell had been sent by General Ryder to London where he reported to General Eisenhower who, dramatically uncovered a map and informed the Colonel that he was to be assigned to an Allied group planning the invasion of North Africa. In the meantime, Colonel Douglas Lawley, Colonel Carley Marshall and Colonel Walter W. Wendt were also assigned to like duties for the part the Division was to play in this daring military undertaking.

In his records, Colonel Bynell states that the problems in Tunisia, as in all wars, were 80% logistic in nature. General Eisenhower's problem, in those early days, he states, "was not so much strategy of tactics as it was the strategy of supply". He has given us a graphic picture of this tremendous problem: "There was but a single railroad line running from Oran through Algiers to Constantine, a railroad with capacity of approximately only 2200 tons per day, yet, the amount of tonnage which we were required to transport to the front daily, to maintain this force, was some 26,000".

Supplies of all kinds were moved up, not only by truck and rail but by air. The C-47's, under the Army Transport Command, played an early and heroic part in the solution of this enormous problem. Not only did they transport general supplies and men but they carried the vital item of petrol to serve the thousands of vehicles and the hungry demands of our Air Force, then slowly coming into being.

On the important matter of rail transportation in the Tunisian Campaign, the name of General Carl R. Gray, Jr., railroad official from St. Paul, transcends all others. This genius, revolutionized the rail systems of the French, almost immediately multiplying by many times, the tonnage being carried by these totally inadequate transports. In the field of logistics, it is not too much to say, that General Gray, contributed more to the solution of this vexing problem in Tunisia than any single person. General Gray was subsequently to re-organize and operate the railroads of Italy and of all European countries in which American forces were to see combat. His contribution is one of the great single achievements in the war.

Throughout the Tunisian Campaign, the soldiers received liberal supplies of P.X. rations. Careful planning by Major (now Lt. Col.) Beryl Averill insured weekly distribution of candy, cigarettes and toilet articles. Before departing from England, Major Averill had wisely collected vast supplies realizing that, once in North Africa, P.X. rations might not enjoy priority in shipment.

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## STUKA LANE

This was the situation when the balance of the 34th was thrown into line in the vicinity of Maktar and Pichon. Life at the front immediately became one of continuous hazard. The Germans completely dominated the air, their Stukas continually raking the roads in surprise attacks. So frequently did these raids occur, and so unfamiliar with the types of aeroplane were our troops, that the appearance of any plane caused men to scurry from vehicles and run to the fields, a cautious maneuver which saved many lives. "Stuka Lane" was the main road leading towards the battlefield. It was appropriately named. Often these demons of the air would swoop

low over hills and mountains to pounce upon convoys and troops with scarcely a moment's warning. Single vehicles too, were frequently the object of these sorties. This mastery of the air was to remain with the Germans for several months, but the tide was soon to turn.

During this interval, but before the arrival of the Division, General Ryder and his able and popular Aide, Major William W. Prout, visited the 168th Infantry and the 175th Field Artillery gaining firsthand impressions of the strategic problems which lay ahead.

# THE INITIAL MISSION OF II CORPS

On January 1, 1943, General Eisenhower ordered II Corps, commanded by Major General (now Lt. General) Lloyd R. Fredendall to the Tunisian front. In addition, the French Constantine Division and the British Paratroop Brigade, were placed under General Fredendall's command. His orders were to prepare plans for concentration of his forces in the vicinity of Tebessa-Kasserine with the primary mission of protecting the right flank and, with the ultimate mission of launching an offensive against the enemy's lines of communication.

With the arrival of our Division, II Corps consisted of the following elements:

Corps Headquarters and Corps troops; 1st Infantry Division; 1st Armored Division; 34th Infantry Division and attached units of artillery, ack-ack and anti-tank.

Roughly, the American forces constituted about one-seventh of the entire Allied Forces in the Tunisian Campaign.

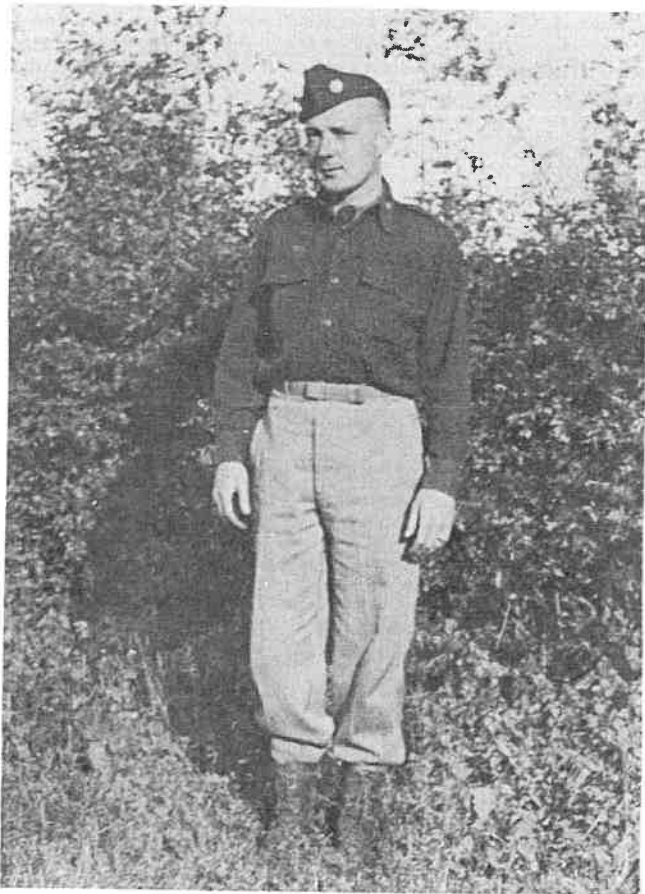
In an effort to thwart a merger of Rommel's Afrika Korps with von Arnim to the north, the "Sfax Project" came into being. General Eisenhower sent General Mark Wayne Clark to study the situation ordering him to place the 1st Armored Division and such infantry troops as could be spared, to stop the advance of Rommel and to seize any opportunity to strike back in force. The ultimate objective, of course, was to drive towards and capture the important seaport of Sfax and to cut off Rommel. The Allied line now ran roughly from Tabarca on the North coast, southward through Medjez el Bab, Baja, Maktar, Faid Pass and the southern anchor at Gafsa.

## EARLY CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY

The combat story of Tunisia must necessarily, be confined quite largely to those engagements in which units of the Division participated, with only an occasional glimpse at the larger picture.

The story starts with the daring exploits of the

168th Commandos, the 168th Infantry Regiment and the 175th Field Artillery, commencing in the middle of November, 1942 and until the arrival of the Division at the Tunisian Front in early February, 1943.



Lt. Col. Mark T. Martin, Jr. who commanded the Commandos and later served as Division G-3.

## THE COMMANDOS

One of the daring exploits of the War was the advanced raid of the Commandos under the leadership of that brilliant young officer, Captain Mark Martin (now Colonel). In the latter days of November, 1942, this hard trained, seasoned group struck boldly across Tunisia towards Bizerte almost reaching the gates of that ancient city. Within actual sight of Bizerte, the Germans launched an attack against the hill positions of the Commandos. In full "Class A" uniforms, singing as they advanced, the Germans, in almost closed formation, moved up the hill towards the small American Force. The attack was repelled with tremendous losses to the Germans but the overwhelming mass of the enemy soon caused the Commandos to retreat back to the American-British lines.

Mark Martin was a journalist by profession. He had no military background but he possessed the courage and those elements of leadership which were to make of him one of the outstanding men of the Division. Later when the Commandos rejoined the Division, Mark Martin rose rapidly, finally serving as Division G-3 in the latter phases of the war.

# THE FIRST BATTLE OF MEDJEZ EL BAB

On the 16th of November, the 175th Field Artillery Battalion was ordered to move out from Algiers to Medjez el Bab, a three day movement of trucks and guns over trails which wound through rugged country. Arriving at Souk-Ahras, Colonel Joseph E. Kelly reported in to Colonel Hull, Commander of a British Combat Unit known as "Blade Force." The Battalion was ordered to proceed to Le Kef and then move to Medjez el Bab with the mission of holding the important bridge at that place. Colonel Kelly was informed that French forces were out in front of Medjez el Bab and that, the decision of the French Army of Tunisia, to join the Germans or the Allies, was hanging in the balance.

The Battalion arrived in the vicinity of Medjez el Bab at about 2300 hours on the 18th of November. News arrived that the Germans had issued an ultimatum ordering the French to evacuate Tunisia or suffer the consequences. This the French declined to do, hoping thus to delay until the arrival of strong Allied support. By liaison, the Allies also were negotiating with the French, to whom again

an ultimatum had been issued by the enemy. Finally, on the morning of the 19th, the French notified the Germans that their decision had been made to join the British and Americans. With this decision, the enemy launched attacks by air and long-ranged artillery fire. The first battle for Medjez el Bab was on.

To Battery "B" of the 175th, goes the honor of firing the first artillery rounds of the Tunisian Campaign. The first shell fired on the enemy has been mounted and is now preserved in the Minneapolis Armory as a memento of this historic occasion.

The drive of the enemy intensified. The French troops, running out of ammunition and maintaining heavy losses from the air and land attacks, the position of the Allied Forces soon became untenable. Expected British Infantry reinforcements failing to arrive, withdrawal was ordered, the Battalion's mission being to mask the retreat with harrassing fire. The withdrawal was successful though the enemy inflicted serious losses.

# THE SECOND BATTLE OF MEDJEZ EL BAB

Intermittent engagements occurred between the First and Second Battles of Medjez el Bab. Orders were now issued for a combined attack and to capture Medjez el Bab. The 175th swung into position adjusting its fire on enemy tanks and gun positions, with marked effect. On the 24th and 25th of November, the infantry launched the main attack against the town which lay on the east slope of the hill and along the river spanned by the important, strategic bridge. The enemy put up a stubborn resistance but by afternoon of the 25th withdrew, the French and British infantry taking possession of Medjez el Bab.

Later, the 175th participated in the battle of

Bordjtoum, in the defense of the Beja sector and saw further action at Sidi Nair.

With these experiences behind it, the 175th Battalion had now become a seasoned artillery unit. Lt. Colonel Kelly, his staff and his men had definitely proven themselves, as was to be demonstrated over and over again, throughout the long campaigns ahead. This Battalion Commander, a small, wiry man, who in his younger days had been a fly-weight fighter of no mean ability, was a dynamic combat leader. Through his friendly manner and effective example, Colonel Kelly won the respect and full-hearted support of all under his command.



Depicting the poverty of the derelict Arab of the Casbah at Algiers, North Africa.



A typical tandem five-mile team, characteristic of road traffic in western Algiers near the Moroccan border. January, 1943.

# THE 168TH INFANTRY REGIMENT

Guard duties in the vicinity of Algiers having been completed, the 1st Battalion of the 168th Infantry was ordered to Constantine on the 11th of January, 1943, there to guard lines of communica-

tions. On the 29th of January, the balance of the Regiment was ordered to the Gafsa-Sbeitla area where they passed under the command of the First Armored Division.

## THE BATTLE OF SENED STATION

In the latter days of January, 1943, Colonel Thomas D. Drake, was placed in command of the 168th Infantry Regiment. A singular character, Colonel Drake, short, stocky and of smart military bearing, epitomized combat leadership. Externally, he presented a picture of complete calm and composure; but internally, this man burned with a fighting zeal which he effectively imparted to his men. On January 31st, he reported at the Headquarters of Major General Fredendall, immediately being assigned to front-line battle duty.

The 168th and the 175th Field Artillery, as a Combat Team, were placed under the command of the First Armored Division, a fact of considerable significance, because from that date forward until the conclusion of the war, the First Armored Division and the 34th Infantry Division were to remain almost constant combat companions. The feeling of comradeship, between those two great fighting Divisions, is such as to make them one in a sentiment that derives from sharing a common experience, in bloody and relentless combat, though at Sened Station and Kasserine, the 168th felt that the 1st Armored had managed badly and had even abandoned the Red Bull.

Colonel Drake was ordered to attack Sened Station and to capture Sened, a tiny, miserable huddle of nondescript buildings, a short distance from the forlorn station which served as a whistle-stop for an even more forlorn railroad. Assuming command in the dead of black night, Colonel Drake was ordered out to meet the advancing units of Rommel's Afrika Korps. The 175th Field Artillery Battalion, under Lt. Col. Joseph E. Kelly, was placed in support of the 168th.

The night of January 31st, 1943, was a night of terror, when troops were bombed and strafed by the all powerful German Air Force. But on the morning of February 1st, Colonel Drake ordered his troops to advance against the enemy, the advance being preceded by a heavy artillery barrage laid down by the guns of the 175th.

Progress was slow in the initial attack. Troops faltered under the withering fire of the enemy and the advance was halted. In the face of impending retreat, Colonel Drake dramatically, and with complete abandon for his personal safety, walked calmly before the halting troops in the direction of the enemy. This action, served to re-ignite the fighting spirit of the men, who rallied and drove forward. Here occurred one of the most dramatic phases in the battle history of the 34th. Spurred on by their leader, infantry-men sprang to the front,

literally hurling themselves at on-coming tanks with rifles and grenades. To the amazement of all, this sudden burst of fury, hopeless as it seemed, threw the enemy into uncertainty and confusion, causing him to close down his hatches and turn his tanks in retreat. In the meantime, Captain Edward Bird, (now Colonel) with Company "B", had encircled the town from the right. This proved to be the coup de grace, for, with this flank movement, the enemy withdrew from Sened Station. The 168th Infantry and the 175th Field Artillery had won a signal victory under most adverse conditions.

But there was no rest for the tired, battered troops. Orders came on the early morning of February 2nd to attack and seize the high ground overlooking the plains leading to Sfax. By 1400 hours on that day, the objective had been reached and, despite heavy bombing and strafing and action of enemy tanks and artillery, the position was maintained through the balance of February 2nd and February 3rd. Indeed, on the late afternoon of February 3rd, Brigadier General Ray C. Porter arrived on the scene, made inspection and gave his approval of the tactical situation.

It must be realized that by now, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 168th were thrust deep into enemy territory. To add to the plight of these forward elements, American bombers unfortunately unloaded their bombs upon rear elements of the 168th. This was the situation, when the re-inforced Germans struck back with heavy armored and infantry force which threatened our troops with encirclement, rendering our forward position no longer tenable. At 1700 hours on February 4th, orders for a withdrawal came over the field wires. Destroying all installations and excess materiel, the 168th and 175th successfully withdrew to the vicinity of Gafsa.

In this famous engagement, the First Battalion of the 168th Infantry Regiment had suffered 20% casualties including the serious wounding of its Commander, Lt. Col. John C. Petty. The 2nd Battalion, too, had suffered serious casualties. It should be remembered that the Regiment had been handicapped by the absence of its Third Battalion, then still in the vicinity of Algiers.

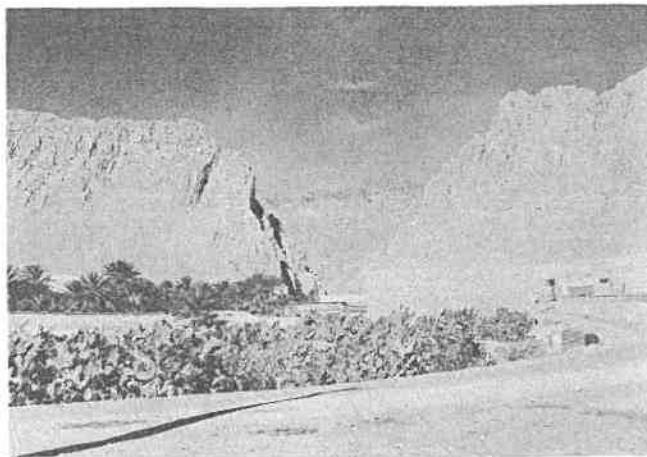
On February 7th, Colonel Drake was ordered to Sidi Bou Zid with the promise that the 175th Field Artillery would rejoin him as well as the Third Battalion of the 168th, which was reported to be moving forward. On arrival at Sidi Bou Zid on the 9th day of February, Colonel Drake caused reconnaissance to be made and effected deployment of his troops in position against the enemy.

# THE STORY OF KASSERINE PASS

One of the dramatic episodes of the North African Campaign was now to unfold—the famous Battle of Kasserine Pass. Thus far, little has been written about this important engagement. The key position in the defense against Rommel's Afrika Korps was to prove to be Faïd Pass, though the High Command appears to have anticipated that the initial enemy thrust would be made through the Kasserine Pass.

Following the capture of Sened Station and the gaining of the heights to the eastward, the troops, as we have seen, retreated to Gafsa. Here, Lt. Col. Joseph E. Kelly was transferred from the 175th Field Artillery and placed in complete command of the artillery defense of the Gafsa area, the 175th then passing to the command of Major (now Colonel) Edwin R. Bodey, who later was to command the 125th Field Artillery. The 168th reverted to the command of the 1st Armored Division.

In this historic engagement, which will grow in importance with the years, the 168th Infantry Regiment was deployed athwart Faïd Pass, a natural defile through which passed the important road leading westward from the eastern coastal port of Sfax. The 1st Battalion was held in Corps reserve in the vicinity of Fariana; the 2nd Battalion, less Company "E" and one platoon of Company "H", was held in the vicinity of Djebel Lessouda; while the 3rd Battalion was stationed in the vicinity of Djebel Ksaira, a mountain to the south. Colonel Drake established his headquarters in a small olive grove a mile and one-half east of Sidi Bou Zid with Djebel Garet el Hadid some four miles to the east which served as a favorable observation outpost. Under his immediate Headquarters Command were Service Company, Headquarters Company, Band, Medical Detachment, Collecting Company of the 109th Medics, a Platoon of Co. "C", 109th Engineers, an attached Tank Destroyer Unit of the 9th Division, an attached Cannon Company from the 39th Infantry and the 17th Field Artillery. On the 12th of February, Major General Ward of the 1st Armored



Road reconnaissance between Algiers and Biskra and from Biskra and Setif. Approaching El Kantara Pass on the Biskra-Constantine Highway, North Africa. December 12, 1942.

Division, placed Colonel Drake in command of the Infantry troops.

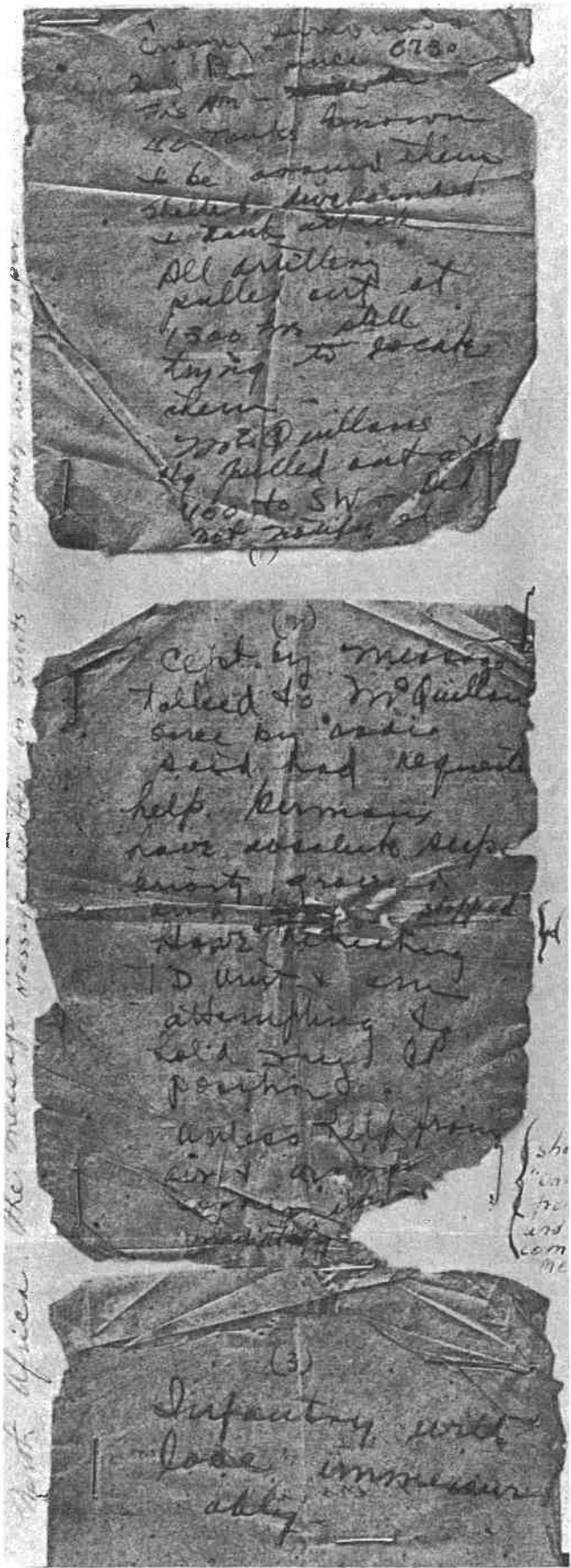
At this critical juncture, some 450 replacement troops arrived. As was the case, throughout much of the Tunisian Campaign, these replacements reported in overloaded with barracks bags, many without arms, without entrenchment tools, without bayonets, and with many among them who had never fired a rifle. Moreover, the group contained Medical Corps men, Artillery men, Tank Destroyer personnel, almost everything save the desperately needed Infantrymen. It was a most discouraging factor that occurred over and over again as replacements were sent into the Regiments and Battalions of the Division throughout the Tunisian Campaign. Weapons too, were now woefully lacking. Colonel Drake made insistent and repeated demands for bazookas, the most effective infantry weapon against armored vehicles and tanks. None of the men had been trained to the use of this weapon, and when finally bazookas arrived on the night of the 12th of February, it was too late to instruct men in their use.

On the 13th of February, General Eisenhower arrived on the scene, reviewed and seemingly approved the situation. Before departing, in a fitting ceremony, he decorated Colonel Drake with a well-earned Silver Star, for the Colonel's signal performance at Sened Station.

On Sunday morning of February 14th, the German Panzers attacked the position of the 2nd Battalion in the vicinity of Djebel Lessouda with two battalions of tanks, one from the north and one from the east, closing in with a pincer-like movement. Some eighty-three German tanks were observed as they closed in upon our position.

A small group of American tanks sallied forth to meet this gigantic German force in the early dawn of the 15th of February with inevitable serious losses resulting, including seven American tanks, a number of self-propelled anti-tank units, as well as other important installations. Infantrymen hurriedly dug in on the plains in the face of the thundering, advancing German tanks. None of these unfortunate heroes was ever heard from or about again, but observers witnessed enemy tanks ruthlessly ploughing their tracks over the crouching bodies of our men; men helpless against an armored enemy and with escape through the open field rendered impossible.

On the 14th of February, communications were constantly being interrupted. Colonel Drake was virtually cut off from the outside world. His last written message was dictated to Major Marvin E. Williams who reduced it to writing on rough, English toilet paper. This historical message tersely but dramatically told how the enemy had surrounded the 2nd Battalion with some forty tanks; that the beleaguered force was being severely shelled and dive-bombed and that tanks were moving in to pour their devastating fire on the isolated group. The message told how help had been urgently requested but that none had arrived. It contained a last appeal for support from the air, and for reinforcements of infantry and tanks. Major Williams carried that



Colonel Drake's final message carried out from the beleaguered 168th at Faid by Major Marvin Williams.

message back to General Ward in a wild, hazardous drive by "jeep" passing by German patrols on the way.

While the 2nd Battalion was now threatened with complete encirclement, enemy tanks came from behind Djebel Lessouda cutting off all road traffic to Sidi Bou Zid and placing Colonel Drake's troops and the 3rd Battalion in a most precarious position. The morale of the men grew low. Enemy troops and tanks moved in simultaneously towards Sidi Bou Zid from the southeast. Desperately, Colonel Drake called in vain for air bombardment. To the utter amazement and consternation of our men, armored artillery and the 17th Field Artillery commenced withdrawal, a withdrawal that developed into a partial rout. The last telephone communication to reach the beleaguered troops informed Colonel Drake that all support was being withdrawn but the same message ordered the 168th to stand fast.

In the face of these great odds, the indomitable Colonel ordered his men to attack and capture the high ground of Djebel Garet el Hadid about a mile to the front. With the pitifully few troops remaining, the heights were gained and held. Company "C" of the 109th Engineers hurriedly mined the roads and the fields between them and the enemy. Garet Hadid was quickly surrounded by the enemy who chose to besiege, rather than effect an immediate break-through. About 950 men were employed in the defense of Garet Hadid and of these some 300 were not armed.

The siege was translated into a series of attacks by the enemy through part of the 14th and throughout all of the 15th and 16th of February. By noon of the 16th, all guns of the 39th Cannon Company and of the 37th Artillery had been knocked out. Promised reinforcements never arrived, though elements of the 1st Armored Division made feeble and futile attempts to relieve the beleaguered force. Ammunition was asked for, air bombardment was requested, but neither arrived, nor were promised rations dropped from the air.

Hourly the situation grew more desperate; food and water were completely exhausted, ammunition almost gone, communications completely severed and now, the troops were faced with the stark realization, that all hope for rescue had passed beyond redemption. In the face of these odds, there was but one decision to make—an order of withdrawal. Colonel Drake ordered the 3rd Battalion to withdraw to the vicinity of Sbeitla, the designated rendezvous, his troops to follow. The tires of all vehicles were ordered slashed, magnetos and radio parts buried, all machine gun bolts removed and hidden. The choice of an escape route was left to the prayers of Chaplain Stephen W. Kane who, in full view of the enemy and with hands upraised in supplication, asked for the divine blessing of God upon the decision to be made. The route selected lay along the west side of Garet Hadid, thence southwest along the foot-hills until reaching the desert paths ahead.

Desperate troops without food or water for three days, marched all the night of the 16th covering a distance of some twenty-five miles. Sbeitla could not be reached before dawn and so, Colonel Drake set El Hamir, the only high ground between his position and Sbeitla as the next objective. But El Hamir was never reached. The armored garrison of El



Hamir had been withdrawn and the retreating forces were left to their inevitable fate.

Many heroic incidents occurred in the last effort of these men to escape the encircling Germans. The remnants were being cut up into small groups which either died or were forced to surrender. Finally, a German armored car with white flags floating, burst into the inner circle throwing the men off guard and permitting other armored and infantry troops to enter the area. Under pointed rifles, Colonel Drake and his remaining officers and men surrendered.

No more gallant fight, no more heroic and desperate attempt to hold a position and no grander last ditch defense has been recorded in the annals of American warfare.

Lt. Colonel Gerald Line was the sole person of Drake's immediate command to return to safety. His was a harrowing experience, living without food, without water, dodging enemy groups, concealing himself in cactus patches, and relying for directions on the uncertain Arabs, who had robbed him of his side-arms as he slept. Worn to utter exhaustion, Lt. Col. Line finally reached friendly troops with the story of the sad but inevitable fate of Drake's command.

The pictures of this engagement has never been completely made clear. In the short space allotted, it is impossible to do justice to the tactical situation and to the achievements of all the units of the 168th and those attached, nor to relate acts of heroism performed by the many. The most that can be done here, is to record a summary of the experiences of the three Battalions engaged in this fateful episode.

As we have seen, the 1st Battalion was in a reserve position at Farian. Major James J. Gillespie who had been wounded returned from the hospital on February 9th and assumed command of the Battalion relieving Captain Frank Conway. The Battalion immediately went into defensive position. On the twelfth of February, Lt. Col. John C. Petty died of wounds at the Field Hospital.

On the sixteenth of February, the Battalion received orders to withdraw to the vicinity of Tebessa. Withdrawal was accomplished over difficult terrain, Company "C" defending the retreat against advancing German Panzers. The Battalion arrived safely, deploying its line of defense generally along the Algerian-Tunisian border.

## THE 2ND BATTALION

The story of the 2nd Battalion is partly recited above. It remains only to mention a few phases of its experience. Throughout the engagement, it had functioned under Combat Command "A" of the 1st Armored Division. The order to withdraw reached the Battalion at dusk on Monday the fifteenth. The men passed on in two-file formation, passing directly through several German positions. They had been ordered not to open fire but if they encountered the enemy, they were ordered to disperse or to proceed individually or in small groups to the designated rendezvous. It was during this withdrawal that Chaplain Eugene L. Daniels, and an unnamed aid man, remained behind with two badly wounded German soldiers, an act of bravery and of

mercy such as exemplified the service of the Chaplains of the 34th Division throughout the entire war.

The column moved out, its progress being interrupted by several engagements during which the enemy poured in machinegun, rifle and mortar fire. In the confusion, the Battalion dispersed. On the morning of February 16th, the remnants of the Battalion reached the appointed rendezvous at Sbeitla. They arrived in three separate groups led, respectively, by Major Robert P. Moore, Captain Floyd E. Sparks and Captain Charles P. Apgar. Of the Battalion of some 800 men, only 432 reached the rendezvous, all in a high state of exhaustion, weak from lack of rest, food and water. Captain John D. Peterman and Major Marvin E. Williams soon arrived upon the scene with food and water, which was quickly consumed, the men immediately throwing themselves to the cold ground where they slept as only utterly exhausted men can sleep.

## THE 3RD BATTALION

The story of the 3rd Battalion is gathered chiefly from an account submitted by Lt. Harry P. Hoffman, Commanding Officer of Company "K." It will be recalled that the 3rd Battalion had been placed in the vicinity of Djebel Ksaira, a mountain, facing generally north in the shape of a horse-shoe. It was contemplated that the enemy would attack through Faïd Pass. The natural line of that attack would be around the left flank along the foot-hills of the mountains. Food and water were running low and on the 15th of February, the Battalion was subjected to heavy mortar, howitzer, and direct artillery fire. Orders came on the 16th to withdraw, the rendezvous being Djebel Hamir, the same objective which Colonel Drake and his troops were attempting to reach. The withdrawal took place on the night of the 16th under a full moon over-cast by light clouds. The line became broken and widely scattered. Lt. Hoffman went towards the enemy in an attempt to round up isolated groups and lost columns. Unable to locate any of the missing troops, Lt. Hoffman made his painful way back through enemy lines in the vicinity of Djebel Hamra. Enroute, he picked up mixed groups of soldiers from various units of the Regiment. Together they then proceeded on, by-passing Kasserine Pass. With compasses set in the direction of Sbeitla, they dodged their way through cactus-patches, over rough ground, along wadis and across open areas for four fearful days, reaching friendly lines on February 20th. Of the entire 3rd Battalion, only Lt. Hoffman and two infantrymen returned to safety.



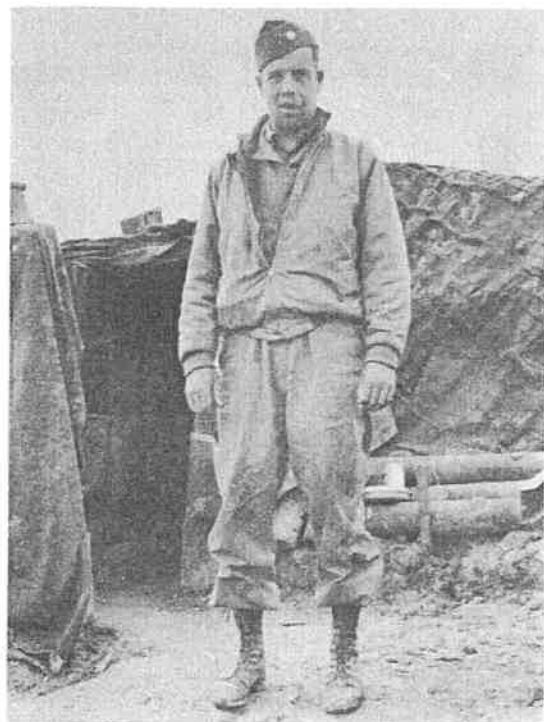
Lt. Col. William O. Darby of 1st Ranger Battalion, at rest after field chow. North Africa, December 12, 1942.

## THE 34TH DIVISION AND KASSERINE PASS

General Rommel, the Fox of the Desert, with his Afrika Korps and Panzer Division, had won a major victory. It was obvious now that he would continue his attack through the Kasserine Pass and would then, either swing northward to cut off the British 1st Army in the vicinity of Thala, or swing south to cut off the American II Corps.

By this time, in addition to the almost complete destruction of the 168th Regiment, the 1st Armored Division had suffered reversals, necessitating regrouping. It was Combat Command "B" of the 1st Armored Division, assisted, in no small part, by the defensive efforts of the 34th Division, that finally stopped the enemy in the vicinity of Thala.

The 133rd Regiment, (less the 2nd Battalion which was then in Algiers) under the command of Col. Ray C. Fountain, had been assigned the task of guarding the passes to Pichon and Fondouk; the 1st Battalion under Lt. Col. Loyd K. Shepherd being assigned the Fondouk position, and the 3rd Battalion, under the command of Lt. Col. Donald B. Johnson, being assigned the Pichon area. The immediate mission was to relieve the French troops, but before that could be accomplished, news of the break-through by Rommel at Faid Pass caused re-deployment of the Regiment. The 1st Battalion was rushed into defensive positions in the vicinity of Hadjeb el Aioun and immediately dug in to meet the forces of the enemy advancing from the direction of Sidi Bou Zid, which by this time had



Lt. Colonel A. T. Tracy, who commanded the 125th Field Artillery Battalion during the Tunisian Campaign.



# THE 109TH ENGINEER BATTALION

It was in this eventful Division withdrawal, that the famous 109th Engineers were to perform one of the most magnificent engineering accomplishments of the war. Arriving on the scene with his Battalion, Colonel Robert E. Coffey immediately ordered reconnaissance to determine the route over which a road for retreat should be constructed. Only one main route led into the Maktar-Pichon area which was entirely inadequate to accommodate the movement of the troops in the anticipated withdrawal. A new road was finally decided upon, leading from Sbiba to El Ala, a distance of 35 miles. The terrain was semi-desert, cut with many rugged wadis, rock-ridges, and sand dunes. Work commenced on the 14th of February, with an estimated seven days required for the construction. Company "A" started at El Ala, working west; Company "B" started at Sbiba and worked towards the east while Company "C" worked from the center in both directions.

On the night of February 16th, word had been received at Division Headquarters that the Germans were making a determined push through the Kasserine Pass and were striking at Kef El Amar and Sbeitla Valley. This necessitated completion of the road by 1200 hours on the 17th of February. With renewed and feverish energy, these Engineers set to work with their bull-dozers, explosives, trucks and hand tools. Wadis were crossed, rough ridges blasted, holes filled and the surface graded at unbelievable speed, and by 1200 hours on the 17th of February, the job was done, a herculean task completed in one-half of the estimated time.

The successful building of this road, achieved as it were in the nick of time, proved one of the principal factors, not only in the withdrawal of the 34th Infantry Division, but also in the retreat of the beleaguered French, who otherwise would assuredly have fallen captives to the Germans.



Lt. Col. Robert E. Coffey who commanded the 109th Engineers.



A few of the many German Panzer trucks that were knocked out by American artillery. El Guettar, Tunisia, April 11, 1943.

# THE 109TH QUARtermaster COMPANY

The 109th Quartermaster Company, which did such an outstanding job of logistic performance throughout the entire war, had located its dumps on the eastern side of Kef El Ahmar Pass and its vehicle pools on the western side. With the breakthrough of the Germans through Faid and into Kasserine Pass, the Quartermaster Company destroyed some 9,000 rations, Captain Robert F. Thorson super-

vising the job. He with some fifteen to twenty men, then worked their painful way back a distance of some thirty miles to Rohia. During the withdrawal of Division troops, the Quartermaster Company performed the excellent service in transporting men of the various units back to the Rohia-Sbiba-Sbeitla line.

## THE 109TH MEDICAL BATTALION

The 109th Medical Battalion arrived at the battle front, Company "B" moving into the vicinity of Pichon-Maktar on February 10th, Company "A" moving into the vicinity of Kef El Almar Pass on the 15th of February, and Headquarters and Company "D" moving into the same area later that same day. Company "B" immediately set to the task of evacuating casualties from the 135th Combat Team,

Company "A" and "D" performing the same service for the 133rd Combat Team. It will be recalled that Company "C" of the 109th Medical Battalion had been captured in the Faid Pass engagement. Later, the twenty lone survivors of the old company were to constitute the nucleus for a reconstructed Company "C."

## PRISONERS OF WAR

The story of what happened to the captured prisoners of the 168th can best be told in the account of Colonel Drake. He had been assured by the German Commander, that all American wounded would be properly attended and that our medical officers and aid men would be assigned to the task. But the assurance was promptly violated for, medical officers and aid men were immediately forced to move off with the marching columns. With true, characteristic Nazi methods, wounded and stragglers were bayoneted or shot to death. Arabs, who ran rife throughout the area, robbed our men of shoes, robbed them under the observation of the Germans; the Germans, themselves relieving the men of personal effects, such as watches, jewelry, rings, pocket books, pens and all valuables.

All day, on the 17th of February, the prisoners treked through the desert sands with no water or food to relieve men who had been without these necessities for three days. Officers who appealed to the Germans for food and water, were rebuffed with the answer that only sufficient food and water was available for their own troops.

At dawn on the 18th of February, the troops were packed into German trucks and carried to the city of Sfax where they were fed their first food in five days, the meal consisting of black bread and water. Officers and men were placed in wired compounds, flanked at the corners by observation towers from which machine guns peered down upon the miserable men of the 168th. Nights grow cold in the deserts of Tunisia and, with no shelter, these men were compelled to burrow into the sand to preserve their very existence.

The next move was to Sousse by box cars, designed for eight horses, but in which the Germans crowded from forty to sixty of our boys. From Sousse, they were moved by rail to Tunis in the same manner. From Tunis, they were transported by sea to Italy where they were thrown into compounds at Capua. Here they were huddled into a

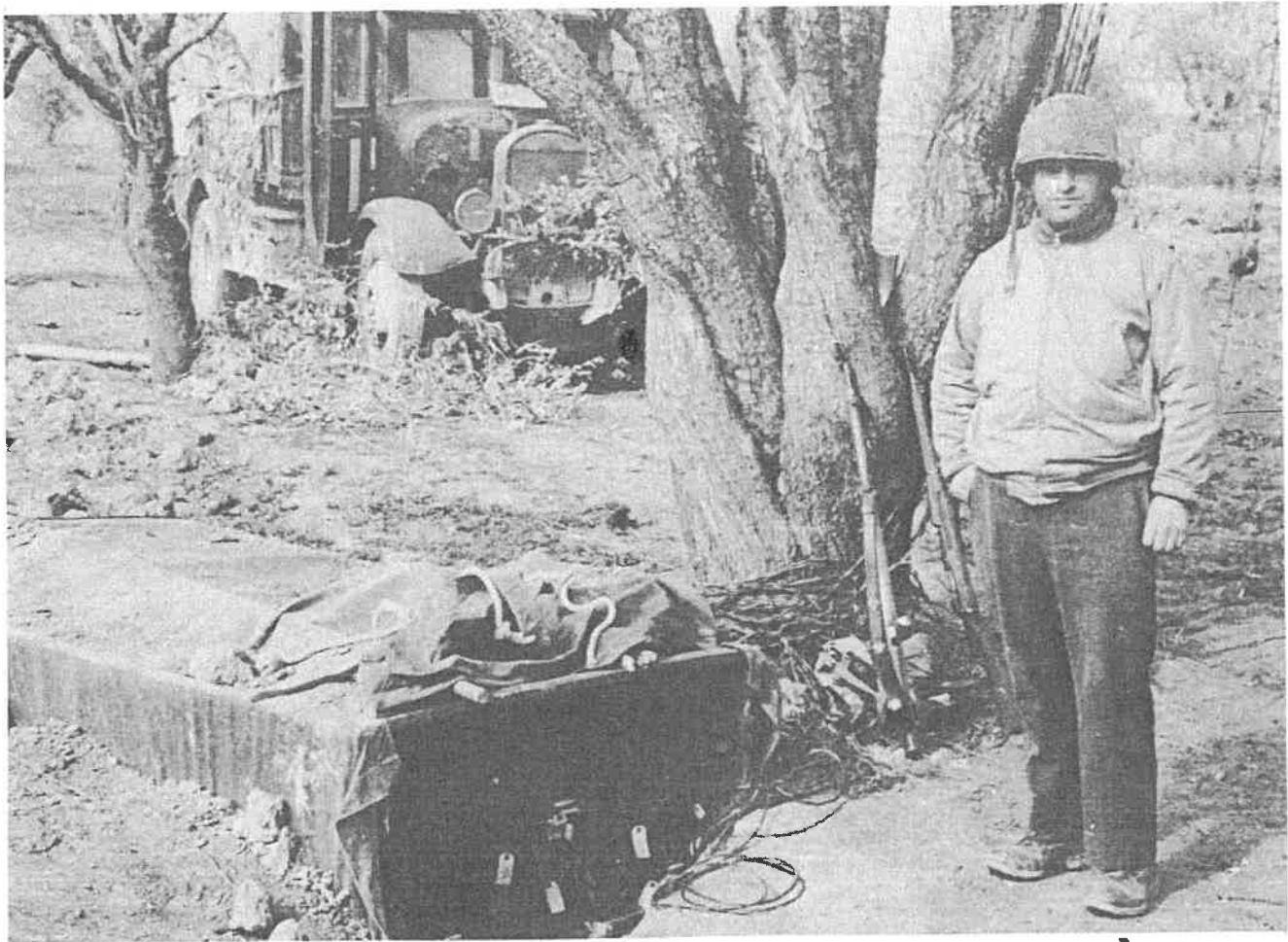
miserable area with no shelter and with utterly no accommodations. From Capua, these unfortunate men, many sick, sore or wounded, were transferred by rail or air to concentration camps in Germany or Poland.

While at Tunis, a German officer, who had resided for some time in the United States, and who was known only by the name of "Charlie," interrogated our men and officers, inflicting upon them indescribable physical abuses in an attempt to exact from them information concerning the Allied Forces in Tunisia. No information was obtained.

The casualties of the 168th in North Africa up to this date had been tremendous: 23 wounded or killed or who had died from natural causes, in the landing operations at Algiers; 155 killed, wounded or missing in action at Seneid Station and 1628 wounded, killed, missing in action or prisoners of war, at Faid Pass, a total loss of 1806.

The fate of those who had been captured or were reported missing in action, remained a mystery for months to come, until finally word seeped through from the International Red Cross, telling of the fate of those gallant men of the 34th. The suspense in the hearts and minds of American parents, wives and sweethearts was one of great agony, many communities, such as Red Oak, Iowa, awaiting news of scores of sons, husbands and brothers whose fate remained a matter of uncertainty for so long a time.





Lt. Col. Dominic J. Calidonna, 34th Division Signal Officer of a U.S. front line division, after battle of Kasserine Pass, February, 1943.

## KASSERINE PASS IN RETROSPECT

What caused the disaster to the 168th Infantry Regiment? What caused the 34th Division to withdraw some thirty to thirty-five miles—the only time during the war the Division was forced to retreat? Newspaper correspondents, reporting the story back home, placed the blame on “green” troops, to the lack of morale and an understanding on the part of the soldiers as to the issues involved in the war. Men of the 34th knew better; they knew then and know now that the causes for this defeat ran deeper than “green” troops. Conceding their inexperience, they knew then and they know now, that the catastrophe, in large part, was chargeable to confusion in the higher echelons of command. Officers and line sergeants were acutely conscious of the fact that the over-all direction of the campaign had become highly disorganized. Units of the 34th had passed to the French, to the British, to the II Corps, over and over again, resulting in the utmost confusion. Orders were given and countermanded; conflicting orders came from different directions, and finally, as we have seen, the 168th was left to work out its own fate. Promise of reinforcements, supplies,

and air support was never fulfilled. Difficulties encountered in moving up troops and supplies are recognized; superiority of the German Air Force is recognized too; but the tactical mistakes made in sending thin lines of Allied tanks against massed German tank movements, and tactical failure to evaluate the strategic importance of Faid Pass were obvious to officers and men of the Division alike. When an unvarnished, truly military history of this phase of the Tunisian Campaign is finally written, the fault will be found to run far deeper than “green” troops and the blame will be placed on those who should justly share its major responsibility.

But this baptism of fire, was to steel these men in spirit and determination and was destined to mould the 34th into one of the finest and most effective Combat Infantry Divisions of the war. This re-kindled spirit, was epitomized by the Divisions slogan offered by General Ryder and quickly adopted by the troops: “ATTACK! ATTACK! ATTACK!” It was the slogan which was to characterize the Division’s combat record until the surrender of the enemy at the far-away foot-hills of the mighty Alps over two long years after the fighting in Tunisia had ended.

# THE FIRST FONDOUK



Brigadier General Frederick B. Butler, Regimental Commander 168th Infantry Regiment—the "Jeb Stewart" of World War II.

The interim between Faid-Kasserine and the First Fondouk was devoted to training, reconnaissance against the enemy, occasional skirmishes and coping with constant strafing and bombing by the German Air Force. The 34th Reconnaissance Troops, under Captain Kenneth Rice, performed almost daily missions skirting and sometimes infiltrating the enemy lines, obtaining valuable information. The performance of these old Pennsylvania cavalry reconnaissance troops is all the more remarkable, considering the fact that they scurried about on their tremendously hazardous assignments with wholly inadequate armored "Half-tracks" and tiny "jeeps" on which were mounted 37 or 50 millimeter guns. Too few seemed to realize the difficulties and the importance of their tasks.

Frightful rains fell upon the area during the month of March, at times of such density as to cause a stoppage in all training operations. Air fields became unuseable, transformed into veritable lakes. Men and officers lived and slept in areas steeped deep in mud beyond description.

On March 26th, the Division moved into position in the vicinity of Fondouk Pass from there, to launch its first concerted attack against the enemy. At last, all units of the Division, including the 175th Field Artillery Battalion, the 168th Infantry Regiment and the 168th Commandos were being drawn into an operation under the banner of the 34th.

The 168th Infantry and the 135th were to launch

an attack in the direction of Hadjeb El Aioun and Fondouk, while the 133rd Infantry Regiment was to relieve a Combat Team of the 9th Division near Sbeitla, there to remain in reserve but with a mission of defending Sbeitla Gap. The 175th, and the 125th and the 185th Artillery Battalion were drawn up in support of the attack. The 151st Field Artillery Battalion was assigned to the Sbeitla area with the 133rd but was later drawn up into action at Fondouk Pass.

The purpose of the attack was to draw the enemy towards the Fondouk Gap and to thus weaken his lines on the flanking positions by compelling him to concentrate troops to meet the frontal attack, at the expense of his flank forces. The orders called for the 168th to assume the position to the right and to the south, the 135th to take up position to the left and to the north, with the axis, Hadjeb El Aioun-Fondouk El Okbi, given as the boundary between the two Regiments.

The reconstituted 168th Regiment was now under the command of Colonel Frederick B. Butler (now Brigadier General), a tall, angular, silver-haired, relentless, driving officer who, in later campaigns in Italy and France, was to gain the name of the "Jeb Stuart" of World War II. Colonel Robert W. Ward, as we have seen, was in command of the 135th Regiment. Here was a perfectly poised, calm commander of troops who gained and held the respect of his men during his long period of command until finally, a severe wound suffered in the Italian Campaign, resulted in his outstanding services being lost to the Division.

While the tactical situation cannot be detailed, it can nevertheless briefly be described:

The 3rd Battalion of the 135th was placed in the assault; the 2nd Battalion echeloned to the left and rear, in depth, to protect the flank; while the 3rd Battalion passed to Division reserve. The 1st Battalion of the 168th was assigned the advanced position of that Regiment with the 2nd Battalion to the right rear, to protect the flank, while its 3rd Battalion was likewise placed in the Division Reserve.

The entrance to Fondouk Pass, was guarded on the South by a long range of sharp mountains running to the Southwest, Djebel El Haouareb, while at the North stood Djebel Trozza, a high mountain which overlooked, not only Fondouk Pass but also the Pass of Pichon, the two Passes converging on the plains lying to the Eastward. The enemy was dug in on both of these promontories; every move the Americans made on the plains below could clearly be seen from these points of observation. The immediate objective of the Division was the mask of mountains to the right of the Pass, the British having been assigned the mission of breaking through the Pass of Pichon and flanking the enemy when our frontal attack had sufficiently engaged his attention.

The drive was launched at 0630 hours on March 27th. Almost immediately, both Regiments were subjected to artillery fire which grew in intensity as the troops pushed forward. New orders came, changing slightly the direction of the advance. Moving forward, troops of both Regiments were subjected to

machinegun and mortar fire. Despite this fire, elements of the 1st Battalion of the 168th reached the lower foot-hills of the mountains, a thrust forward into the enemies' lines which placed them in danger of an out-flanking movement by the Germans. The 2nd Battalion of the 168th advanced toward the first ridge under this withering fire, but was forced to dig in for the night some 500 yards short of its goal.

In the meantime, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 135th were being subjected to enfilading fire from the enemy artillery as they launched their drive. Like the 168th, the 135th was subjected to intense hostile enemy fire from heavy machineguns and mortars, as they advanced across the lowland in the direction of the enemy. Contact between the two Regiments was lost, and, to add to the difficulty, the two Battalions of the 135th became confused and split up in the advance over the more rugged terrain in the blackness of the night.

To comprehend the mission of the Regiments, it must be appreciated that the attack was directed at an enemy, who was dug into the forward face of these hills and mountains, an enemy that had carved out of sheer rock, gun emplacement positions, emplacements, reinforced with timber and steel girders. Barbed wire and mine fields lay ahead of these troops. Altogether, the task assigned these Regiments was impossible of performance.

A re-organization of the 135th became necessary which, when successfully accomplished, found the two Battalions moving again forward, paralleling their advance with the 168th drive which had commenced in the early dawn of March 28th. Evidently, the plan to divert the enemy by drawing his forces

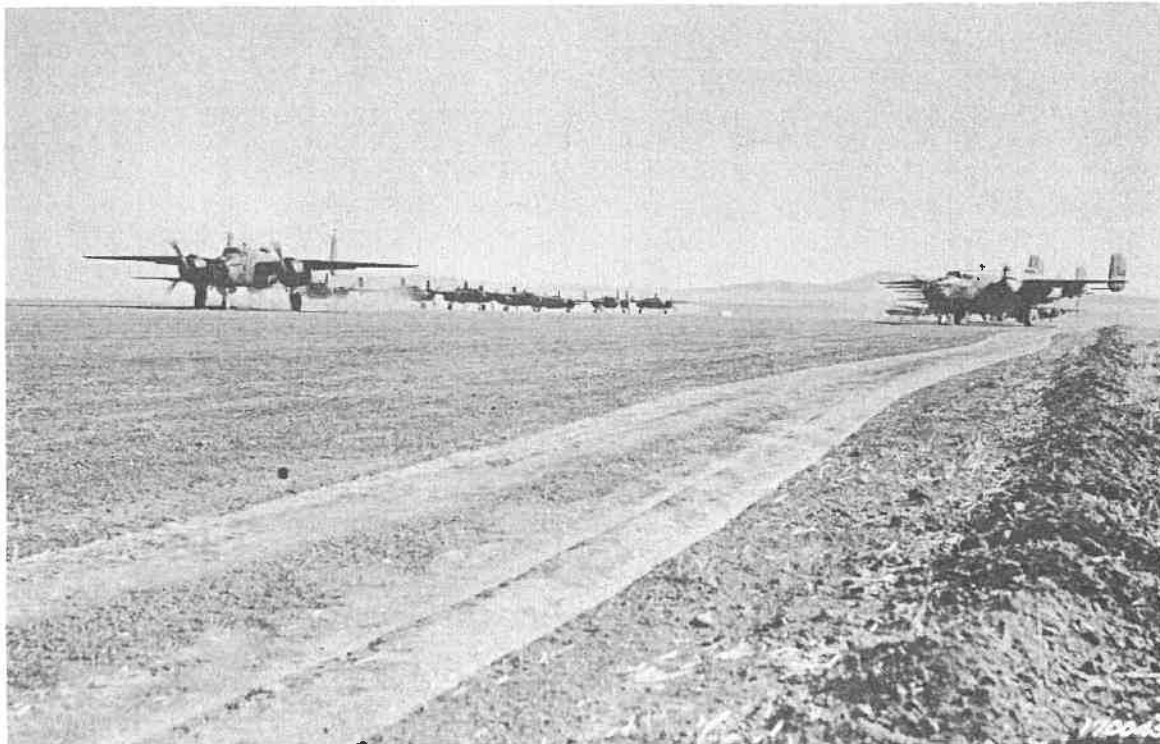
to the Fondouk Gap was proving effective, for the increased fire-power of the enemy told our troops with certainty, that re-inforcements had arrived to support the enemy defense.

On the afternoon of March 29th, Company "G" of the 168th scaled the heights overlooking Fondouk Pass. Several prisoners were taken and from them it was learned that our troops were opposed by units of the 901st Afrika March, as well as Panzer units. At this juncture, the 3rd Battalion of the 168th was committed.

Both Regiments continued to move forward against the impenetrable wall. On the 30th of March, Major Edward Babcock became a casualty and was replaced in command of the 3rd Battalion by Captain Sparks. Units of the 168th gained yet another ridge farther to the East, but both Regiments were stopped in their advance by the fire of an enemy whose position gave him an advantage that could not be overcome.

Orders came at midnight on March 31st directing both Regiments to withdraw a distance of some two miles, there to reorganize and prepare for a renewed attack. Withdrawal was completed on April 2nd in a well-executed movement, assisted by the artillery and by machinegun elements who successfully held off the pursuing enemy.

The 1st Fondouk was a demonstration in force and the withdrawal was in no sense a retreat. It was, indeed, a tactical maneuver. Now, the strength of the enemy was known and the problem of breaking through the Pass could be based upon a knowledge of his position. His strength and his vulnerability had been exposed, and in the Second Fondouk advantage was to be taken of both.



B-25 bombers taking off for a raid. Berteaux, North Africa. Raid over Tunisia, February 12, 1943.

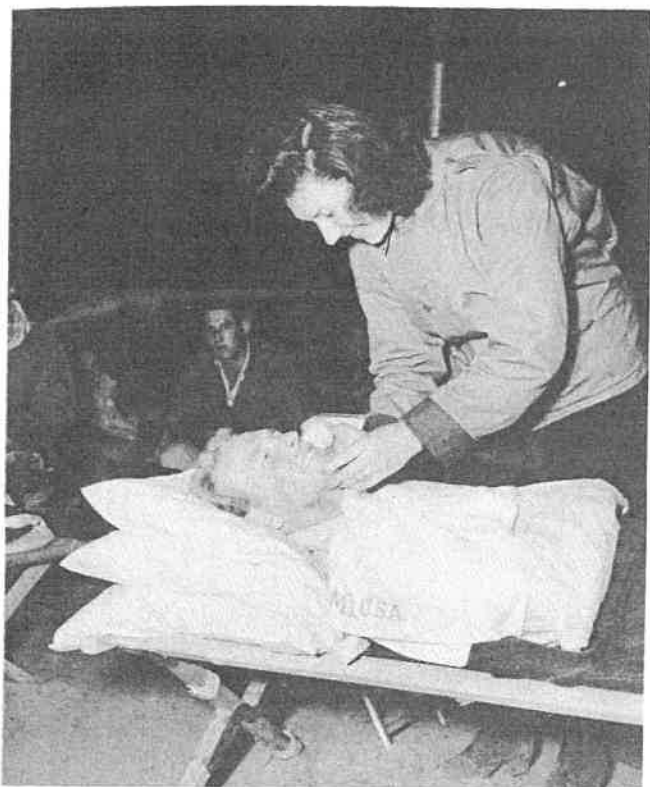
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# THE SECOND FONDOUK



Nurse Margaret Bachoke, Perth Amboy, New York, washes "Scotties" (Sgt. Ian MacLean, Buffalo, New York) face after assigning him to bed in the war, North Africa, December 12, 1942.

On April 4th, the Division was attached to the British IX Corps. The plan for the renewed attack called for the British to seize the hills guarding the north entrance to Fondouk Pass, while again, the 34th Division was assigned the terrific task of advancing over the same plains in an attack against the same mask of mountains that constituted its objective in the First Fondouk. Once an opening was pierced through Fondouk Gap, a British Armored Division was to come in from Pichon and drive eastward along the highway to Karouan, the second most important city in the Mohammedan world and the reputed, sacred burial place of the beard of the prophet Mohammed. The grand strategy was to cut off a large part of Rommel's forces which were fighting a rear guard action against Montgomery's 8th Army in an attempt to join von Arnim to the north.

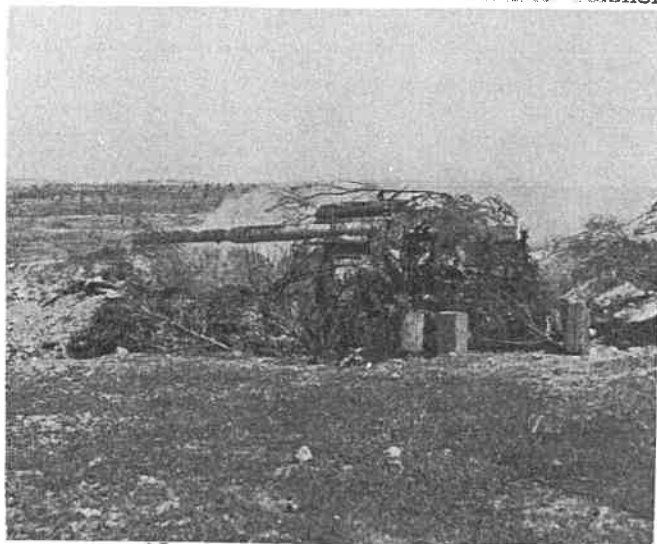
In early March of 1943, General Fredendall had been replaced by General George S. Patton, Jr., as commander of II Corps. Before the Second Fondouk attack, General Patton made an inspection of the positions of the Division troops and gave such counsel and advice as he thought was required but, expressed concern that the Division Command-Post as well as all Command-Posts of lower echelons, were established in the forward line in position where they were all open to intermittent strafing and bombing and within range of heavy artillery. It was at this time that Patton was breathing terrible words of defiance at Rommel, even challenging the Des-

ert Fox to settle the issue in a man-to-man tank duel with troops of both sides as spectators. The idea appealed to men of the 34th, forced by the General's orders to wear neckties in combat and all officers to solder their insignia rank on the front of their helmets—an aid, so they thought, to enemy marksmanship. Boys of the 34th had seen Patton when he dramatically appeared on the scene during the Louisiana Maneuvers in 1941, with steel helmet, two pearl-handled pistols on his hips and with the air of battle literally steaming from his nostrils. We didn't know then that this prodigious showman was to become the immortalized Patton, who died enroute on a peaceful mission of the hunt near Heidelberg, and not on the field of battle where he performed so heroically over and over again.

The Pass at Fondouk runs between two promontories, as we have seen. To the left, Djebel Rhorab and, to the right, Djebel El Haouareb with Djebel Trozza dominating the area. In the First Fondouk experience, the Division had learned that the key to the Fondouk Pass was Rhorab.

At a memorable Staff meeting, held in a deep wadi in the face of the enemy, the Commander of the British IX Corps outlined the plan of attack. General Ryder presented his plan at the briefing: to attack Rhorab from the rear accompanied by a show of force against Haourab, a plan, which he contended would cause a collapse of the enemy defense. In this, General Ryder was supported by General Koeltz of the French Forces who, better than anyone else, knew the terrain of this entire area. But the commander of the British IX Corps remained adamant, and the 34th was assigned the mission of a frontal attack upon the well-defended Haouareb. This failure, in tactical planning, was to result in unnecessary losses to the 34th Division. In years to come, critics of "green" troops, will again see that higher command was in error, and historians of the future will place the blame for these unnecessary losses on the shoulders of those who should rightfully bear it.

The 135th and 133rd Combat Teams, under the command of Colonel Robert W. Ward and Colonel



Wrecked 88 mm. on the outskirts of Frenjil.



1st Ranger Battalion on speed march through Arzew, North Africa.



Joint Allied Attack on Pichon. German prisoners being allowed to search pile of equipment for their water bottles.

Ray C. Fountain, respectively, moved up under cover of darkness on the night of April 7th, to the line of departure in the open ground some five miles in front of the foot of the mountain, the formidable Haouareb. The attack was preceded by a heavy concentrated Division Artillery fire. Zero hour had been set for 0300 hours on the morning of the 8th of April but the launching of the attack was delayed until 0430 hours, owing to change in orders from higher command.

In this engagement, the 135th Infantry moved in on the right with the 133rd Infantry on the left. The 3rd Battalion of the 135th under Major Garnet Hall, had been assigned the assault mission, with the 1st Battalion under Lt. Col. Robert R. Miller, protecting the flank. The latter being early subjected to heavy fire poured down from the hill mask of Rhorab.

The Higher Command ordered the troops to halt in position shortly after the lifting of our artillery barrage, to permit Allied bombers to work over the enemy's positions. The bombers never arrived. The advance was resumed at 0900 hours across the flat five-mile area which lay before the imposing and forbidding Haouareb. On that beautiful sun-lit day, in the path of our advancing men, ran a veritable river of crimson poppies, a river, soon again to run to deeper crimson with the red blood of these courageous Americans. The uneven struggle continued throughout that day and, on the night of the 8th of April, the two Regiments were pinned down on the flat prairie, with the enemy, perched high above, sweeping the field with all of his fire-power. It was a battle ordeal of terrific magnitude, and now, as indeed, General Ryder had warned, our crouching troops were receiving an unmerciful shelling from Djebels Rhoab and Haouareb.

During the day of the 9th, the 1st Battalion of the 133rd had moved into position on the right and abreast of its 3rd Battalion, the two moving forward into the renewed assault. The attack was stopped by enemy artillery, mortar and machinegun fire. During that day, tanks had come to the support of both Regiments, but with ineffectual results. The faltering troops then became disorganized. In an effort to recoup the situation and to effect re-organization of the 3rd Battalion of the 168th, General Ryder ordered Captain Floyd H. Rockwell to assume

command of the Battalion.

In the meantime, Colonel Carley Marshall, who had re-organized his 1st Battalion, then under the command of the 168th, requested permission to launch an attack with the objective of assaulting and taking the enemy's position on the high hills at night. This permission was granted. The immediate objective was Hill 306.

When the bright moon of that night had set, and blackness had enveloped the area, the attack was launched, the assault being made with Companies "A" and "C" moving directly forward towards the Hill, Company "B" following with the purpose of executing a flank envelopment of the enemy's right. Company "D" was assigned the mission of placing its machinegun and mortars along the Fondouk-Hadjeb-El-Aioun Highway to cover the advance.

The troops moved forward quietly in the dead of night, infiltrating the enemy lines on the steep slopes of Hill 306 before being discovered by the Germans. A terrific battle ensued, but finally, at 0115 hours on the 10th of April, the enemy position was over-run and the 1st Battalion of the 133rd had won a brilliant victory.

The name of First Lieutenant Roy L. Stephenson, S-2 and acting S-3 of the Battalion during the engagement, will always be associated with that of Colonel Marshall in the capture of Hill 306. This modest young lawyer, beloved by his men and respected by his superiors, was awarded the Silver Star, while Colonel Marshall was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Both had earned the gratitude of their Division Commander and the grateful thanks of their Nation, which they had so gallantly served.

But it is the soldier to whom the greatest tribute must be paid—the G-I's of both the 135th and 133rd. To the men of his 1st Battalion, Colonel Marshall paid a grand and lasting tribute: "Never before have troops behaved better in a night attack. Every movement and action of the rifle troops was marked by the greatest confidence, precision and toughness. The attack was quiet, smooth, rapid and determined". This tribute applies with equal significance to the performance of the men of the 135th.

In the meantime and, on the 10th of April, the 135th Regiment with the 1st and 2nd Battalions

abreast and with the 3rd Battalion in the rear, launched a final attack on Fondouk. The 1st Battalion's objective was Fondouk Gap, while the 2nd Battalion was to assault three hills to the rear of the Gap. Relief had come with the fall of Rhorab to the British. With the infernal fire from that direction silenced, the dauntless Colonel Miller swept his troops through the Gap with but slight opposition, while Colonel Svoboda soon attained his objectives, his 2nd Battalion occupying the three hills to the rear of the Gap. On the morning of the 10th of April, the 168th Infantry Regiment relieved the 135th Infantry, the latter withdrawing to the newly assigned assembly area.

The 135th Regiment, true to its ancient traditions, though sustaining terrific casualties in the three days' engagement under prolonged, grueling fire had stood the test. Each Battalion Commander had served in exemplary fashion. Lt. Colonel Robert Miller of the 1st Battalion, a dentist in civilian life, had distinguished himself as an outstanding combat leader. This daring, fighting officer was to further distinguish himself in the later phases of the Tunisian Campaign and in Italy, finally returning home, where, because of his outstanding record, he was chosen by the United States Army as an adviser in the production of the famous motion picture "G-I Joe", a story based upon the reports of the famous War Correspondent Ernie Pyle who lived with the 34th for long periods in both Africa and Italy. No one knew better than the highly decorated Colonel Miller, the awful battle-life of G-I Joe.

Colonel Albert A. Svoboda, a Minnesota farmer, a man of rugged exterior, kind heart and great courage, had held his men in position under tremendous enemy fire, leading them forward to final victory. While his men were flattened out on the prairie, Colonel Svoboda "enjoyed" a most unique experience. As British tanks rolled through our infantry, one stopped in the immediate vicinity of the Colonel. The hatch opened, the crew dismounted and proceeded to brew a "spot" of tea in the proverbial can that always hung at the rear of all British vehicles. This, all in full view of the enemy and at a time when his fire was particularly intense. Seeing the Colonel crowded in his foxhole, the crew called to him to join them. Sportsmanship decreed that Svoboda accept the invitation. Jumping out of his hole, the Colonel scurried across the opening, consumed his tea behind the tank and then scurried back to the doubtful cover he had so reluctantly left for the occasion. Mounting their tank, the crew rolled on only to have a track blown by a concealed German mine, forcing them to abandon the tank and flee to the rear. The British really love their tea!

It was here too, that troops, in horror, observed a British tank pass directly over a foxhole occupied by that quiet but doughty battalion medical officer, Captain John S. Hamlon of St. Charles, Minnesota. To the utter amazement of those who witnessed the incident, the Captain worked his way up through the fallen earth, unscathed. Others, were not as fortunate as Captain Hamlon.

Major Garnet Hall, as commander of the 3rd Battalion, had been a member of the Minnesota State Highway Patrol. His innate qualities of leadership as demonstrated at Fondouk, marked him as one of the outstanding Battalion Commanders of the Division.

During the Second Fondouk, the 168th Regiment, although not directly in the main battle, was engaged in reconnaissance and patrol movements to divert the enemy. The 3rd Battalion of the 168th relieved the 3rd Battalion of the 133rd on the 9th of April. In the meantime, Major Bird who had distinguished himself at Sened, was placed in command of the 2nd Battalion.

The road to Karouan was now open, Montgomery's British 8th Desert Army having now entered that ancient city. The 3rd Battalion of the 168th with Anti-tank Company and Regimental Reconnaissance, was sent forward to guard the area in the vicinity of Karouan.

The Second Fondouk was history. Though defeated, the Germans had executed a successful withdrawal and with losses not at all commensurate with the magnitude of the engagement. But the aftermath scene on the sun blazed plains and foothills of Fondouk told all too plainly, the price paid by the Allies to gain the victory. No less than fifty-two tanks of the Allied forces spent themselves against the enemy and lay strewn over the plains, bespeaking the German's tremendous fire-power and position advantage. Along the mine-swept road to Karouan, were scattered a few enemy tanks and vehicles, victims largely of the rear guard, covering the retreat. Little is known of the actual man-power loss sustained by Rommel's troops, the enemy following the practice of evacuating his dead to conceal his losses.

In the two Battles of Fondouk, our losses in men present a picture that discloses the iron resistance offered by the Germans and the terrible price paid by the Division in forcing entrance through the Gap: 1038 wearers of the Red Bull patch, killed, wounded or missing. Statistics are often cold reading, but the following tables of losses vividly reflect the bloody carnage on that field of poppies—poppies that somehow became a sacred symbol of sacrifice made on distant shores, by sons of America in both World Wars.



Lt. Col. Frank L. Putman, Division Chemical Officer, in center; examining captured German gas vial, Beja, Tunisia, North Africa, May 1, 1943.

<b>168th INFANTRY REGIMENT</b>	
Officers killed .....	5
Enlisted men killed .....	51
Officers wounded in action .....	10
Enlisted men wounded in action .....	182
Officers missing in action .....	1
Enlisted men missing in action .....	108
<b>Total casualties .....</b>	<b>357</b>

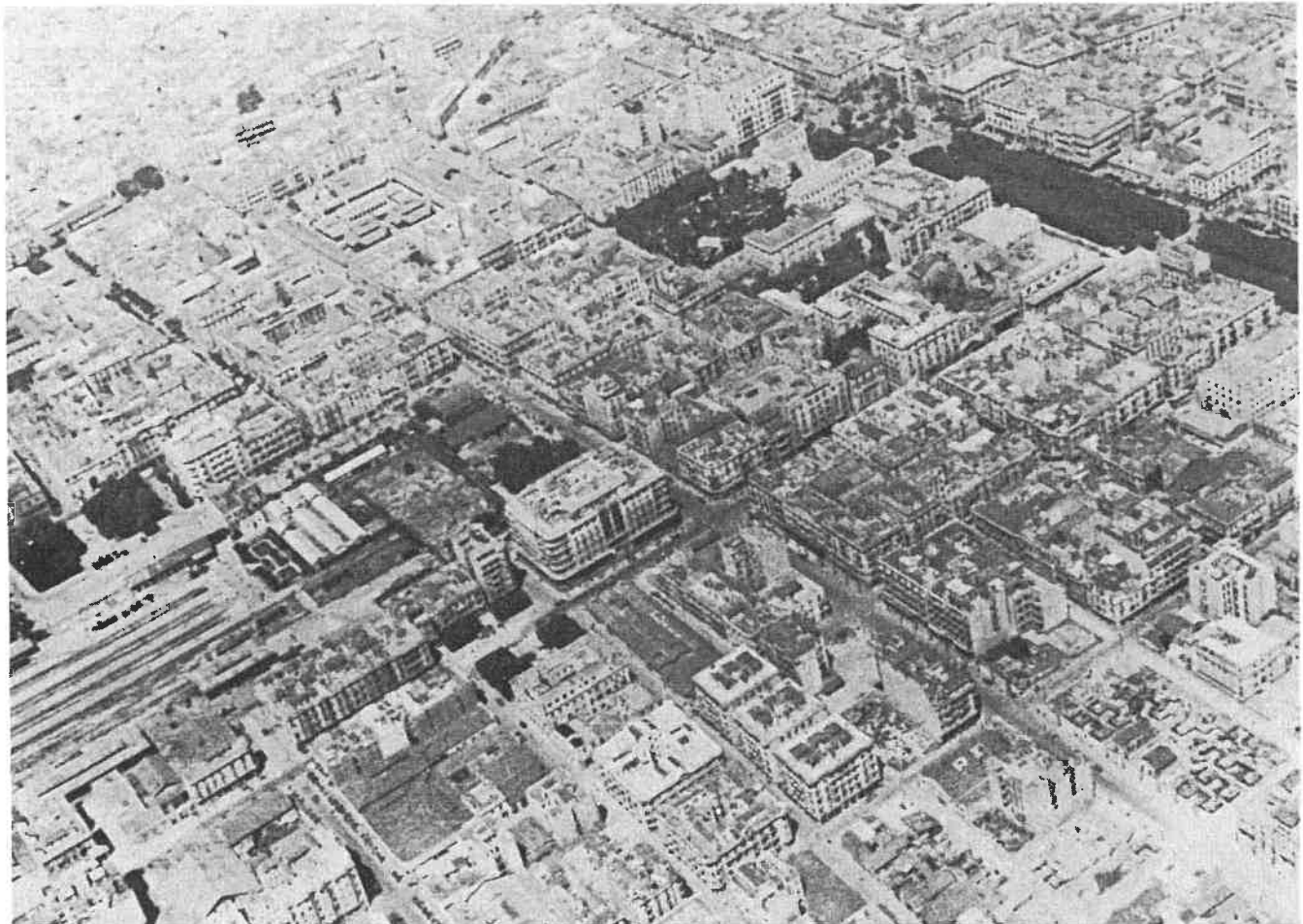
<b>133rd INFANTRY REGIMENT</b>	
Officers killed in action .....	1
Enlisted men killed in action .....	25
Officers wounded in action .....	14
Enlisted men wounded in action .....	143
<b>Total casualties .....</b>	<b>183</b>

<b>135th INFANTRY REGIMENT</b>	
Officers killed in action .....	10
Enlisted men killed in action .....	91
Officers wounded in action .....	20
Enlisted men wounded in action .....	340
Officers missing in action .....	1
Enlisted men missing in action .....	17
Captured Enlisted men .....	1
<b>Total casualties .....</b>	<b>480</b>

<b>109th ENGINEERS</b>	
Killed by mines and enemy action:	
Officers .....	1
Enlisted men .....	13
<b>Total casualties .....</b>	<b>14</b>

<b>DIVISION ARTILLERY</b>	
Enlisted men killed and total casualties .....	2

All units of the Division moved back to the old area in the vicinity of Maktar, there, to devote themselves to checking equipment, adjusting personal matters and obtaining some greatly needed rest. But chiefly, the Division was almost immediately assigned to a strict, rigid training schedule, General Ryder ordering officers of his Command to advance behind a rolling barrage from our own artillery. The exercise was a high success and paid dividends in the days and years which lay ahead.



Aerial view of Tunisia, North Africa, May 2, 1943.

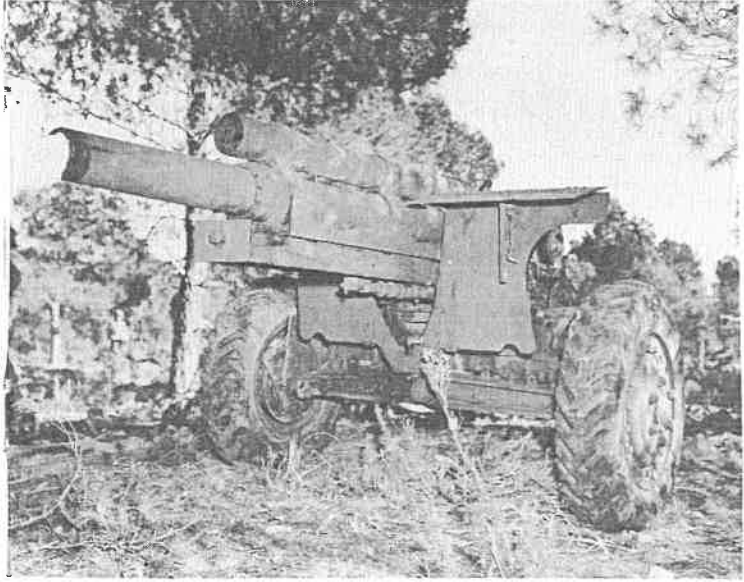


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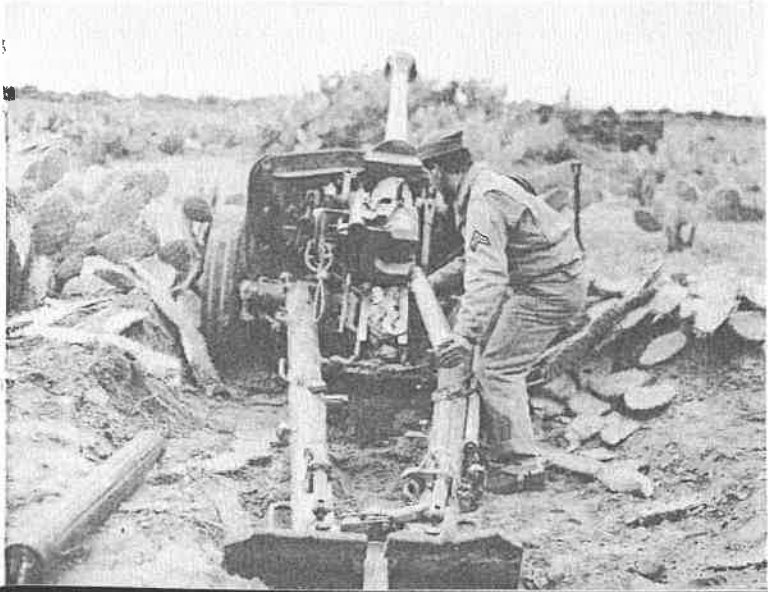
Lt. Col. Edwin T. Swenson, Left with his staff officers during Tunisian campaign.



Italian 105 mm Howitzer captured by 109th Ord. Co. (M.M.) near Gafsa, Tunisia, Feb. 7, 1943.



A Caravan halts in the desert while Arabs fall to the ground facing Mecca in prayer. Tunisia, North Africa, 1942.



Rear view of a German 75-mm gun captured by the 168th Infantry. Anti-tank Company. Cpl. Sarant is holding a shell to the open breech. Sidi Bou Zid, North Africa, (Tunisia) February 10, 1943.



Hill 609 captured by the 34th Division. It proved to be a key German defense position in the North Tunisian sector. Its fall caused the collapse of the German line standing before Matuer and Bizerte, March 27, 1943.

## HILL 609

Before the relating of the story of Hill 609, it is necessary to present the over-all tactical picture as it then existed. The German and Italian troops had now thrown themselves into a strong defensive arc which was anchored at the south at Enfidaville close to the eastern coast-line, and south of the peninsula, Cap Bon; from thence, the line ran westward to Djebel Skirine and Djebel Mansour; thence, northward, following the range of mountains that form a natural and formidable barrier to the Tunisian plains, to Cap Serrat on the north coast, west of the important port of Bizerte.

It will be remembered that Rommel had retreated successfully across the Libyan desert some 1500 miles to Tunisia, with General Montgomery's 8th Army in hot pursuit. And now, with the enemy's withdrawal from the Mareth Line, General Rommel and General von Arnim, stood at bay against a superior force, for at this time the enemy was composed of five Italian and nine German Divisions, while the Allies comprised twenty Divisions, in three main groups, on an arc front of approximately 140 miles.

Confusions and difficulties in High Command among the Allied Forces had received the early attention of General Eisenhower, who in the later days of February, effected radical changes. On February 20th, General Sir Harold R.L.G. Alexander was appointed Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Allied forces and was also placed in immediate command of the 18th Army Group, which was composed of the

British 1st and 8th Armies, the United States II Corps and the French XIXth Corps. General Alexander had a certain intimate significance to men of the 34th for the 133rd had headquartered in North Ireland on his beautiful estate "Caledon", where they had come to know his charming wife and his delightfully officious mother, who constantly in the evenings, busied herself with ordering Americans to leave her glowing kitchen fire-place and to turn in to early beds. Lady Alexander always insisted that the Yanks needed the stern hand of a mother to shoo them away to bed for the rest she insisted her boys must have to fit them for the ordeal which lay ahead.

General Alexander's first order re-grouped the Tunisian Forces and, before the final assault, including the famous engagement of Hill 609, the 18th Army Group was deployed as follows: The 8th British Army, under General Montgomery, held the southern sector of the arc; to the left and northward on the arc, stood the French XIXth Corps; next, the IXth British Corps and the V British Corps with a boundary line running between them northeasterly, through Medjez El Bab; left and northward on this arc, came the U.S. II Corps with the Corps France d' Afrique occupying the extreme North Coastal Sector. This latter French Corps was made up largely of Goumiers, perhaps the most barbaric and ferocious group of soldiers in all the world. It was the "Gooms," to whom the French paid an award of fifty francs for every enemy ear accounted for,

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and more than one American had the unhappy fortune of seeing pouches filled with atrophied ears, the nationality of which was sometimes a matter of considerable doubt.

To comprehend further the plight of the enemy at this point, it should be told that the superiority of the Allied Air Force was finally asserting itself. German troop-transport, had been arriving at Tunis and Bizerte at a rate as high as 250 a day. But our strategic Air Force under Air Chief Marshall Tedder (British), and our own General Spaatz, his assistant, devised a plan of attacking the enemy airports in Sicily, Italy and North Africa and then sending P-38 Fighters and Spitfires to sweep the skies, knocking down enemy air-craft while bombers cleared all sea-approaches, and blew up the harbors. On April 18th, as many as 73 of the enemy Air troop transports met their doom. Finally, practically all communications by air and sea were cut off as the legions of Hitler and Mussolini girded themselves for the final, desperate stand.

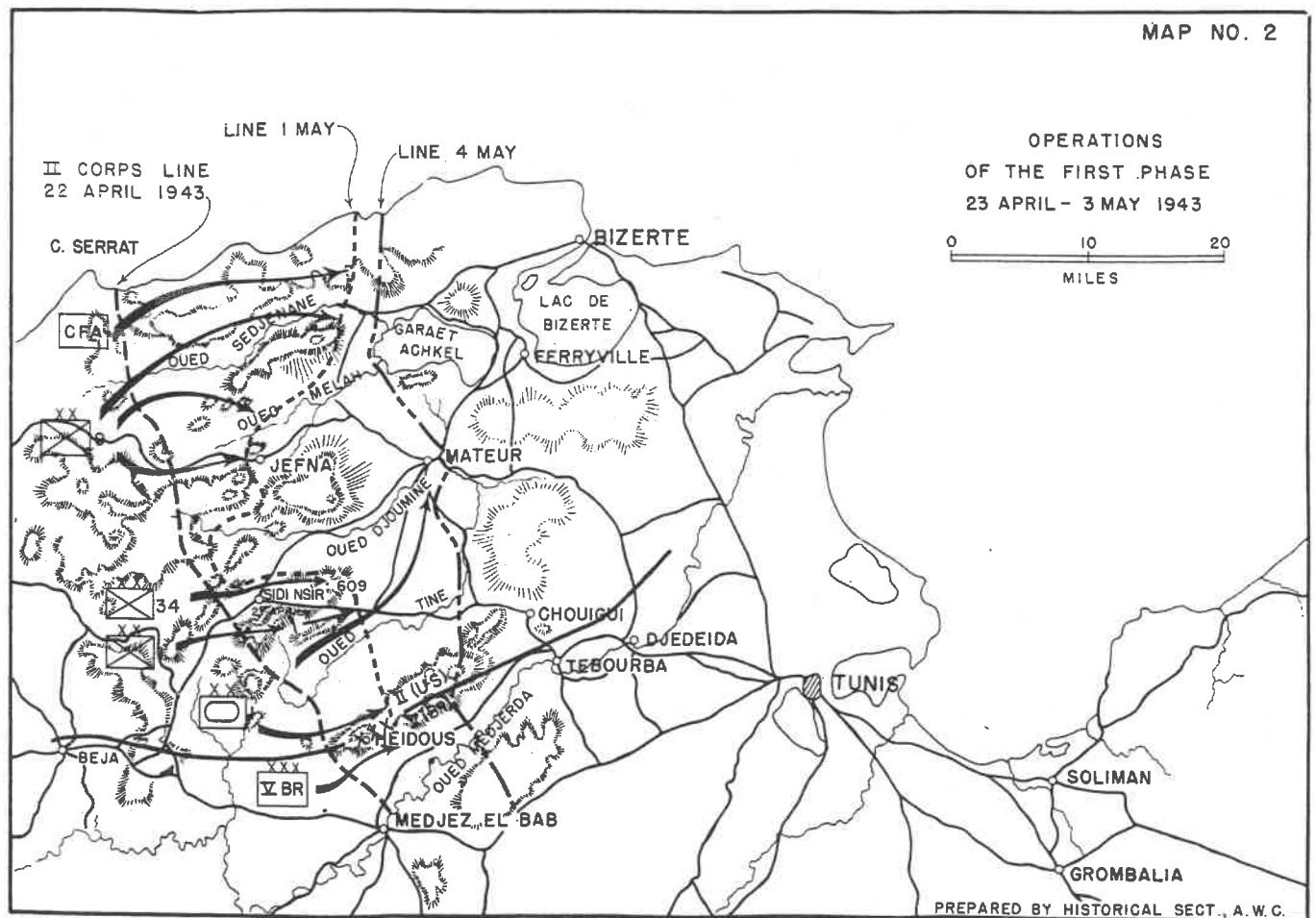
The American II Corps was comprised of the following units: Headquarters Company and other attached Corps units, the 1st Armored Division and the 1st, 9th and 34th Infantry Divisions. There were, of course, other attached units of Artillery, Anti-tank, Ordnance, Quartermaster, Engineers and Anti-aircraft, all of whose services merit detailed mention, but whose stories must be left untold, for want of space for the telling.

At the conclusion of the Second Fondouk, Gen-

eral George S. Patton, Jr., relinquished his command of the American II Corps to Lt. General Omar N. Bradley, 'the soldiers' choice of a Field General and a man who was destined to come out of the war as one of the really great military figures.

In conformance with orders received from Allied Headquarters, and to effect the re-grouping mentioned, General Bradley ordered all units of II Corps to move from the southern Maktar-Pichon-Gafsa area an average distance of 150 miles, to its new position in the north. One hundred thousand men, together with a vast amount of equipment, supplies and ammunition, cut across the British 1st Army and moved into position, smoothly and without delay. It was a magnificent logistic achievement, performed with such secrecy as to amaze and confound the enemy.

The immediate sector occupied by II Corps Command, extended in an arc of some forty miles, from Cap Serrat on the north Mediterranean coast-line, to the Medjerda valley, to the south. It was a rugged battle area with a jumbled mass of hills and mountains, varying from 16 to 20 miles in depth, a natural and seemingly insurmountable barrier. Beyond these hills on the plains of Tunisia, lay the strategic cross-roads city of Mateur, while to the northeast lay the important sea-port of Bizerte, a city possessing one of the finest land-locked harbors in the world. Again, troops of the II Corps were to be compelled to battle forward towards an enemy who literally looked down their throats, a circumstance which happened over and over again, not



only through all the North African Campaign, but throughout the long, bitter Italian struggle which lay in the future.

Troops of the American II Corps were deployed in line from north to south in the following order: the French Corps d' Afrique, the 9th Infantry Division, our own 34th, the 1st Infantry Division and the 1st Armored Division.

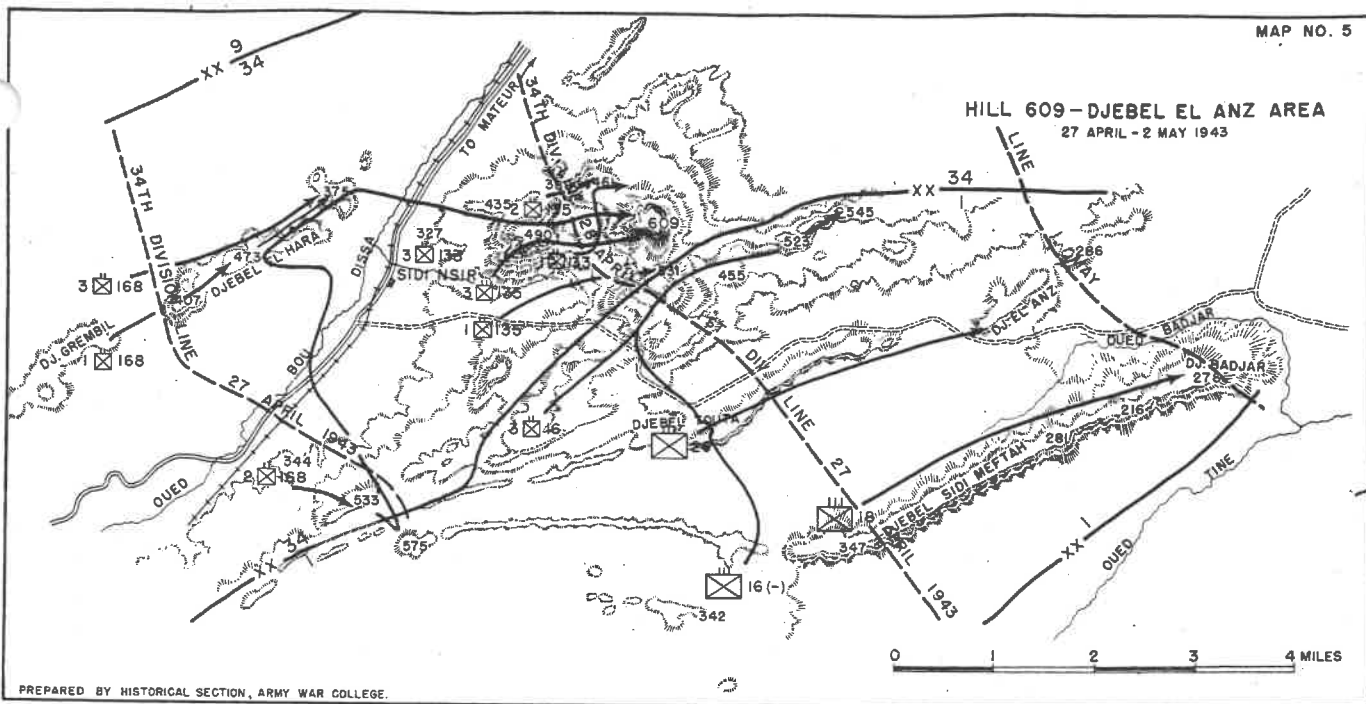
There were two natural corridors passing eastward through these masses of hills and mountains: the one leading from Sidi Nsir to Mateur and paralleled by a railroad and the small river Nsir, ran through a valley known as Oued Djoumine; the other road, farther to the south, was the corridor of Oued Tine Valley through which ran the River Tine. This southern gateway was the broader of the two, offering fair scope for tank operations, but, too, it was a natural "mouse-trap" as General Bradley called it, into which he refused to be drawn. Before attempting to breach either of these passes, numerous well-fortified hills and mountains had to be cleared of the heavily entrenched enemy. It was a task of gigantic proportions.

Dominating this rugged area, stood Hill 609 (Djebel Tahent), a huge mass of sheer twisted rock, a natural key fortification, which was to remain impregnable until the enemy had been swept from the many high hills which surrounded it.

A study of the maps will reveal how admirably

suited this rough terrain was for defensive fighting. The enemy had the advantage of perfect familiarity with the area and had, for several months, been preparing an elaborate system of defense. The pattern of his defensive system was again to repeat itself. With uncanny skill, he selected his gun firing positions, digging them into sheer rock and concealing them so thoroughly as to render their neutralization by our artillery fire, a most difficult task indeed. Again the enemy disclosed his great skill and mastery in the art of camouflage. Smokeless powder failed to reveal his hidden positions. He used machineguns in the most lavish fashion. He followed the tactics too, of permitting patrols to pass defensive positions in order to await the arrival of larger game. He defended every hill with almost unbelievable, stubborn and fanatical resistance and could only be driven out at the point of a bayonet. He resorted to subterfuge and, at times violated rules of warfare, by pretending surrender, only to open up on our men as they approached. This nefarious trick was only attempted on two or three occasions, for the enemy soon learned that our men could retaliate by declining to take prisoners.

The 1st Division attacked at dawn on the 23rd of April and, by the 25th, had advanced to hills lying to the right of Hill 609. By this time, the 1st Division was thrust so far forward as to dangerously expose its flank. The 34th was now thrown into action and attacked in co-ordination with the 1st Division.



The enemy's right flank was anchored in Djebel El Hara, consisting of Hills 407, 473 and 375. To the east, and close to the gigantic 609, the enemy was firmly entrenched in Hills 435, 490, 461 and 531, all of which must be cleared before the final assault upon the central fortress of Djebel Tahent.

On April 25th, the 175th Field Artillery Battalion and other Artillery elements attached to II Corps, poured in a heavy barrage on the three hills of Djebel El Hara. The 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 168th then launched their assault upon the three hills, but were soon pinned down by heavy machinegun

and mortar fire. Again, on the 26th of April the artillery swept Hills 407 and 473 with a tremendous fire designed to soften the enemy and prepare the way for a renewed attack. On that day, Major Edward Bird led his 2nd Battalion of the 168th from Hill 575 to the south and, in a rapid drive to the north, launched an attack on Djebel El Hara securing a foothold on its southern slopes. Major Bird's name appears with great frequency in the records. The hard-bitten, exacting Colonel Butler, declared Major Bird to be the ideal of a Battalion Combat leader. All battalions of the Division that were en-





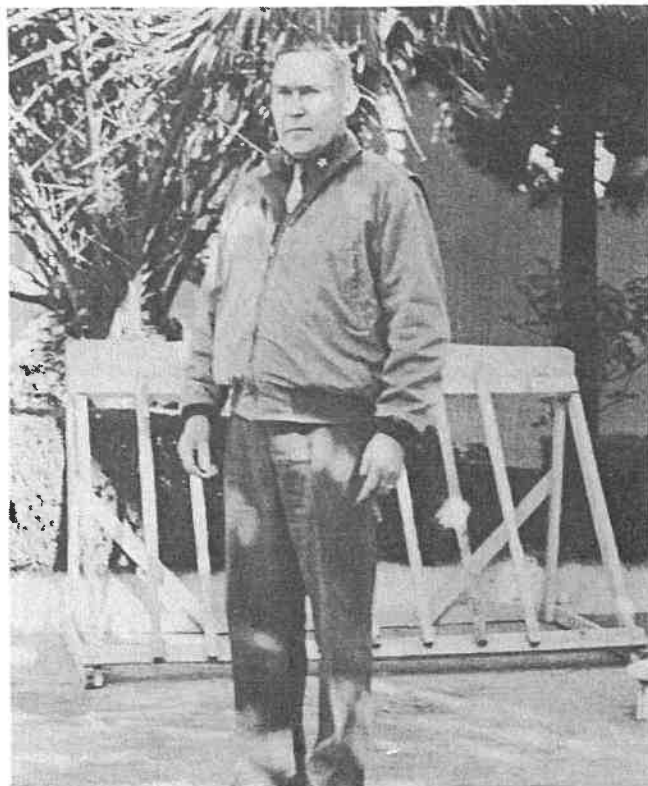
34th bullets found their mark near Enfadille, North Africa.



Lt. Col. Dee M. White, Division Adjutant General

gaged in this important assault upon Djebel Tahent, performed in admirable fashion, but Major Bird's 2nd Battalion was outstanding in the fact that it covered such a great area in this engagement as will be seen from the map accompanying this story. On the 28th of April, the 2nd Battalion completed its occupation of Hills 407 and 473, in the meantime, the 1st Battalion of the 168th moving on to capture Hill 375. Gradually, the enemy's defenses were falling, but still other obstacles lay between the troops and the ultimate goal of Hill 609.

In the meantime, and on the 27th of April, the 135th Regimental Combat Team moved forward to an attack on Hill 490. The mission was assigned to the 3rd Battalion which advanced against the hill across the lowlands with very little cover, crossing a small stream in the face of the enemy, and storm-



Colonel Ray C. Fountain (now Major General, 34th Infantry Division) who commanded the 133rd Infantry throughout the African and part of the Italian Campaigns.

ing the hill which was captured after a bloody combat, but from which they were soon driven off by a tremendous counter-attack. On the morning of April 28th, the heights were regained, the enemy making four determined efforts to recapture Hill 490, all of which were successfully repulsed by the seasoned fighters of the 3rd Battalion with effective support from our Division Artillery.

Almost all of the day of the 28th of April, our Artillery threw great masses of concentrated fire on Hills 609, 435, 461 and 531, the boom of the guns reverberating like thunder through the valleys. In the meantime, the enemy was doing his part, throwing into our area devilish air-burst shells, mortar and machinegun fire, with deadly effect. Hill 461, fell to the savage attack of the 2nd Battalion of the 135th while the 1st Battalion swept to the south of Hill 609, attacking the important bastion of Hill 531, its final capture being delayed until April 28th because of bitter resistance offered by the enemy.

Together, the 1st Division and the 34th Division had captured all forward and flanking obstacles and the time had now arrived for the direct assault on the majestic Fortress of Hill 609.

At five o'clock on the morning of April 29th, the attack against Djebel Tahent was launched. The 3rd Battalion of the 135th, which occupied Hill 490, moved down from the Hill and proceeded across the valley, with the objective of gaining a position at the base of the huge Hill. The delay in capturing Hills 531 and 461 resulted in the 3rd Battalion eventually entering into a frontal attack on the formidable 609. At 11:00 hours on that day, advancing under terrific fire, the 3rd Battalion succeeded in cap-



Afrika Korps prisoners of War. Tunisia.

turing the small Arab village huddled close to the slopes of the Hill. The fire was heavy but the Doughboys hung on like grim death, actually working their way up the jagged rock for a distance of one-half mile from which position they were never dislodged.

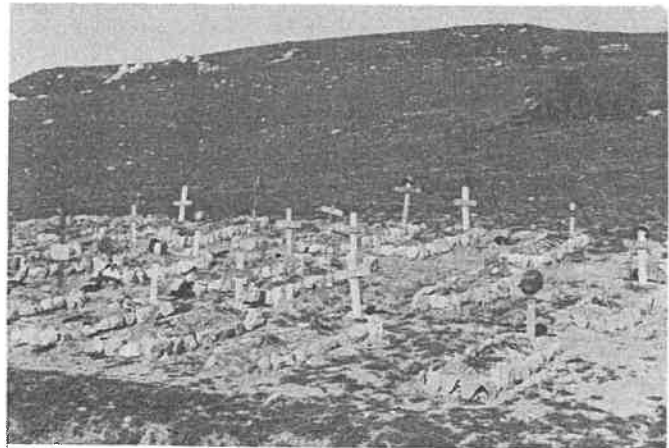
At 0500 hours in the morning of April 30th, the attack was renewed, the 3rd Battalion of the 133rd Infantry occupied Hill 327. The 1st Battalion of the 133rd advanced towards the great rock behind a Company of medium tanks of the 1st Armored Division. The movement was beautifully coordinated though several tanks and considerable casualties were sustained in the advance.

The 2nd Battalion of the 168th now moved in to attack 609 from the north where it joined the right flank of the 1st Battalion of the 133rd, the two driving forward until they had by nightfall scaled the summits of the northern slopes, holding the north nose of the rock against furious counter-attacks. During all that day, the enemy's artillery fire continued with great intensity. Still clinging desperately to part of the hill, the enemy renewed his counter-attack to regain control of the summit on the morning of May 1st, but the 2nd Battalion of the 168th repulsed him with a withering fire.

A most important pass leading to the crown of the hill, was a goat trail which the Germans regarded as invulnerable, but the 3rd Battalion of the 135th Infantry Regiment, in a surprise move, en-



The Famous Djebel Tahent, Hill 609.



North Africa. German crosses on the way to defeat.

tered the trail from the rear, a maneuver which probably proved the determining factor to the enemy's final withdrawal.

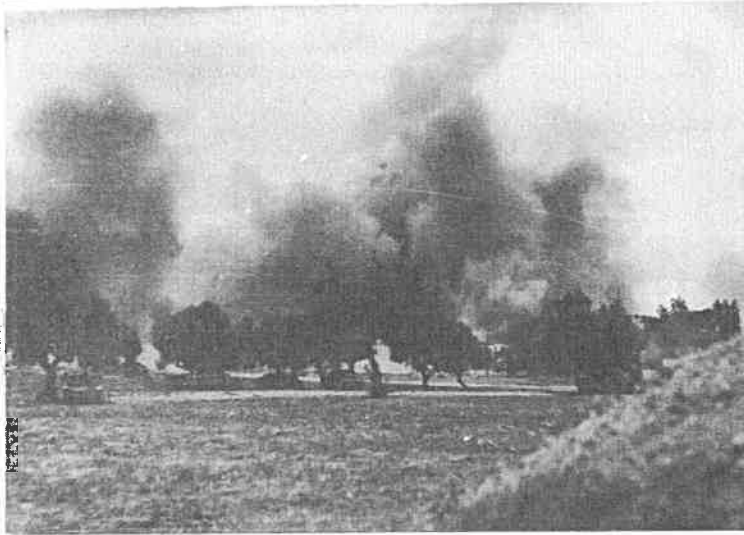
The great bastion of 609 had fallen, spelling the certain doom of the enemy who had fought with a fanatical stubborn resistance rarely equalled in military history. The gallant men of the 34th and 1st Divisions had broken the enemy's key defense causing his lateral defenses to crumble in the few desperate days remaining. Men of the 34th had now arrived. No longer did reports speak of them as "green" troops for the world was now proclaiming the 34th as an incomparable fighting Division led by one of the greatest of combat leaders, Major General Charles W. Ryder.

Of the last assault on Hill 609, held by the German "Barentin" paratroops, General Bradley has said: "A strong enemy attack was repulsed. Fighting all day was intense and bloody. The enemy was engaged with bayonets and grenades, and there were many cases of outstanding bravery."





Damaged ships in the Bizerte Harbor. (Tunisia) May 10, 1943.



German planes bomb II Corps area North Africa.

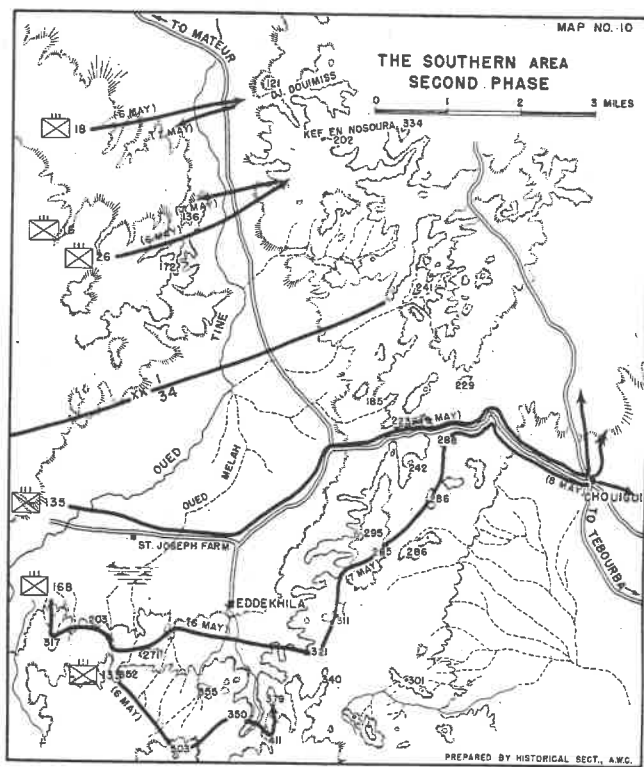


German prisoners captured by II Corps on the Gafsa-Gabes road.



While we were rounding up prisoners in the compound near Mateur, the British were bagging their quota near Tunis.

# THE FINAL PHASE OF THE TUNISIAN CAMPAIGN



Counter-attacks by the Germans on several hills lying east of Hill 609 continued, but all were repulsed. The 1st Division, after a bitter struggle, captured the important range of hills, Djebel El Anz, forcing the enemy to abandon the other great out-post, Djebel Badjar, thus finally opening the corridor through the Valley of the Tine.

In this latter phase, the 1st Division and the 1st Armored Division, cut directly across the path of the 34th Division. The 1st Armored Division striking with tremendous force towards Mateur, joining the elements of the 9th Division in the capture of that famous and important rail and road center.

The path of the 34th now lay open to the eastward. The mission of the Division was now to push east and to secure the pass north of Tebourba. The Division Headquarters were established at St. Joseph's Farm. The 135th Combat Team moved eastward along the main highway proceeding on to Chouigui. The 168th Infantry Regiment passed south of the main highway to the hills near Eddekhila arriving at Chouigui on the 8th of May, one day before the arrival of the 135th. The 133rd Infantry Regiment struck south in a thrust against Hills 503, 350 and 379. All three Regiments encountered the enemy as they advanced, and many minor but bitter engagements occurred, with many prisoners captured. The fighting around Eddekhila was particularly intense, the 168th Combat Team, with heavy losses, forcing the enemy to withdraw.

In the meantime, the 9th Division and the French Afrique Corps, to the north, had driven forward to the gates of Bizerte. While at the south, the British 8th and 1st Armies had driven remnants of the Axis forces on to the Peninsula of Cap Bon, forcing their surrender.

In the northern sector, the enemy still persisted in his defense. From Mateur, the 1st Armored Division struck at the new German line which ran from Mateur through Ferryville to the Tunis-Bizerte highway. The final defense of the enemy in this area was based upon Djebel Achkel, a lone mountain rising sheer from the plains some 1600 feet, the base surrounded by an enormous swamp and lake area. The enemy had entrenched on this high mountain from where he continued to pour down artillery fire upon our troops on the plains. These were men of the Goering Division, gallant and stubborn fighters, 300 finally surrendering to the 1st Armored Division after holding out for several desperate days.

By May 13th, it was obvious to both Allies and the enemy, that the Tunisian Campaign had reached its final phase. For some 25 days, the enemy had persisted stubbornly in his defense as he retreated into the relentless small corner from whence escape was impossible. Repeatedly, he had counter-attacked, but all to no avail. By this time, the British armored forces had pierced through to the city of Tunis itself. The final doom of the mighty Axis forces had now been determined. On the 15th of May, 1943, the enemy, realizing the utter futility of further resistance, surrendered.

During all of the African Campaign, the Division Artillery had served magnificently. Under the command of Brigadier General Albert C. Stanford, the four battalions played a prominent role in most of the engagements. The accuracy of their fire and the effectiveness of their support playing an indispensable part in the success of our infantry attacks. During the Tunisian episode, the 125th was commanded by Colonel A. T. Tracy, the 151st by Lt. Colonel George H. Sylvester, the 175th by Lt. Col. Joseph E. Kelly and the 185th by Lt. Colonel Charles Raymond. The casualty lists reveal that artillerymen too, paid a supreme sacrifice in attaining the victory.

The long, bitter Tunisian Campaign, in which the 34th had suffered such serious losses, had now come to an end. The entire area became a scene of much confusion; prisoners were marched in under control of our troops and thrown into temporary



Shoulder to shoulder, we fought with the British Tommy. British Artillery in action, Tunisia.

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Advanced troops of II Corps on the drive towards Matueur.

compounds in the vicinity of Djebel Achkel, where as many as 75,000 Germans and Italians were concentrated at one time. And now, the American soldier was permitted to see men of the Afrika Korps as they truly were; sun-bronzed, tough, muscular men, probably as fine a physical type as has ever fought in any war.

Many interesting incidents occurred in these days of confusion. There was the incident when Lt. Colonel DeLoss Marken, our beloved Division Chaplain, visiting and scouring the area with his famous movie camera, turned up at a prison compound where he engaged in conversation with the highest Commanding General of the German Forces. The General, with the haughty air that typifies the Prussian, remonstrated with the Padre on the ineptness of the Americans in organizing a prison camp. Whereupon, the Padre informed the rigid General, that Americans had never anticipated a surrender on the part of the noble Afrika Korps, that as a consequence, the Americans were caught unaware



Aerial view of a German Prisoner of War Camp west of Matueur, North Africa. Approximately 9,000 prisoners were taken in one day. Tunisia, May 9, 1943.



Italian prisoners captured by the 168th Infantry at Station in Sened whose mission was to collect equipment left behind in retreat. About 15 miles of Sened. February 2, 1943.

and unprepared to receive such a multitude of prisoners. Here the interview grew a bit acrimonious with the Chaplain finally informing the General that as a Chaplain his mission was one not of command but that he had really been serving in the Tunisian Campaign for one of the expressed purposes of burying the fallen soldiers of the German Forces left behind in their withdrawal.

There were other incidents. There was the story of a long convoy of German trucks, preceded by a German Colonel in a command car, who stopped his convoy at the cross-roads in Ferryville inquiring of an M.P. of the 34th Division: "Hey Buddy! Where is your P.W. Camp?" The obedient Military Police pointed down the road towards the compound in the vicinity of Djebel Achkel, whereupon the German Colonel saluted, mounted his vehicle and rolled on with his convoy, there to impound his troops in our great compound. Later we were to learn that the Colonel had spent many years in Brooklyn.

There was still another incident, when the Pro-



The 34th Division took its quota in the wind-up of the Tunisian Campaign, May, 1943.

vost Marshal, Major Leslie Brown, and the Division Judge Advocate, believing that Bizerte had fallen, proceeded by command car through Ferryville and other small communities, where they were greeted by shouting men, women and children and decorated profusely with flowers. They continued blithely on into Bizerte only to find when they reached the center of the city, that it was still occupied by enemy forces. Desultory enemy fire caused them to beat a hasty retreat to the gates of Bizerte where they met the first contingents of the 9th Division which were assembling at the city walls prepared to enter and clear out the remaining enemy snipers.

The British had named the Tunisian Campaign "Operation Retribution," a retribution which was to compensate for the terrible days of Dunkirk, Greece, Crete, and Norway. Now, Africa, from the gateways of Cairo and Alexandria in the east to Casablanca on the far Western Atlantic shores, had been cleared of the enemy and the pathway to Churchill's "soft under-belly" to Europe had been opened. Not only had the remnants of Rommel's great Afrika Korps been destroyed, but a total Axis Army of more than 320,000 were now dead, wounded or prisoners of war.

Northern Tunisia presented a scene of the havoc of war scarcely paralleled in history. Before us, strewn over the plains of Tunisia, lay thousands of German vehicles, while at Cap Bon, in the wake of the final British thrust, lay more thousands of destroyed vehicles and equipment of the enemy. Much of this he had himself destroyed, in a desperate last effort to escape. As men of the 34th gazed upon this holocaust of destruction, upon the plains and the sea-beaches, somehow, it all symbolized and foretold to them the ultimate, inevitable doom of Hitler's dream of a conquest of the world.

True, the war in North Africa had ended, but not so the work of the men of the 34th. Instead of the long-looked for rest and recuperation, the 34th Division was to be assigned to the task of cleaning up the northern sector and salvaging the material of both armies, scattered far and wide over the area. This onerous task was relieved by orders from General Ryder, assigning the troops at intervals to rest-areas on the sea. Here, men lulled in the sunshine adding a deeper tan to that which had been acquired during combat—a tan which darkened their bodies to the enviable hue of the Arab.

#### THE TUNIS VICTORY PARADE

Victories must perforce be celebrated and commemorated. No people on earth can quite equal the British and the French in pageantry. And so, at Tunisia, on May 20, 1943, one of the most colorful victory parades in modern history occurred: rugged "Goons" in olive green; dashing Spahis with white-flowing capes, lined with flaring red and with heads bound in white turbans, these men of the desert, mounted on snow-white Arabian stallions; French Colonials in blue uniforms, striped with red; smart British, in colored dress; Scotsmen, of various clans, kilted and with jaunty tams; and lastly the 135th Infantry Regiment, led by Colonel Ward, and representing the Americans, in somber khaki, marching none the less, with a determined cadence, heads high, faces deep brown and with an air of confidence in their ever demeanor.

It was an impressive two hour ceremony as the

troops, tanks and vehicles marched down the palm-lined Boulevard Gallieni and passed before the imposing review stand where stood General Eisenhower and all prominent Chiefs of the Allied Staff. Wave after wave of bombers and fighters roared over the colorful parade, as thousands upon thousands of frenzied spectators waved flags and rang the air with various "vivas."

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The Tunis Victory Parade.



General Eisenhower and General Giraud reviewing the Tunisian Victory Parade.

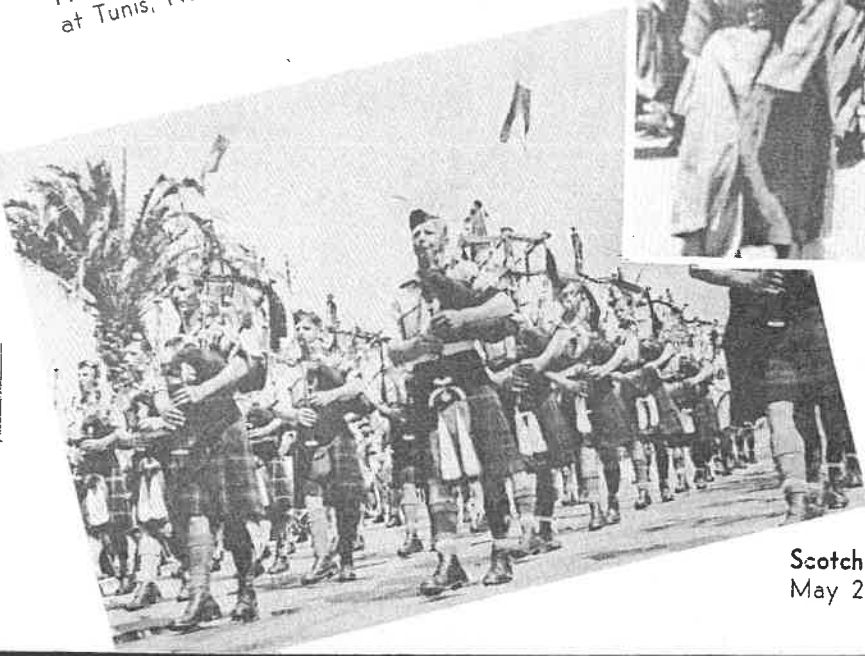
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# The Tunis Victory Parade



135th Infantry Regiment passing in review in the great Victory Parade, Tunis, Tunisia, May 20, 1943.

French North African troops marching in Victory Parade at Tunis, North Africa, May 20, 1943.



Scotch bagpipers marching in Victory Parade in Tunis, May 20, 1943.



Unidentified French Army Major; Left to right: General Henri Giraud and Major General Omar N. Bradley, North Africa, April 24, 1943.

### REMAINING DAYS IN NORTH AFRICA

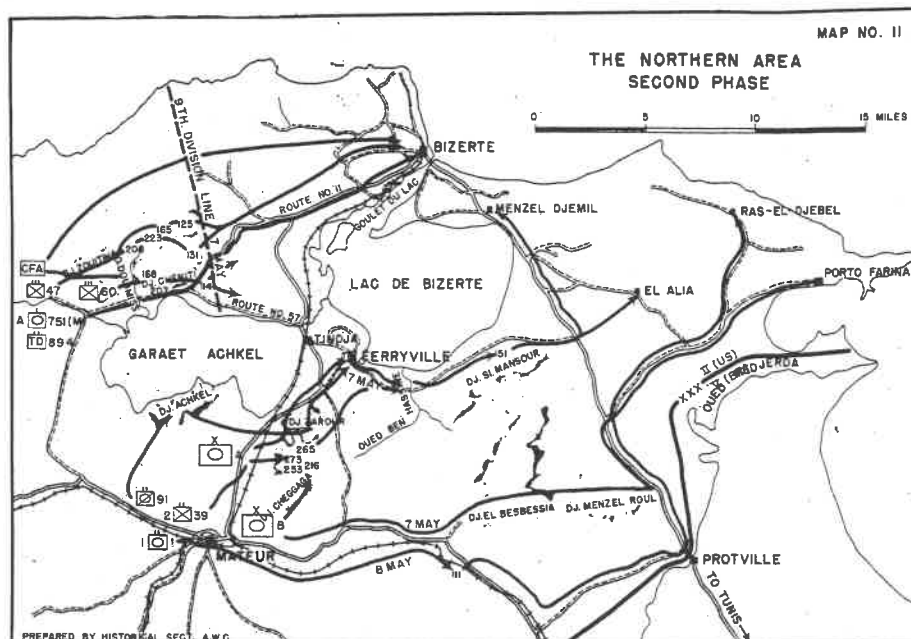
In late July, all troops of the 34th were sent back to the vicinity of Oran, some nine hundred miles to the west, there to immediately resume rigid combat training, including the running of fierce obstacle courses designed by the British Commandos. Troops were sent to the vicinity of Port Aux Poules, there to practice amphibious landing. Hard marches and maneuver problems, became the order of the day. All of this was in preparation for what the men now knew would be consummated in the drive into Italy. Indeed, General Ryder called in officers and non-commissioned officers to a great meeting on a hillside near Cap Falcon, where he reviewed and summarized the part played by the 34th in the Tunisian Campaign, and then, inadvertently divulged to all present, that our next objective was Italy. He depicted more bitter days ahead, describing the Tunisian Campaign as a mere ball ammunition maneuver compared to the phase to come. The General's dreams went farther, for he told us, on that day,

that, after Italy, would come Japan and the Far East. This prophecy was to turn true as far as he and his able Chief of Staff, General Norman E. Hendrickson, were concerned, for before the completion of the Italian Campaign, both of these officers were to be assigned to duty with the IX Corps in the Pacific.

If not during the Tunisian Campaign, at least following it, troops became conscious of the magnificent beauty of North Africa. A narrow coastal strip, some one-hundred-fifty miles wide, extends for two thousand miles from Casablanca to Tunis. It is a luxuriant strip, heavy with natural and cultivated vegetation. Here is a land of colors, purples and blues predominating. It is a land where the brush of Maxfield Parrish could well find inspiration, for the blues of the hills and the mountains and the deeper purples that come with the setting sun, present colors to be found nowhere else in the world. Wild flowers abound in profusion, ranging from flashing reds to yellows, blues and purple. It is an enchanting land of kaleidoscopic colors. The blue of the Mediterranean and the strange emerald green of the waters around Carthage, presented poetry in colors never to be forgotten by men of the 34th.

Days in Africa were coming to an end. Sicily had fallen and the Division was soon destined for the shores of Italy. Before leaving, the 100th Battalion had joined the 133rd Infantry Regiment as its 2nd Battalion. These Hawaiian boys, commanded by Lt. Colonel Farrant L. Turner, were accorded a most enthusiastic reception attended by speeches and martial music by the Regimental Band. This enthusiasm for the 100th Battalion was to grow for the Nisei were to prove themselves one of the outstanding combat units of the war.

Standing at the rails of their troop-ships as they skirted the shores of North Africa on their way to new adventures in Italy, veteran fighters of the 34th dwelt in sad reflection upon the fate of their comrades who had fallen at Algiers and on the bloody fields of Tunisia. The price of that victory had run high for the 34th: 4,254 men killed; wounded or missing, over one-third of the Division's strength expended in the terrible ordeal.





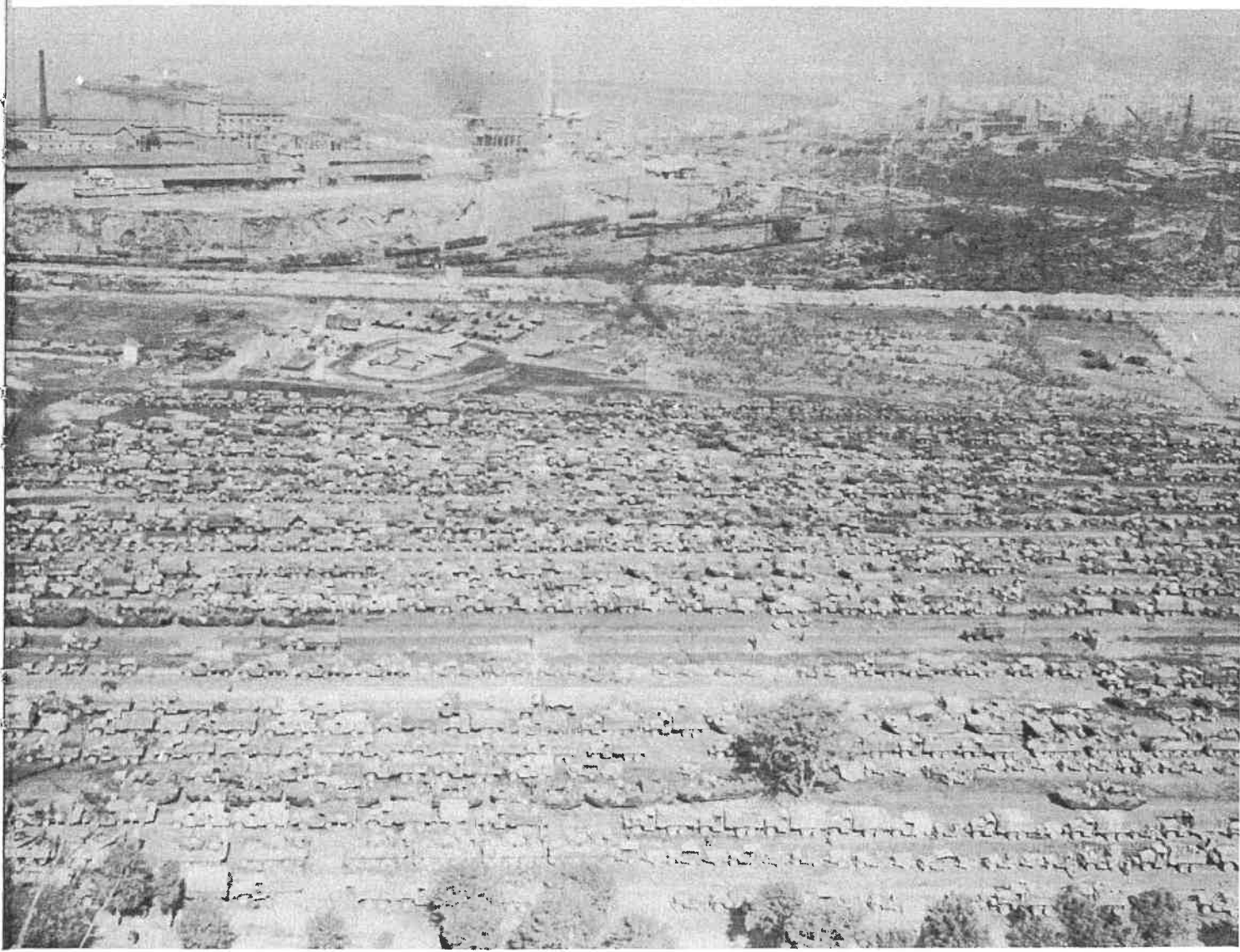
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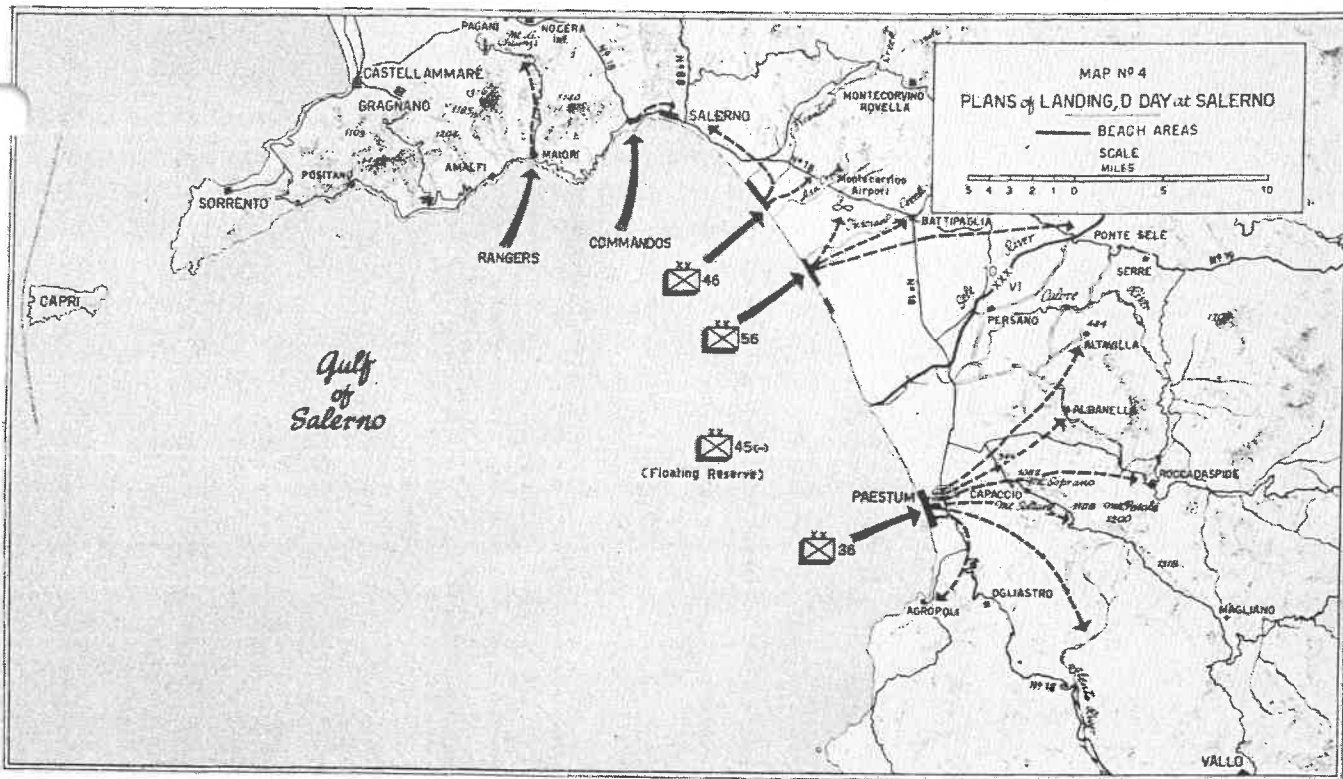
Arab women doing manuel labor, North Africa, December 15, 1942.



Camel caravans frequently crossed through the lines of the 34th during the Tunisian Campaign, North Africa in the Winter of 1943.



View of Oran Harbor showing motor pool in preparation for departure from North Africa for attack on Italy. August 8, 1944.



## Chapter XII

# THE ATTACK UPON "FORTRESS EUROPE"

In thirty-eight days of furious and rapid onslaught, General Montgomery's Eighth Army and General Patton's Seventh had swept across the Island of Sicily, thereby removing that important bastion guarding "Fortress Europe." Plans for the invasion of the Italian Mainland, had been in the making every since January, 1943, when General Mark Wayne Clark set up his headquarters at Oudjda, Morocco.

The grand strategy called for the Eighth British Army to strike across the Straits of Messina into Calabria, the toe of the boot of the Italian Peninsula. British troops were also to strike from Bizerte at Taranto, the important naval port located in the heel of the Italian boot, and to force their way up the Adriatic Coast towards the highly important harbor of Bari and the equally important air base at Foggia.

General Clark's 5th Army was composed of the British 10th Corps, which, in turn, consisted of the 46th and 56th Infantry Divisions (British), the 1st, 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions (United States), the 2nd and 41st Commandos (British) and the 23rd Armored Brigade (British). The strictly American Commandos consisted of the 82nd Airborne Division and the United States 6th Corps, which Corps in turn, consisted of the 36th, 45th, 3rd and 34th divisions.

The landing possibilities had been the subject matter of much careful study, based upon reconnaissance by Allied Naval and Air Forces. It was thought for some time that the effort should be

made somewhere north of Naples, preferably near the mouth of the Volturno River, but the final decision reached was to strike at what was commonly known as the Salerno Beach-head. This Beach-head extends from Salerno to the north to Agropoli to the south, at its widest some ten miles, sweeping in an arc between the two points mentioned, narrowing down at the extremities. The terrain consists of flat plains of highly productive agricultural character, ringed about completely by high mountains and hill affording, again, an advantage of



At a Naples dock, supply-packed vehicles are loaded into LST's for amphibious landing at Anzio, Italy.

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position to the enemy.

The broad, general plan contemplated a bold stroke by the 5th Army, a plan designed to cut across the Italian Peninsula and pocket the Germans between the British advancing from the south. British troops successfully crossed the Straits of Messina and pierced into the hinterland of the toe of Italy, while other British troops forced a landing at Taranto and drove deep into the geographical heel to the east. The plan was not to succeed, for the Germans, masters in the art of retreat, held off the attacking 5th Army, meanwhile executing an orderly withdrawal northward for the obvious purpose of establishing new defense lines.

Units of the 10th British, which included the 1st, 3rd and 4th United States Ranger Battalions, under the command of Lt. Col. William O. Darby, were to attack the shores on the Northern half of the arc. The boundary line between the 10th Corps (British) and the 6th Corps (American) was the confluence of the Calore and Sele rivers which join and empty into the Tyrrhenian Sea. The initial attack by the 5th Army was to be made by the 36th Infantry Division from the State of Texas, followed by the 45th Division, the 34th Division, the 3rd Division, the 13th Field Artillery Brigade and with the 82nd Airborne Division performing a separate mission to the north.

Major General Ernest J. Dawley was placed in command of the 6th Corps consisting of the 36th, 45th, 3rd and 34th Divisions, while Major General Mathew B. Ridgway was in command of the 82nd Airborne Division.

The 36th Division had arrived on the scene in the closing hours of the Tunisian Campaign. Assigned to the Italian assault mission while the invasion of Sicily was still in progress, the 36th Division with British troops, was engaged in practice landing operations in the vicinity of Arzew in North Africa, the 34th Division serving as the defense unit in these exercises.

On the 5th of September 1943, under heavy naval convoy, the American forces moved out of Oran, within two days skirting the shores of Sicily, passing into the Tyrrhenian Sea, the ships rendezvousing off the Salerno coast-line.

From north to south, units of the 5th Army had been assigned the following missions: The Rangers were to land in the vicinity of Maiori; the British Commandos were to establish a beach-head at Vietri, Sul Mare; the British 46th and 56th Divisions were to land 5 miles south and strike inland cutting the main arterial highways; while the 36th Division was to spear-head the landing in the southern sector in the vicinity of Paestum. In all, the Allied Forces comprised 100,000 British and 69,000 American troops.

At "H" hour, and Armada of 450 vessels lay off the shore of Salerno with tense troops poised for the fateful dash for the shore.

Late on the night of that memorable 8th of September, General Eisenhower's historical radio message reached the waiting troops. Laconically it announced: "Hostilities between the United Nations and Italy have terminated, effective at once." That message climaxed negotiations with the crumbling Italian Government; negotiations which were secretly concluded on the Island of Sicily at the very

moment our convoy was approaching the shores of Italy. The news spread rapidly among the troops throughout the convoy with the result that a more or less gala atmosphere prevailed. It is even told how the 36th Division band prepared to march off onto the beach-head in musical flare; men were in a joyous, hopeful mood, despite the effort of officers to alert them to the probable danger which lay ahead.

But Field Marshal Kesselring was not to be caught napping. Despite the fact that the Italian fleet at Taranto had surrendered and the Italian troops had ceased hostilities, Marshal Kesselring determined to fight it out on the beaches of Salerno. His 16th Panzer Division was placed in defense of the Salerno area; while the 15th and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, and the 26th Panzer Division. It was estimated that Kesselring had some 100,000 effective troops to meet the drive of the British from the south and to cope with the landing at Salerno.

On the first hour of the morning of the 9th of September, orders came over loud speakers announcing the attack. Men of the 36th Division scrambled over the sides of boats racing down the nets into landing craft and into "DUKW's" whose motors madly churned the waters driving the landing crafts towards the shore.

In the distance to the north, the eternal fires emitting from the volcanic crater of Vesuvius lighted the Heavens with an eerie red glow. But soon, lights of a different character illuminated the skies and the terrific roar and reverberations of cannons told the confident troops that, after all, the landing was not to constitute a friendly entrance into Italy. Unmistakably, scenes of battle lay ahead. As the first landing boats approached the Paestum beach, a loud voice boomed out over German speakers warning men of the 36th, that their cause was hopeless, that they were completely covered and that their only salvation was to make the landing, come forward and surrender. As the first troops sprang from their craft and rushed for the shore, the sky was thrown alight with flares and all hell broke loose on the attacking Americans.

#### THE 151ST FIELD ARTILLERY AT SALERNO

An almost forgotten incident in the history of the 34th Infantry Division was now to occur. The 141st and the 142nd Infantry Regiments of the 36th Division had successfully made their landings and were piercing across the low plains towards the hills beyond. The dominating feature of the Paestum Beach-head is Monte Soprano which commands full view of the field and which together with surrounding hills and mountains, constituted a seemingly impregnable wall to the exposed troops below. At the foot of Monte Soprano stand the ruins of the ancient Greek Temples dedicated to Neptune and Ceres, with the remnant columns of the Basilica, all still in a remarkable state of preservation and bespeaking that era when the Greeks predominated the area.

Our own 151st Field Artillery had been attached to the 36th Division for this Italian mission and was now to follow in behind and in support of the landing operations. The two Infantry Regiments soon met with terrific opposition, the enemy subjecting them to an unmerciful fire. The situation grew critical. It was then that the 151st made its famous land-

ing. Batteries took to their "DUKW's" and started for the shore, one "DUKW" being rammed resulting in the loss of a 105 Howitzer and all ammunition, though the crew was rescued to a man. The first "DUKW" to reach shore carried the Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Gerald E. DuBois and his Executive Officer, Major Eugene Surdyk. "DUKW" after "DUKW" unloaded its men and artillery pieces and immediately swung into position to lay in supporting fire, the infantry being then threatened with being driven off the Beach-head. In the confusion, three guns of the 36th Division Artillery, having become separated from their organization, were taken under the command of the 151st. Units of the Battalion reached the foot of Monte Soprano; while another unit reached a grove in the vicinity of the ancient Greek Temples. The latter group was immediately assaulted by some seven German Mark IV tanks, two of which were destroyed by our batteries, the rest retreating. By this time, the German strategy was apparent: entrenched as they were in the hills, they continued a ceaseless fire upon our men below, sending forth tanks and troops across the plains in sporadic attacks.

Again, space does not permit a detailed recital of the tactics employed by the 151st Field Artillery in this famous engagement. It was a day filled with repeated encounters with Mark IV's. At 10 o'clock, Captain Constant's Battery sustained an attack by seven of these armored monsters, our guns making two direct hits and causing the sortie to withdraw though none of the tanks were immobilized. Again, between the hours of 1030 and 1330 a total of some 14 Mark IV's assaulted the position of Captain Vaught. Five of these iron monsters received direct hits from our guns and were completely destroyed,



Water Buffalo hunt which provided first fresh meat for Division Headquarters troops in Tunisia.

the others dispersing in retreat.

During this latter engagement, Brigadier General Cowles, who commanded the 36th Division Artillery, joined Battery "A" as a number five man, causing Sergeant Frisk to remark that the General was the highest priced number five man it had ever been his privilege to command, adding that the General was a most efficient member of his crew. But the enemy was taking his toll, for in this engagement Lt. Fitzgerald, 1st Sergeant Boyce Murphy and Staff Sergeant Frisk of Battery "A" and Sergeant Zeek of Battery "C" were wounded.

The several sorties by German Mark IV's, having been successfully repelled, the Battalion spent the balance of "D" Day laying down supporting fire and attempting to search out enemy gun positions. The tenth and eleventh of September were spent in sporadic fire, reconnaissance and re-adjustment of positions.

During the twelfth and thirteenth, the units of the Battalion were being subjected to harrasing enemy fire resulting in several casualties, including the death of Pvt. Chester Szewezkyk. More casualties resulted. Headway against a stubborn enemy was slow. But on September 14th, the enemy showed signs of breaking and soon began a slow withdrawal leaving self-propelled guns and armored vehicles to cover his retreat. The Battalion moved towards the Calore River. By the 18th the Beach-head had been made secure. Then, a few brief days of lull for these Artillerymen, interrupted by the inevitable training period which always ensued immediately after troops were drawn out of line.

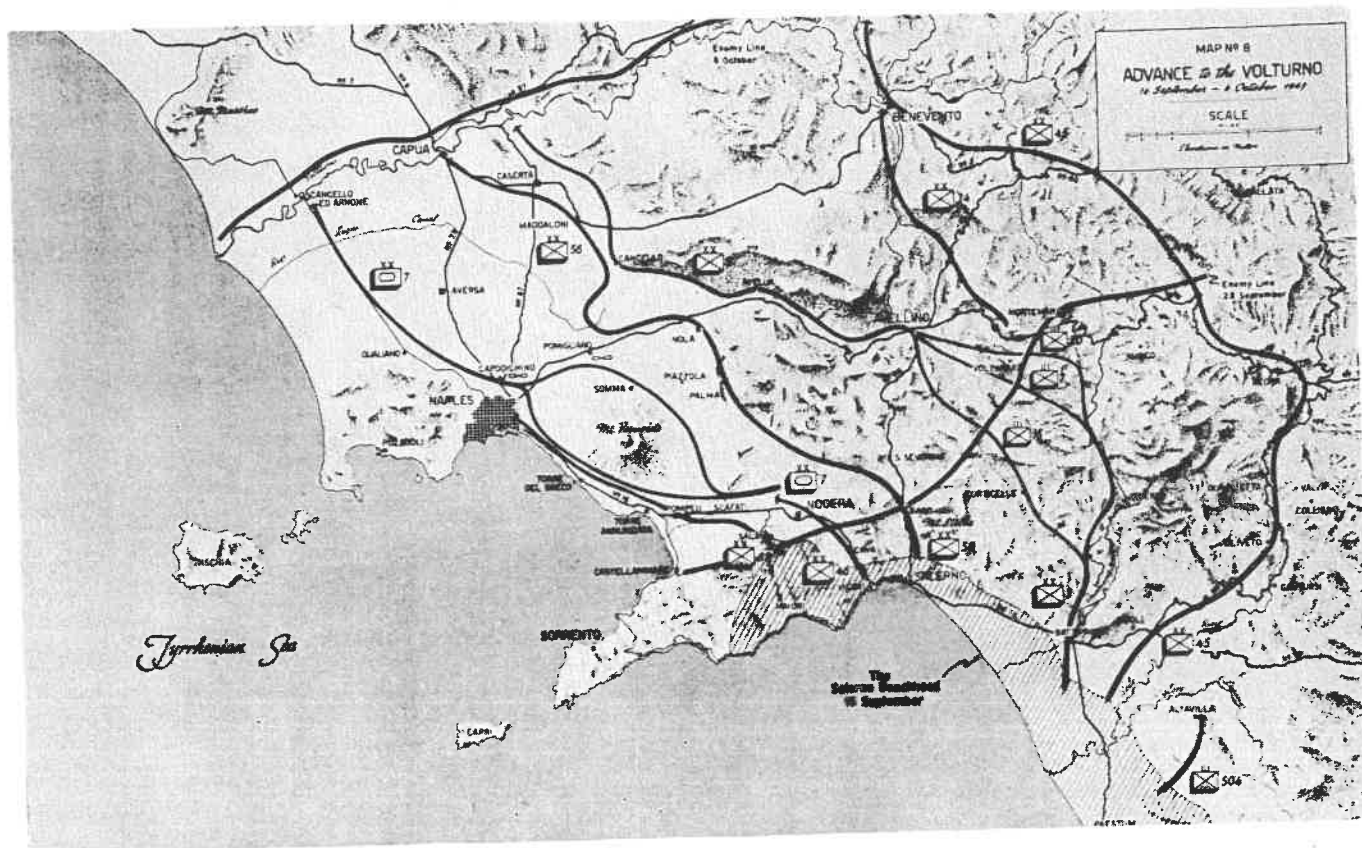
How signally, the 151st Field Artillery had performed during this terrific engagement is attested by letters of commendation received from the 36th Division Artillery Commander, Brigadier General Cowles; Major General Fred L. Walker, Commanding the 36th Division; from Major General Lucas, IV Corps Commander; from our own General Ryder, and from Brigadier General A. C. Stanford, the 34th Division Artillery Commander.

One commendation reached the 151st from 5th Army Headquarters which reads as follows: "The Army Commander views with pride the courage and heroism displayed by the officers and men of 151st Field Artillery Battalion and is pleased to transmit this commendation." This commendation had been prepared by the Assistant Adjutant General of the 5th Army Headquarters. When it reached General Clark's desk, he added in his own handwriting: "Is this all that we can do for this outfit?", signing the note, "M. C." Men of the 34th Division are still wondering why that "something more" was never done. Doubtless it has been the result of oversight, for if ever an Artillery unit deserved a presidential citation, it is the 151st for its outstanding performance in saving the beach-head at Paestum. That it did save the beach-head is well recognized by men of authority who were there and observed the engagement. The Chief of Staff of the 36th Infantry Division had this to say about the 151st's performance: "Had it not been for the arrival of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion thirty minutes before the first counter-attack by German tanks, it is probable that the beach-head would have been destroyed." And in the pamphlet on Salerno included in "The American Forces in Action" series, the Intelligence Division of the Army recognized the performance of

this great Artillery Battalion: "Guns of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion had reached the mainland . . . just in time to beat off an early German attack."

To understand the magnitude of the firing performance of the 151st at the Salerno engagement, it

need only be told, that in these eight furious days, the Battalion had fired more rounds of ammunition than it did during the entire Tunisian Campaign. The 151st had added new glory to a banner unsullied in a battle-history that commenced with the war between the States.



## Chapter XIII

# "THE SOFT UNDER-BELLY"

For centuries, Armies had attempted to advance north towards Rome from the southern shores of Italy. Hannibal of old Carthage had attempted it and failed on the fields of Paestum. Hordes had driven down to Rome through northern corridors, but the Allies were now to attempt the considered impossible feat of driving north through the rugged, Apennines which extended like a gigantic alligators back from the toe of Italy up the Valley of the Po. Eight hundred miles of rugged, tortuous mountain passes lay before these British and American troops in their effort to dislodge the Germans from the Peninsula of Italy.

The 34th was a reserve Division in the Salerno phase. But the day was now at hand when the 34th as a whole was to be committed to this formidable campaign.

The 135th and 168th Regimental Combat Teams were the first to depart from Oran for Italy, their destination being Naples. Enroute, they were to discover that Naples had not yet fallen and that

that port would not be accessible until its capture had been assured. The convoys then turned back towards the Salerno Beach and were waiting off shore when the 133rd Infantry Regiment arrived from Oran.

The 133rd had left the docks at Mers El Kebir on the 17th of September, arriving at Salerno Bay on the 22nd, anchoring off the mouth of the Sele River. The trip from Oran had been without incident, all ships arriving safely. As they entered the harbor they were afforded coverage by British and American aircraft. At 1000 hours on the 23rd of September, the assault boats were lowered and the troops taken to shore, all without enemy opposition.

By now, the Germans had slowly withdrawn northward in orderly retreat establishing a line across the Peninsula north of Naples. Our immediate objectives were Naples, with its unparalleled harbor, and its close-by airfields, including Capo di Cino; while the great airfields near the Adriatic at Foggia were to be captured by the British, who had

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Lt. Col. Ludwig Gittler, Division Medical Officer.

**133rd Infantry troops** unloading at the Salerno Beach-head, Agropoli, Italy. September 21, 1943.

of Colonel Ray C. Fountain.

Orders came to move northward some 60 to 80 miles, the exact objective to be made known en-route. Progress was greatly impeded by delaying action of the enemy, who had blown bridges, mined roads and approaches to natural river crossings. The route selected for the advance was generally along the line, Battapaglia - Eboli - Teora - Linoni - Montemarano. The going was tough, for the fall rains had set in, transforming the roads into slippery dangerous passes. On the evening of the 27th of September, forward elements had reached the Calore River. Progress continued to be retarded by the torrential rains and the mine fields which lay before the troops, many of these fields being pointed out to the Americans by friendly Italian civilians. Advanced units were met by occasional harrassing artillery fire. It was not until the morning of the 30th of September that real contact was made with the enemy. On that day, the 100th Battalion engaged in a brisk skirmish with enemy machine guns. The 1st Battalion then passed through the 100th Battalion and established a road block in the vicinity of Tratula on the road between Avellino and Benevento. The Battalion then struck for Montemilieto, gaining its objective in the early morning of the 1st of October.

Our troops had by-passed Naples, which it should be remembered, had not yet fallen. German troops held on with great tenacity to this important sea-port, blowing out sewage systems, water and port facilities, before leaving the city the night of October 1st.

On October 2nd, the 133rd reached the vicinity of San Giorgio, when orders came directing the Combat Team to attack and capture the ancient and important city of Benevento, an early Roman stronghold, partially surrounded by an ancient wall and on the main street of which stood the famous arc dedicated to Trojan in the year 114 A. D. Through the city ran the famous Calore River spanned by a

already taken the important Adriatic seaport of Bari.

Upon landing, the 133rd assembled in the vicinity of the ancient temple of Neptune on the Paestum beach-head. The Regimental Combat Team consisted of the 133rd Infantry, the 151st Field Artillery Battalion, joined later by the 125th Field Artillery Co. "A" of the 109th Engineers and Co. "A" of the 109th Medical Battalion, one Platoon from the 105th AA Battalion, and Tank Destroyer Reconnaissance units from the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion. This great Combat Team was placed under the command

massive stone bridge which the Germans destroyed as they withdrew.

The assault upon Benevento had been preceded by heavy bombing and artillery fire from the 151st and the 125th Battalions. The assault was made and the famous and important strategic city was captured. Though the resistance had not been great, substantial casualties had, nevertheless, been sustained by Companies "I" and "K."

As the 26th German Panzer Division withdrew slowly and in orderly manner northward to a new

line of defense, Engineers threw a span across the destroyed bridge and troops moved across the Calore River.

While the assault on Benevento was taking place, the 135th and 168th Regimental Combat Teams were devoting themselves to training, with special emphasis being placed upon the use of anti-tank weapons. The Division had now tasted the ferocity of the Italian Campaign and old veterans were busy orienting new recruits, preparing them for the ordeal which lay ahead.



135th Infantry Regiment troops boarding LCI boats headed for beach landing at Agropoli, Italy, September 21, 1943.



Lava from Vesuvius buries this Italian village, March, 1944.



Riflemen of the Battalion, 133rd Infantry passing through bombed section of Benevento, Italy, Oct. 10, 1943.



Naples Harbor.

## THE REAR ECHELON MOVES TO ITALY

On the 24th day of September, 1943, the Rear Echelon, including Headquarters Troops, boarded the transport "Jefferson" at Mers El Kebir, remaining at anchor there for three nights before setting off for Italy. While resting in the harbor, the ship was occasionally shaken by charges of depth bombs touched off intermittently at the mouth of the harbor, for the purpose of warding off one-man torpedoes which had become a menace to our shipping.

On the morning of 27th of September, the convoy churned out into the open sea on its eastward course, skirting the north coastline of Africa. It was a beautiful day, the bright sun dancing on the heavenly blue waters of the Mediterranean. Oran lay high above rimmed by rows of majestic palms, the city, an iridescent display of delicate variegated colors, like a giant opal resting on the bosom of the hills.

The water was quiet. The troop-ship was in truth a small luxury liner affording great comfort to the men who were being fed unusually excellent rations throughout the voyage.

On the second day out, news came of disaster to convoys a few hours ahead which had been successfully attacked by German submarines. For the

next two days, evidence of destruction wrought by these prowlers of the seas could be seen: empty life boats, rafts and debris drifting and tossing on the waves, telling their mute story. The ships arrived at the harbor of Bizerte where they anchored for three days and three nights awaiting word from naval reconnaissance as to a safe lane to pursue and awaiting word of the fall of Naples.

Leaving Bizerte, the convoy skirted the shores of Sicily on the morning of the 2nd of October passing by the beautiful Isle of Capri and entering into the harbor of Naples where it anchored. It was a day of gorgeous sunshine, with majestic and frightening Vesuvius looming high in the blue skies and from whose caverns belched forth rolling clouds of white vapor. Before us lay the magnificent panorama of Naples, circling the harbor with its vari-colored buildings rising, tier after tier, to the very summits of the hills, the highest of which was crowned by an ancient fortress-like castle which stood out boldly in sky-line relief.

During the night, the Germans had finally withdrawn from Naples, the terrific boom of cannons telling plainly that the battle was in progress at the northern outskirts of the city. Preparations for landing now, took place. Great scramble nets were



thrown over the sides down which men descended with full packs to landing craft which were reeling precariously in the tumbling waters. The boats proceeded cautiously into the harbor through a narrow channel which had been cleared by the navy. As we crowded our way to the small dock area which had been hastily repaired, a scene of terrific destruction appeared before us. Natives were later to relate that over six hundred bombing attacks had been made on the city. The harbor lay in utter ruins, as did miles of buildings lying in close proximity.

In the vacant city, an eerie atmosphere prevailed. A handful of nervous natives were grouped in the vicinity of the dock, but the streets were utterly empty and silent. Down the famous Via Roma, not a living soul was to be seen; a street, in peace-time, one of the most crowded thoroughfares in all the world.

Advance units of the 82nd Airborne were just entering the city. By the following day, a few natives came down from the hills and from the numerous caves of Naples searching for food and water, returning cautiously to their homes. The Germans

had done a most thorough job of destroying all utilities, including water, sewage and lights, all of which were to be restored by American engineers in short order.

Colegio Ciano, an institution named after the father of Mussolini's famous son-in-law, Count Ciano, was selected as a bivouac area. The college, consisting of a dozen modernistic buildings, was located in Bagnoli, some ten miles hike from the water front. As our troops marched down the Via di Mare and up Posillipo, occasional terrific explosions could be heard coming from various parts of the city. Just after the rear guard of one element had passed over a seemingly safe road-way, a terrific explosion took place, opening a tremendous cavern in the road and destroying near-by buildings—another time-bomb that narrowly missed its mark.

Upon arrival at the college, the troops made themselves as comfortable as possible on the cold floors in the great unheated buildings. Engineers had made a hurried search for bombs and booby traps and had pronounced the building safe, only to discover some twenty-four hours later that enough



## Scenes of Naples



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explosives had been planted to destroy all buildings. The time-bombs were carefully and quickly removed, and just in time.

The next few days were days of terror for both civilians and troops, for the Germans had planted time-bombs in numerous places throughout the city. Indeed, one tremendous explosion took place in the beautiful main Post-Office, ripping one wing of the building and blowing an enormous cavern in the adjoining street. Some thirty American soldiers were killed in the explosion and some sixty Italians killed or wounded. A score of 82nd Airborne troops were the victims of yet another time-bomb explosion which wrecked the building in which they were quartered. Meanwhile, the desperate, departed enemy did not forget Naples; for every night, German planes raided down from the north to drop their bombs indiscriminately on the defenseless city.

Characteristically, the G-I used what precious little time he had roaming the streets, of the city and purchasing countless souvenirs from shops that were gradually opening for business. Prices were low to begin with, but they quickly rose to prohibitive prices, not only because of the inherent qualities

of Italian tradesmen, but at least in part, due to the fact that men of the Air Force who received higher pay, spent their money so lavishly as to preclude the dough-boy from competing.

For the most part, the population of Naples seemed highly pleased with the arrival of our troops. To them it meant food, water and a gradual restoration to a safer life, although the nightly interruptions of German planes caused thousands to remain in the mountains or hide away in the numerous old caves and caverns which penetrate the hills of the city. Despite this general friendly attitude, there was an atmosphere of resentment on the part of many for the terrific destructive raids we had visited upon the harbor. A general sadness, helplessness and hopelessness seemed to pervade the populace generally, but the Italians are a spirited people as was demonstrated by their early efforts to restore the city, stone by stone. It should be said that our bombing of Naples was a selective type and damage was chiefly in the vicinity of the vast harbor and upon industrial sites.

With the fall of Benevento, orders came for the Division to assemble in the vicinity of Montesarchio.



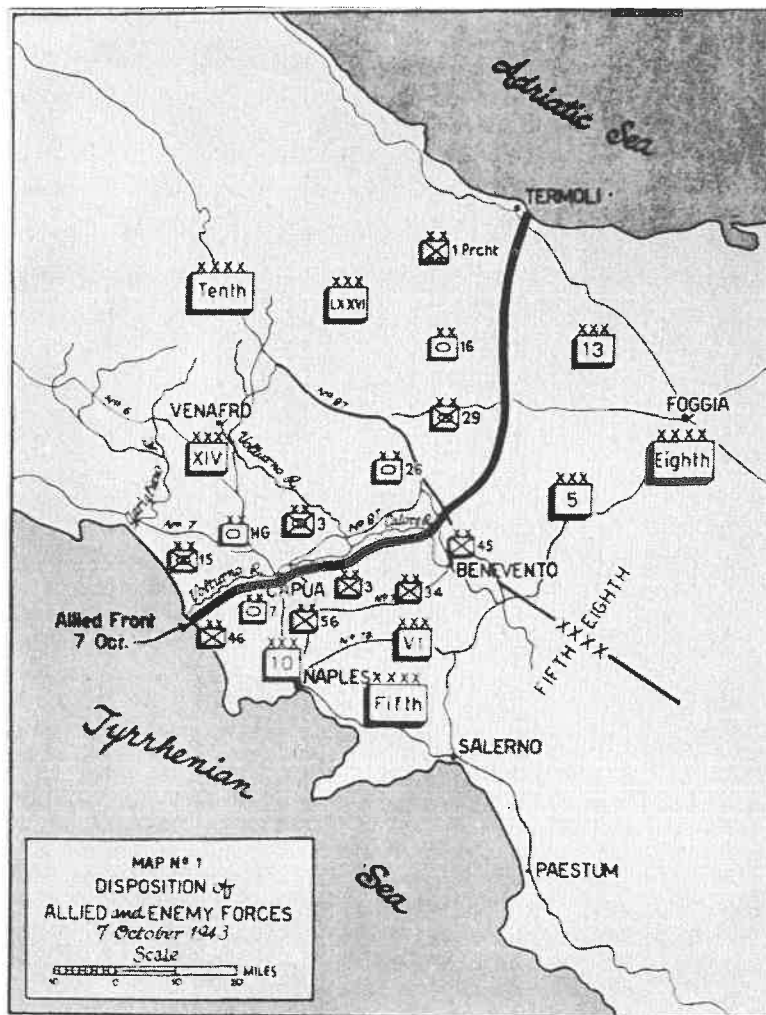
**A Familiar scene** in the south of Italy. It's a "honey-wagon."



**A typical Naples scene**, January, 1944.

## Chapter XIV

# THE TURBULENT VOLTURNO



### TACTICAL SITUATION AND PREPARATIONS FOR CROSSING THE RIVER

With the fall of the important key position of Benevento, the Italian Campaign was to enter its second phase. All troops of the British, American, French and later, the Brazilians, were placed under the XVth Army Group commanded by General Sir R. L. G. Alexander. The Allied Armies had now moved northward some two hundred and fifty miles. The Germans, having put up their most bitter resistance at Salerno, withdrew in an orderly manner to the north, establishing their new line of defense across the Peninsula in a line commencing on the western Tyrrhenian Coast, south of the Volturno River; thence easterly through Capua, Montesarchio, Benevento, San Marco Del Cavoti; thence, in a northerly direction through Larino to Petacciato on the Adriatic coast-line.

The Fifth Army sector ran from the vicinity of Benevento westerly to the Tyrrhenian Sea; while the Eighth Army occupied the line from the vicinity

of Benevento, easterly to the Adriatic Sea.

The American Fifth Army consisted of VIth Corps, commanded by Major General John T. Lucas, and the British Xth Corps commanded by Lt. General Sir Richard L. McCreery. VIth Corps was composed of three highly seasoned, battle experienced Divisions: the 3rd, under Major General Lucian K. Truscott, Jr.; the 45th under Major General Troy H. Middleton; and our 34th, under Major General Charles W. Ryder.

Opposing the Fifth Army, Field Marshall Albert Kesselring, stood with the German Tenth Army, consisting of the 3rd and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, the Hermann Goering Division, and the 26th Panzer Division. The relative strength of the two Armies was: American, 100,000 troops, Germans, 60,000 troops, but this superiority in numbers was more than balanced by the strategic defensive positions enjoyed by the enemy.

On the 15th of September 1943, orders issued from Headquarters, XVth Army Group, to cross the Volturno River and to force the enemy back some



Patrol of the 168th Infantry, in the outskirts of Caiazzo, Italy, on the lookout for possible German snipers. October 13, 1943.

thirty miles. The drive northward was to be coordinated with the British Eighth Army on the right. The turbulent Volturno River has its multiple source deep in the mountains in the vicinity of Isernia, the several streams entering the Volturno at intervals to the north and south of Venafro, from where the waters tumble down in a southerly direction joining the Calore River in the vicinity of Amorosi, from whence it flows southwesterly emptying into the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Orders for the attack reached the 34th Division, then assembled in the quagmire in the vicinity of Montesarchio. The interminable winter rains had set in, impeding the progress of troops moving to new assembly areas to the south of the Volturno River. The original attack had been scheduled for October 2nd but delay, occasioned by incessant rains, the blow-out bridges, the partially destroyed roads and the numerous mine fields, so retarded the movement of troops and supplies as to cause the postponement of the attack until early dawn of the 13th of October.

The mission of the three Divisions constituting the American VI Corps was as follows: the 45th Division, then in the vicinity of Benevento, was to strike westerly and to advance parallel with the Calore River along its north bank, with the ultimate objective of gaining the area in the vicinity of Amorosi; next, and to the west, the 34th Division was to

cross the Volturno with the objective of capturing the area around the high mountain villages of Caiazzo and San Giovanni; while the 3rd Division, next in order to the west, was to cross the Volturno north of Caserta at a place where the river makes a sharp hairpin turn, with the objective of gaining the heights, Monte Majulo, Monte Caruso, and Hill 580.

The Xth British Corps, composed of the 46th Division, the 56th Division, and the 7th Armored Division was to strike across the Volturno at three different points on a line extending from Capua, west to the Tyrrhenian Sea. The 7th Armored Division was to load tanks on L.S.T.'s and to effect a landing north of the mouth of the Volturno River.

By the 10th of October, the 34th Division had moved into its sector south of the Volturno River, relieving the 30th Regimental Combat Team of the 3rd Division. Our sector extended some fifteen kilometers from the junction of the Calore and Volturno Rivers, southwesterly to the vicinity of Limatola. The troops had moved forward quietly through the jumbled mass of hills where they remained concealed while intensive reconnaissance was being made by the 135th to the northeast and the 168th to the southwest, searching for suitable crossings and gaining information concerning the position of the enemy.

Across the Volturno, then swollen to swift, dangerous depths, stood a mighty mass of hills and

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mountains about which the river twisted in a semi-circle like a "moat defending an ancient fortress." Troops must ford, swim or cross the turbulent Volturno in rafts or small landing boats, then scramble up the muddy, slippery north bank of the river, advance across the open flat area to storm the high hills and mountains beyond.

Kesselring's troops, anticipating the impending attack, had been diligently at work feverishly laying mines, digging gun replacements, and organizing a system of machinegun, mortar and artillery positions to cover the likely river crossings with inter-locking bands of fire; while self propelled artillery pieces lay in waiting at the foot of the hills prepared to strike at us in any direction.

The assault missions had been assigned to the 168th and 135th Regiments, with the 133rd and the attached 756th Tank Battalion held in reserve.

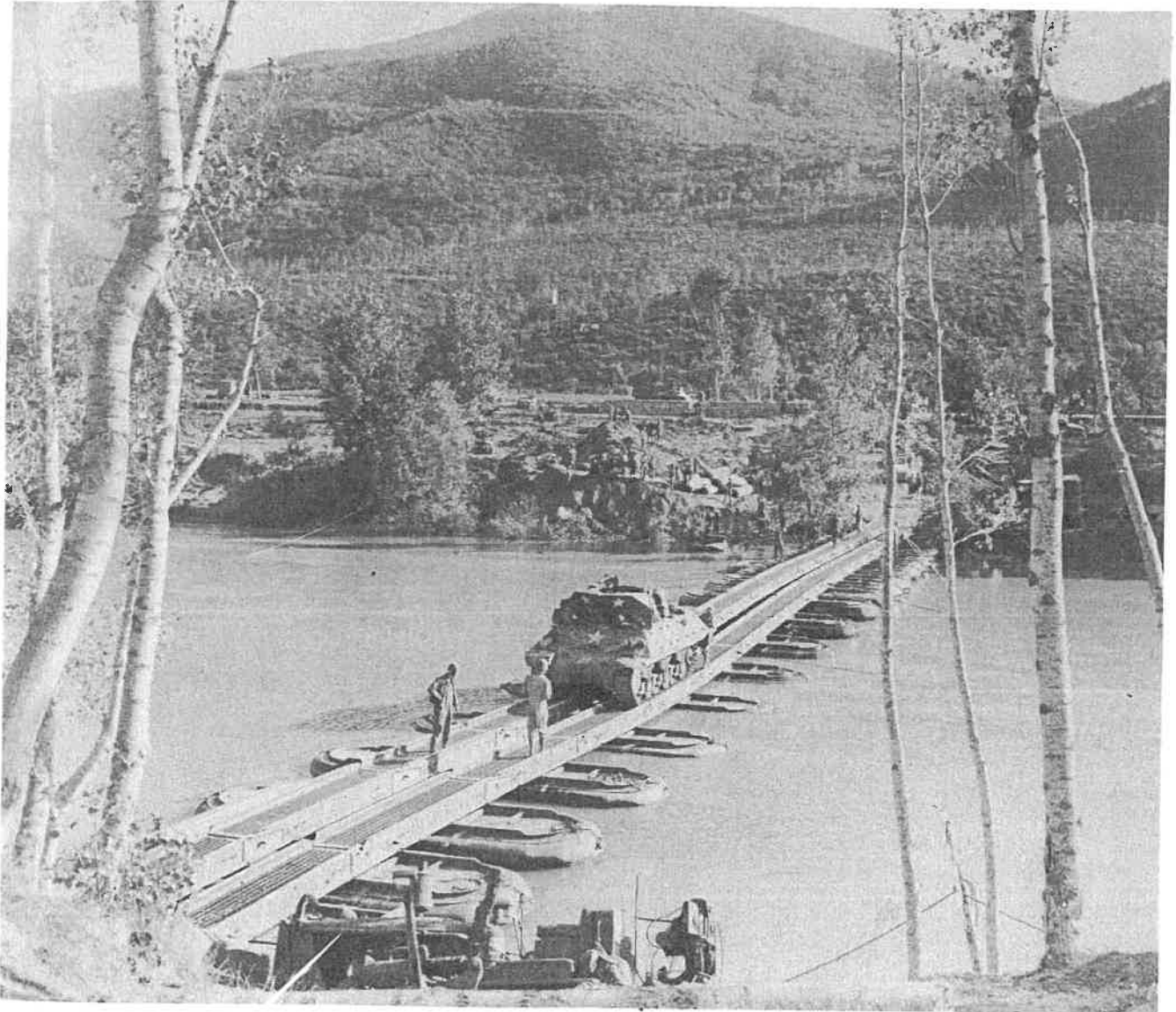
Patrols from each of the assaulting Regiments had successfully crossed the river, returning with important information concerning enemy gun positions. were water-proofing vehicles, improvising rafts and engaging in dry-land practice in the use of assault boats. The hands of the time clock of destiny were creeping relentlessly towards zero hour.

While the attacks by the 168th and the 135th Regiments were co-ordinated and simultaneous, the action of each will be reviewed separately. While river crossings were being determined, troops

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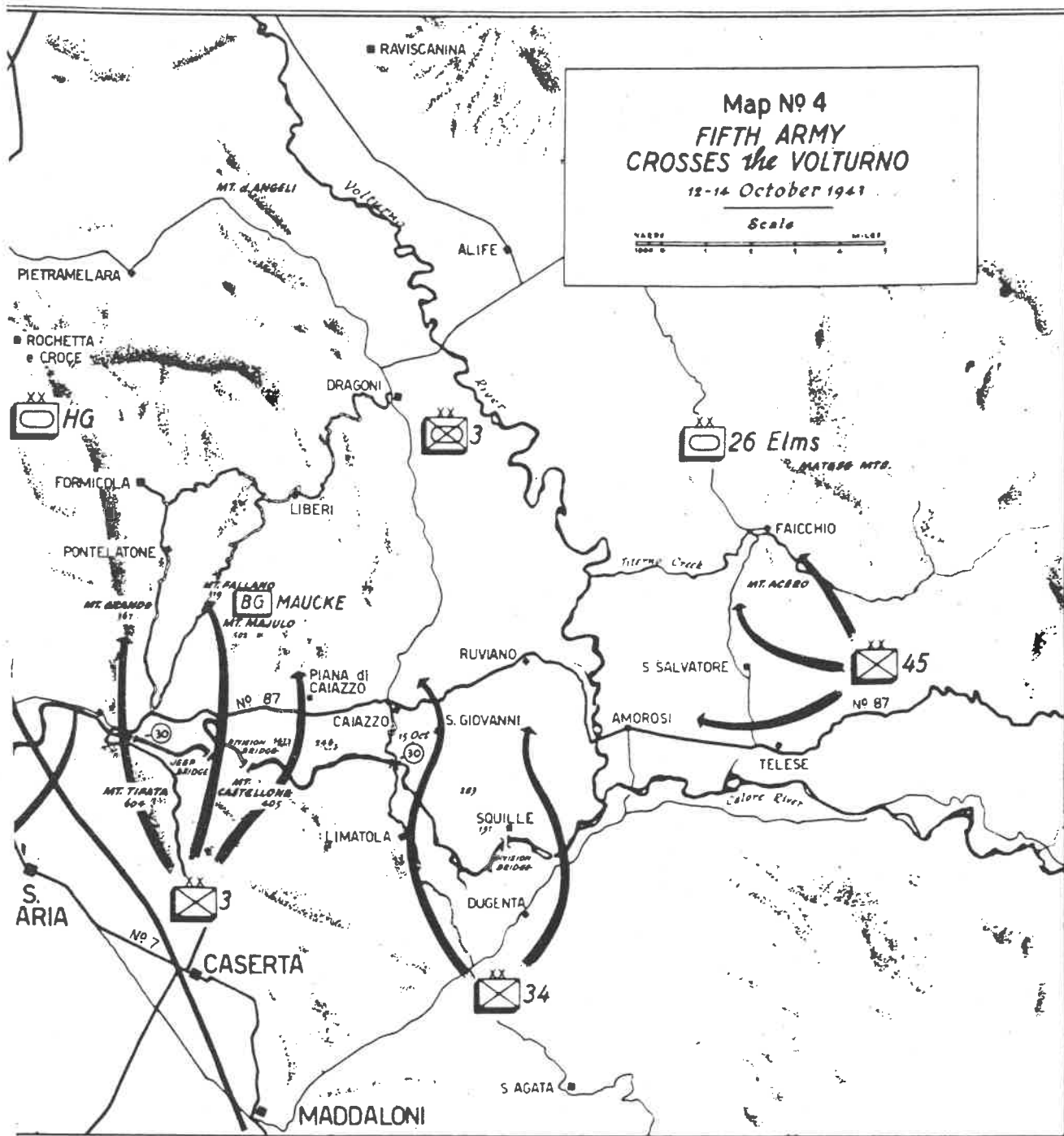
Gun Carriage and soldiers crossing pontoon bridge, laid down over the Volturno River, Italy, October 13, 1943. Members 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, North of Castera.



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# First Crossing of the Volturno

## THE 168TH INFANTRY COMBAT TEAM



At dusk on the evening of the 12th of October, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 168th Infantry moved into their assembly area, accompanied by Company "C" of the 109th Engineer Battalion which was to assist in the crossings of the river. The 3rd Battalion was to protect the left flank, its 37mm guns to afford a protecting fire as the troops crossed the river. The anti-tank company, behind mine-sweeping parties, moved to positions near the

river, its mission to repel any armored attacks which might greet our men, once the far banks had been scaled.

The skies had cleared, the moon arose and descended and blackness engulfed the scene, leaving the outline of the hills beyond faintly silhouetted against the sky. At 0145 hours on the 13th of October, all Division and supporting artillery joined in a terrific raking of the enemy positions on the op-

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posite side of the river. At 0200 hours, the barrage was lifted, followed by a series of concentrated fires designated to cover the crossing points of the two Battalions. A cover of smoke was laid down by the attached 2nd Chemical Battalion. Zero hour had arrived.

Colonel Butler ordered the 1st Battalion to cross the swollen stream at a ford in the vicinity of Limatola; the 2nd Battalion to cross in the vicinity of L'Annunziata. Holding their guns high over their heads, the initial troops of the 1st Battalion moved quietly into the torrential waters, reaching the opposite bank and struggling up its steep, slippery slopes. Immediately enemy mine fields were encountered, resulting in several casualties. The remainder of the Battalion crossed some 800 yards farther down the stream in assault boats, some reaching the opposite shore safely, others being swept down with the current, necessitating the abandonment of boats and forcing the men to ford the stream at shoulder depth. Men were drowned, radio and other equipment were rendered useless, but the dauntless Battalion, in the true tradition of the 168th, and in the face of bitter enemy fire, had triumphed in the initial phase of its mission.

Due to the darkness and our own smoke screen, troops of the 2nd Battalion missed the crossing near L'Annunziata, necessitating the stringing of guide ropes across the deep water to which the men clung as they forded the cold, dangerous stream. But at 0645 hours the entire Battalion had scrambled up the precipitous, greasy banks and made its way to the foot-hills beyond. One hour later, the Battalion had gained the high ground overlooking and east of San Giovanni.

While little resistance was offered to the 2nd

Battalion, the 1st Battalion was not so fortunate. At dawn, heavy enemy machinegun and mortar fire held up the advance, but troops soon proceeded forward behind a blessed rolling barrage laid down by the 175th Field Artillery, and the 168th Cannon Company, aided by the concentrations laid down by the balance of the Division Artillery. By nightfall, the 1st Battalion had reached its objective, a high hill overlooking San Giovanni. While this was all happening, a platoon of Company "A" of the 2nd Battalion had actually entered the village of San Giovanni only to be driven out by our own Artillery. At 0530 hours, Co. "L," sharing in the protection of the Regiment's left flank, crossed down stream over an old ferry-site on a line with Caiazzo, perched high on a commanding hill.

At 1700 hours the 3rd Battalion, less Co. "L," had crossed the river reaching the high ground northeast of Caiazzo in the early morning of October 14th. The enemy abandoned Caiazzo, but not without first having perpetrated a major and indefensible atrocity—the putting to death of 19 innocent old men, women and children by rifle fire.

Immediate pursuit of the enemy was delayed for lack of supplies. When, finally pontoon bridges had hurriedly been constructed, desperately needed supplies and ammunitions arrived. With the 2nd Battalion in Regimental reserve, the 1st and 3rd Battalions moved forward, the 3rd Battalion capturing Marciano in a flank attack. By the 17th of October, the Regiment stood in command of heights overlooking Alvignano. The 168th had accomplished its mission. The casualties had been considerable, and now the men, inadequately dressed for the cold weather, were suffering untold misery with the return of a heavy rain.

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## THE 135TH INFANTRY COMBAT TEAM

At zero hour, Colonel Robert W. Ward ordered the 1st Battalion to cross the river and attack the high ground behind the village of Squille. The night was dark and to avoid men becoming separated, all troops had been directed to wear a white strip of tape down the center of their backs, a precaution which paid dividends.

All across the Italian Peninsula, tense, grim-faced men from many nations were driving forward, the roar of heavy guns reverberating through the hills like mighty thunder, while the skies were lighted by numerous flares and explosions. On our front the 125th Artillery was raining down its preparation fire, joined in by all Division and support Artillery.

Men of the 135th slid down the slippery slopes of the river-bank wading out into the deep, cold, swift-flowing water gaining the opposite shore in the face of considerable opposition. At first the advance was rapid. Company "A" had effected its crossing just south of the confluence of the Calore and Volturno Rivers, while Company "E" had crossed at the southern extremity of the Regimental sector. Company "B" followed Company "A," followed in turn, by Company "C." Gaining the opposite shore, troops rushed rapidly over the lower terrain on towards the foothills, encountering mine fields, which, together with enemy fire, held up the advance until the following morning. By that time,

the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion had succeeded in bringing four tank destroyers across the river and these, with the assistance of our Artillery, permitted the advance to proceed.

In the rush across, Squille had been by-passed and by noon of the 14th of October, the 135th troops had reached their objective, the high hills to the east of Caiazzo, had made contact with the 168th Infantry and the 45th Division and had sent out patrols reaching as far north as highway 87. The enemy was clearly withdrawing.

Many men in both Regiments distinguishing themselves in the heroic first crossing of the turbulent Volturno. In the 135th, Lt. Joe H. Kimble, commanding Co. "F" was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for leading his men across the River under intense machinegun fire; 2nd Lt. Vernon C. Harris was likewise rewarded, but posthumously, for in leading his men across he was mortally wounded by shell fragments; 2nd Lt. William D. Sporbert of Company "A," twice wounded by mines, was also given the same coveted award. Their names are indelibly carved on the banner of the gallant 135th.

The 109th Engineers and supporting Engineer units had again performed a magnificent and most difficult task. The construction of pontoon bridges was constantly being interrupted by artillery fire, several direct hits being made and shell fragments

from nearby explosions frequently puncturing the rubber pontoons. The Engineers worked with feverish haste repatching pontoons and reconstructing.

The problem now became one of a battle for supplies. At first, ammunition and food were carried across on the shoulders of struggling men, but finally by the afternoon of October 14th and the morning of October 15th, a 30-ton bridge had been built by Company "B" of the 16th Armored Engineers to serve the 168th, and other bridges were constructed to serve the 135th. Difficulty in bring-

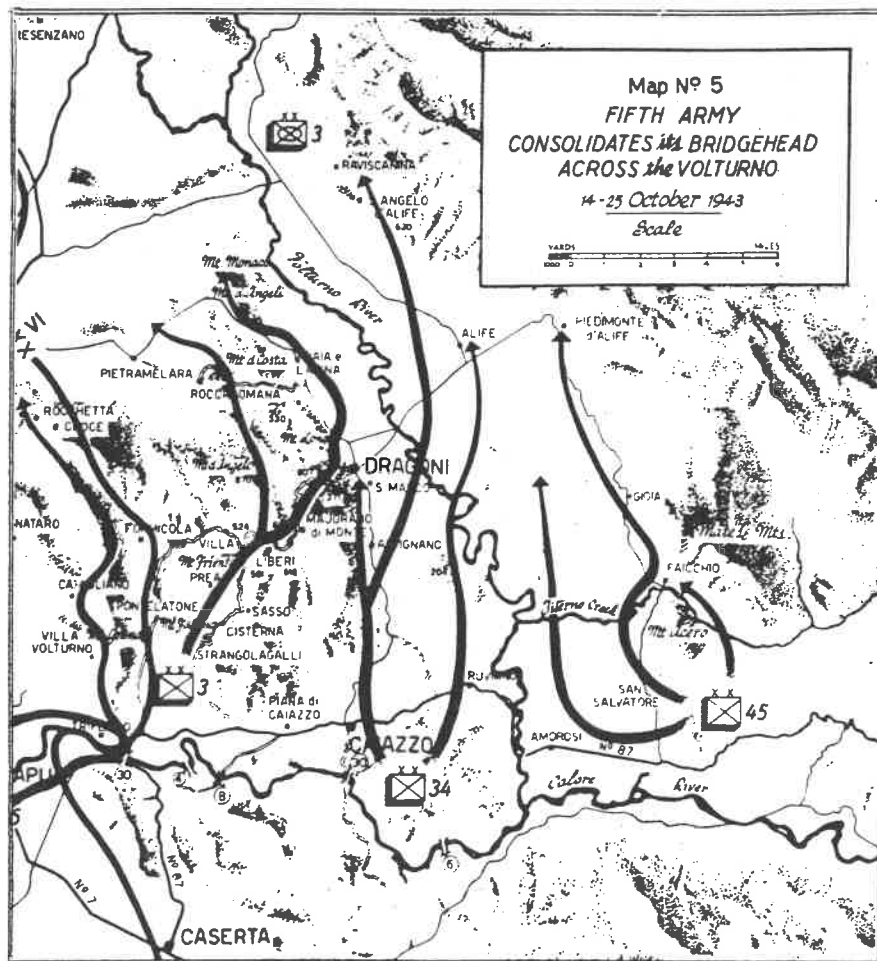
ing up these precious supplies had rendered immediate pursuit of the enemy impossible, but by evening of the 15th of October, supplies and ammunition and all units of the Division Artillery were rolling over the river, preparing the troops for a renewal of the attack.

By this time, all elements of the Fifth Army had achieved their objectives and all German units facing General Clark's troops were retreating to a new line of defense.

## A Sergeant Tells of the First Crossing of the Volturno

1st Sergeant Wealand of the 135th Regiment gives this graphic story concerning the first crossing of the Volturno: "Do I remember it? Hell, I don't think I could forget it if I tried. We jumped off to cross the Volturno on the night of the 13th of October. We were initially in reserve following behind Company "A." Well, you know how these reserve deals are. Company "A" caught a lot of hell from Jerry mortars and we had to push through them and get across. Some officer from Company "A" had swum across the river and tied a guide rope to the far bank. Even with this guide rope a lot of men were swept off their feet and washed away with the swift current. And there was nothing you could do to help them. It was a weird night, so black everywhere. Everybody was slipping and falling in the mud and getting lost, but before we had

more than a squad of men across the river, the sky was lit up like a carnival. There were flares going up all over the place, tracers criss-crossing everywhere. When "A" Company got stopped they were in a mine field, but just the same, we were told to push through and head towards high ground which the Battalion had for its objective. Well, we didn't like the idea of pushing through a mine field, but we couldn't stay where we were; there was too much mortar and machinegun fire for that, and we didn't feel like going back across the river either. It was too damn cold. So we pushed, and we were able to make the objective. It was a good thing Jerry didn't counter-attack that day though, because there weren't a lot of us left when we got on the objective. What a night that was, and imagine people asking me if I still remembered the Volturno."

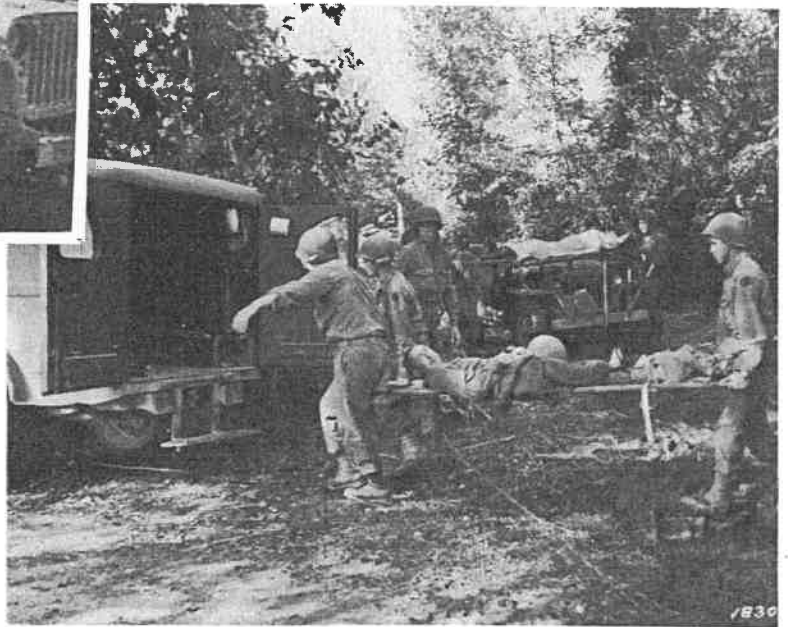






34th Division Red Cross trio in typical field garb. Italy.

Medics of the 34th Infantry Division loading a wounded soldier into an ambulance near the Volturno Front to be moved to the nearest hospital. Italy, October 21, 1943.



## THE SECOND CROSSING OF THE VOLTURNO

The 3rd Division had captured Alvignano. Its mission now was to continue northward from its positions in the vicinity of Monte Magulo and to gain the mountain range known as Monte Maggiore, which range of promontories, at its eastern extremity, overlooked the village of Dragoni, a short distance north of which a combined railroad and vehicular bridge spanned the Volturno: from thence, the 3rd Division was to move in a northerly direction, finally reaching and pushing up Highway No. 6 to the vicinity of Mignano. The 34th was to advance towards the river on the right of the 3rd, cross the stream in the vicinity of Dragoni and then strike across the flatlands toward Alife.

Between the 3rd and 34th Divisions and the second crossing of the Volturno, lay the tremendous task of forcing a way through the narrow defiles, which passed through high, rocky, precipitous heights, at the base of which were small fields, vineyards and olive groves. To the right of the 34th loomed the gigantic range of the Matese mountains, eternally capped with white snow. To add to the difficulties confronting these advancing troops, rainy weather continued almost without interruption. On such days as were clear, a heavy, dense fog would descend in the early evening hovering over the ground until late morning, blanketing out all vision for our troops. So inclement was the weather that men of the 34th came to believe that nature was conspiring against us and allying herself with the retreating enemy.

As stated, the commander of the American Vth Corps placed the 3rd Division on the left and the 34th Division on the right, the latter to relieve the

45th Infantry Division which would be squeezed out as the troops advanced up the narrow valleys. The 45th had been in the line for a long period of time and was soon to be placed in reserve for a well-deserved rest.

In the meantime, the 133rd Infantry Regiment which had been held in reserve in the vicinity of Montesarchio during the first crossing of the Volturno, re-joined the Division.

Across the path of the advancing Fifth Army, the enemy was establishing a new temporary line of defense known as the Barbara Line which ran roughly from Monte Massico, in the vicinity of the Tyrrhenian Sea, thence northwesterly to Teano, thence northerly to Tresenzano, thence southward to Monte Monaco, thence westerly to Alife and Piedimonte d' Alife. In the meanwhile, the enemy was preparing the famous Winter Line which will be described later as the tactical phases of the Campaign progress.

Before the second crossing of the Volturno could be accomplished much hard fighting lay before the 34th Division. The Germans who had proved and were to prove again and again, mastery in the arts of orderly retreat, left small forces, effectively entrenched to hold up the advance of all troops in every sector.

From Fifth Army came orders for a re-alignment of troops: the Xth Corps (British) area was widened so as to include Capua where a substantial Bailey bridge had been constructed designed to carry the heaviest type of vehicles.



A Medic of Company "A" 34th Infantry Division, lights a cigarette for a wounded soldier who was brought in from the Volturno Front to this Ambulance Park, to wait for transportation to the nearest hospital. Italy, October 21, 1943.

## THE 34TH DIVISION DRIVES FORWARD

On the 19th of October, the 133rd Infantry Regiment was brought up from reserve and ordered to capture Dragoni. Under the command of Colonel Ray C. Fountain, the Regiment was to seize the bridge intact, if possible; the engineers to span the Volturno in the vicinity of Dragoni in the event the Germans had blown the bridge.

In the meantime, Colonel Butler had ordered the 2nd Battalion of the 168th Infantry to strike towards Dragoni, to be followed closely by the 1st Battalion. Company "A" was to flank Dragoni from the left. Company "T" attached to the 2nd Battalion met stiff resistance in the vicinity of San Marco, which was finally flanked by the 1st Battalion. Records of the Division disclose that Col. Butler and Lt. Col. Joseph E. Kelly, from a high observation post, directed artillery fire to stave off an anticipated German counter-attack. Elements of the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment threw up green signal flares indicating that a counter-attack was imminent, but troops of the 168th were prepared to meet it. So effective was our artillery, machinegun and mortar fire, that the enemy desisted and withdrew towards Dragoni. In support of the advance, the artillery proved invaluable with its effective concentration fire and in turning back German self-propelled guns.

By evening of the 18th of October, the 3rd and the 34th had made contact in the vicinity of Dragoni. Here it was that the commanders of the two Divisions agreed that the 3rd Division would lay down fire on the village of Dragoni and keep the cross roads entering the town under interdicted fire, until troops of the 34th could enter the village. This plan proved highly successful, elements of the 168th Infantry advancing and entering the village on the

morning of October 19th.

The 133rd now moved forward rapidly to take the bridge spanning the river in the vicinity of Dragoni. The 1st Battalion reached the river at 1600 hours on the 18th, but through error, at the wrong place. Since time was of the essence, the Battalion, never-the-less, crossed the Volturno late the afternoon of the 18th, fording the river as had the other Regiments in the first crossing of the Volturno. In the meantime, the 3rd Battalion of the 133rd had reached the bridge, only to find that the alert Germans had thoroughly demolished it. At dawn on the 19th, the 100th Battalion had arrived on the scene..

The 135th Infantry now moved up to the river, Company "T" making the initial crossing, fording the cold, swift stream at 0230 hours on the morning of October 19th, without opposition. That night, the remainder of the 3rd Battalion of the 135th forded the stream and by daybreak had reached a line in front of the ancient walls of the city of Alife. By morning of October 20th, the entire Infantry and 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion had effected a crossing of the river moving forward to support the 3rd Battalion. Before daylight, the 3rd Battalion had entered the bomb-wrecked city of Alife. Morning found the 1st Battalion out in the flat area near the city, shrouded in a deep fog which, when it lifted, exposed the troops to unmerciful fire. The men dug in, after inflicting many casualties, the enemy withdrew. In the meantime, contact was made with the 45th Division at Piedimonte d' Alife where the relief of that famous Division now took place.

On the 20th of October, Colonel Carley Marshall was placed in command of the 133rd.

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# THE DRIVE TOWARD SAN ANGELO d' ALIFE

The 133rd Infantry Regiment was now assigned the mission of driving forward and capturing San Angelo d' Alife. The path lay along a highway skirting the foothills of the majestic Matese mountains.

On the evening of October 20th, the 100th Battalion, which had been assigned the assault mission by Colonel Marshall, started up the slopes against a well-entrenched enemy at about midnight, being caught between intense infiltrated enemy machinegun fire causing a dispersion of the troops which necessitated reorganization. The 3rd Battalion was then assigned the mission of approaching the village along a road-way which led high above the village to the east. Despite strong resistance, the Battalion pushed forward, assisted by artillery support from the 185th and 151st Field Artillery Battalions. So intense was our artillery fire, that the gun crews soon ran low on ammunition, a circumstance which, together with action by the enemy, resulted in the Battalion breaking up into scattered groups. Again, reorganization became necessary.

By early morning of October 21st, enemy tanks in substantial numbers appeared on the scene forcing the men to dig in. To cope with the situation, the 125th directed its fire as ordered by a "Cub"

observer flying close over the enemy lines. So effective was this fire, that one tank was destroyed and several immobilized, causing the remainder to withdraw but not, however, before they had inflicted heavy casualties on the 3rd Battalion.

With the 1st Battalion held in reserve in the valley below, the reorganized 100th and 3rd Battalions resumed their advance. Against tough opposition offered by small delaying forces, the 3rd Battalion, on the 23rd of October, gained the heights above the village, but again the 100th Battalion was held up by withering machinegun fire. On the afternoon of that day, enemy tanks again appeared inflicting heavy casualties, particularly on the pinned down 100th Battalion.

The 1st Battalion was now called into action to make the final drive, and in the mist of the morning of October 24th, entered the village of San Angelo d'Alife. In the meantime, the redoubtable 100th Battalion picked its way through heavily mined fields and scaled the summits of Hill 529. The 133rd had achieved its immediate objective. Now it stood in full command of the high points of the area, but the victory had been won at terrible cost in lives and wounded. The enemy had withdrawn to the vicinity of Raviscanina, two miles distant.



## STUBBORN HILL 235

On October 25th, the 135th Infantry moved through the 133rd Infantry with the mission of attacking the mass of hills to the east of Raviscanina, where the German 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment was strongly entrenched, and from where the enemy commanded a full view of the valley and the foothill approaches to the mountains.

The 3rd Battalion was assigned the assault mission. On the early morning of October 26th, in preparation for the drive, the Division Artillery laid down repeated concentrations, pouring in a heavy series that moved forward on a definite pattern, each concentration being spaced by a matter of a few minutes. To appreciate the magnitude of this artillery fire, it need only be said that the big guns of the 185th Field Artillery alone threw in over 828 rounds within a period of two hours.

The 3rd Battalion started its climb up the side of Hill 559, clearing the Hill and occupying its summit.

The 2nd Battalion jumped off at 0605 hours and commenced across the lowlands towards the foot of Hill 235, but the advance was checked by enemy fire despite the fact that Company "A" of the 2nd Chemical Battalion was raining down high explosive shells which covered the entire face of the hill. On the morning of October 27th, General Ryder attached Company "B" of the 191st Tank Battalion to the 2nd Battalion, ordering the attack to be resumed. During the 27th, our Artillery performed some magnificent shooting, the 125th knocking out two enemy tanks, and the 185th, three. Here too, the Artillery made profuse use of propaganda shells



Mortar Platoon of the 168th Infantry Regiment approach Alife, Italy. October 23, 1943.

as a part of psychological warfare on an enemy who by now, must have been able to foresee the doom of the "Wehrmacht." On this day, the 27th Armored Field Artillery and the 17th Field Artillery Regiments were attached to the Division Artillery.

Early on the morning of October 28th, the 2nd Battalion moved forward behind the tanks which immediately ran into difficulty: rough terrain, mines and enemy artillery, all of which resulted in immobilizing three of our tanks. Locating the position of the enemy was difficult. He had securely concealed his machinegun positions and had hulled down some ten tanks which he used with rifle-like precision. By now, the troops had expended themselves and could no longer make progress.

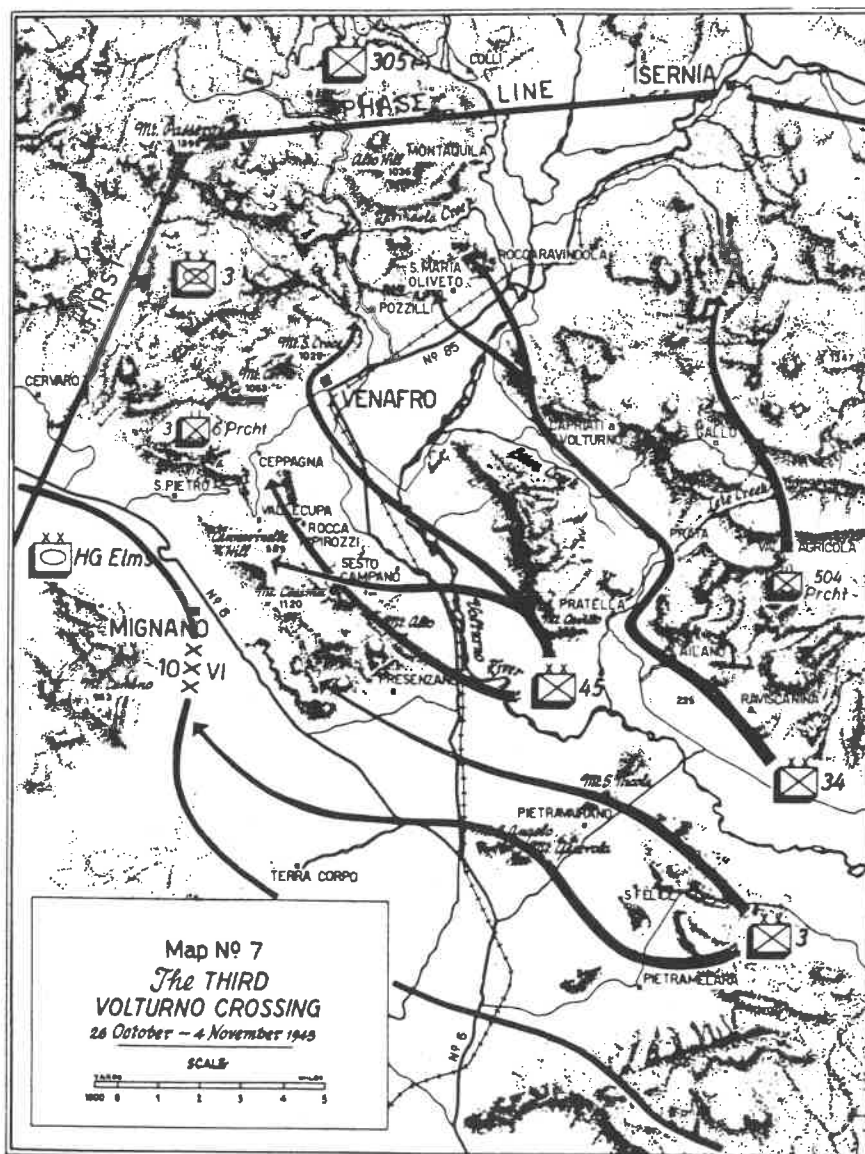
At this juncture, General Ryder ordered the 168th Infantry to pass through the 135th and assigned the 2nd Battalion of that Regiment to assault Hill 235. At 1000 hours on the morning of October 27th, the attack was launched, the troops gaining the summit of the stubborn Hill 235, but surprisingly with no resistance, as the enemy had withdrawn.

The resistance offered by the enemy on Hill 235 was characteristic of the type of delaying action in which he was to engage almost every foot of the

way up the Apennines to the very summit of the towering hills which overlook the ancient city of Bologna.

By the 29th of October, the Division had advanced beyond the point where the Lete and Volturno Rivers join. Still pursuing the enemy, the 135th Infantry drove rapidly forward occupying the villages of Pratella and Prata, the latter lying on the flat lands along the river banks of the Volturno.

With the enemy withdrawing with greater rapidity, on the 31st of October, the 133rd and the 168th Infantries swept through the Lete and Sava river valleys. The 168th drove on to capture Capriati, a village perched high on a hill overlooking the Volturno River. The 133rd, now performed a most difficult physical feat by rapidly climbing mountain after mountain, finally occupying Ciurlano, a small village suspended as it were on the steep slope of the hill known as La Croce. In the meanwhile, units of the 82nd Airborne Division had swung high to the right, scaling the high mountains and capturing the tiny ancient village of Gallo and advancing on to Monteroduni. With his main body still intact the enemy was withdrawing across the Volturno, necessitating yet another crossing of that turbulent river by the tired pursuing troops of the 34th Division.





The 3rd Battalion, 168th Infantry, arrives in Dregone, Italy. They walk past the ruins caused by heavy artillery fire.

## THE THIRD CROSSING OF THE VOLTURNO

By now, all elements of the Fifth Army had reached their objectives. In twenty days of difficult, hard and bitter fighting, the Fifth Army had advanced from 15 to 20 miles along a forty mile front. The weather continued to be unusually bad, bivouac areas and gun emplacement positions were such as to bog down both vehicles and guns. G. I.'s shivering in severe cold and with no opportunity to dry their clothing were suffering untold miseries, their one and only compensation being the knowledge that the enemy was suffering likewise.

The thought of again crossing the Volturno was not pleasant for the 34th Division to contemplate. Here, the winding Volturno flows through a flat, broad valley, extending from Isteria on the east, to Venafro at the southwest. Across the river, reaching high in the skies, spreads a great arc of forbidding mountains, rising perceptibly some 1200 to 1800 feet above sea level. Olive groves spread across the foot-hills, advancing up the slope of the mountains. While the river at this place was not as torrential as it had been in the other two crossings, it did offer additional obstacles: here the stream was cut into several smaller streams, necessitating extraordinary work and effort on the part of the engineers to span the several branches; while fording was not as difficult as in the two previous cross-

ings, the advance must be made across the broad valley in full and complete view of an enemy who had firmly established himself in what was to be known as the "Winter Line."

For this next phase, VI Corps consisted of the following elements: the 3rd, 34th and 45th Infantry Divisions, the 4th Rangers and the 82nd Airborne Division, together with attached Anti-tank units.

The 45th Division was assigned the mission of crossing the river in the vicinity of Venafro; the 34th Division to cross east of Venafro and drive north to Colli; while the 4th Ranger Battalion, grouped with the 45th Division, was to drive across to cut Highway 6 northwest of Mignano. The 3rd Division was assigned the mission of guarding the west flank, while the 504th Parachute Infantry was assigned a similar mission at the northwest extremity of the line.

The 34th was to cross on a broad front of some five miles with the immediate objectives of capturing Santa Maria Olivetto and Roccaravindola. All three Battalions of the 133rd and the 1st Battalion of the 135th and the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 168th were to co-ordinate and drive simultaneously across the valley and the river.

At midnight on the 3rd of November, the troops moved quietly down from the hills to their assembly

areas, there to await preparation fire by the artillery which opened up at 2330 hours on the morning of the 4th of November. Guns laid down a terrific concentration upon enemy positions lifting their fire at zero hour. At 2400 hours, all Battalions moved into the broad valley, entered the river bed and commenced the crossing of the several channels, which, though shallow, none-the-less flowed swiftly. The water had turned to icy cold with the advance of fall. The going was rough: the enemy pouring in heavy mortar and artillery fire; troops encountering numerous mine fields and booby traps which were planted thickly in the river bottom and up the approaching banks and the flat land that lay before the hills beyond. The enemy heavily strafed and bombed, adding still another serious impediment in the crossing. With uncanny skill, the Germans had hung wires between trees in the long grape vines and set vast networks of trip-wires. As the troops advanced in the darkness of the night, observers from our command-posts could determine the progress made by the repeated explosions of mines which told only too clearly the terrible cost being paid in this last crossing of the hated river.

On the south flank the 100th Battalion suffering great casualties from booby traps, mines and machinegun fire finally reached Highway No. 85 where the progress was temporarily retarded by an enemy detachment which fought stubbornly to hold the road. Continuing its drive it captured Hill 590 and, by the 5th day of November, had reached and cap-



**Captain Alex R. Josephs**, Division Assistant Judge Advocate.

ured Hill 610. The 1st Battalion of the 133rd, meeting with the like opposition, drove forward and by November 5th had taken Hill 550. The 3rd Battalion of the 133rd captured the village of Santa Maria Olivetto and advanced to the foot of, and after a bitter engagement, captured Hill 558.

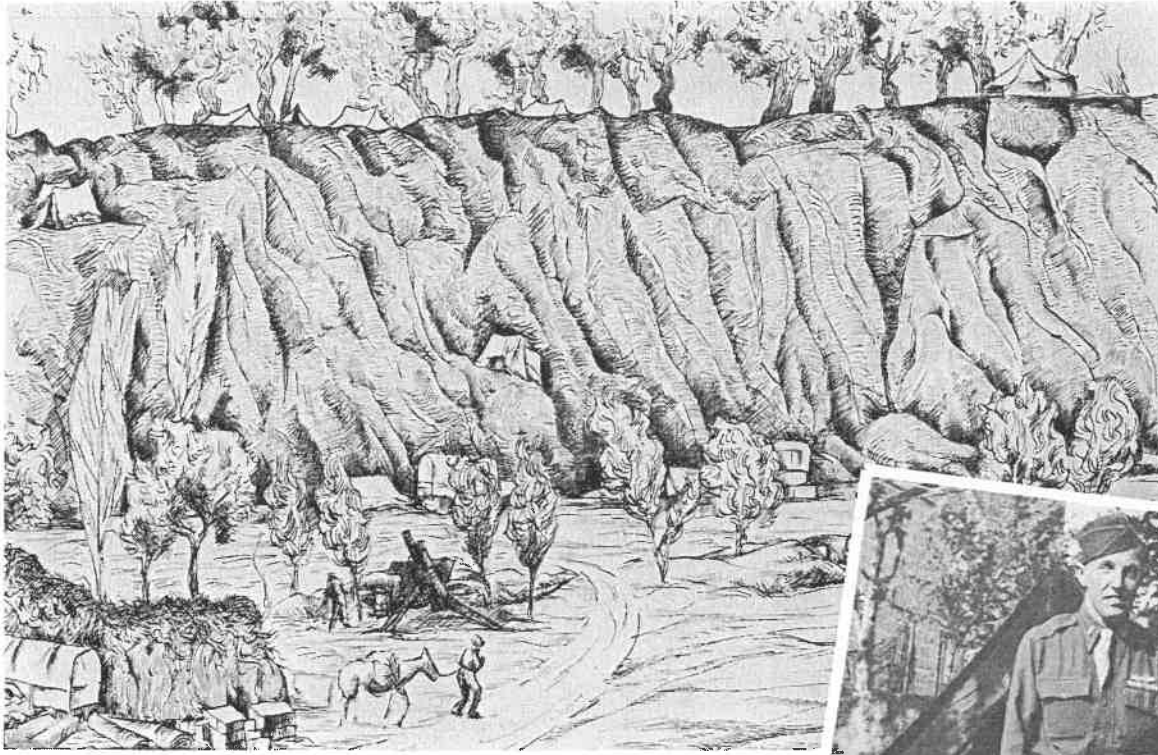
The 3rd Battalion of the 168th captured Hill 400 on the 4th of November, immediately mopping up the area. The 2nd Battalion of the 168th, at the north flank, struck towards its objective, Roccaravindola. Reaching a high ridge, overlooking the village, the Battalion met with stubborn resistance. It was in this engagement that the name of T/Sgt. Rudolph Charles von Ripper came to prominence in the Division.



No litter being available, James L. Parks of Elizabeth, W. Virginia, Med. Det. carries wounded German through ruined street of S. Angelo D'Alife, Italy. Other members of detachment trail behind. October 23, 1943.



Troops hauling food and water to their buddies in positions on heights overlooking Italian country. October 23, 1943. 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry—Overlooking S. Angelo D'Alife.



A French Battery near Pasquale, Italy.



## THE FABULOUS VON RIPPER

Ripper was a unique and fabulous character. He came to the Division in North Africa with a group of artists who were assigned to various units for the purpose of preserving on canvas historic incidents of the war. A restless, spirited individual, Ripper soon grew tired of his brush and asked for combat assignment. His wishes were not fully granted, for he was made a Tech Sgt., but his ambition and zeal were such that he virtually assigned himself to combat troops.

Von Ripper's fanatical desire to close with the enemy came from a background which had its origin in Austria. His had been a most colorful and singular career. As a very young man he had served with the tough, French Foreign Legion. He had spent a substantial period of time in China and had fought in the Spanish Revolution. He stemmed from nobility in Austria from which country he had been driven out by the Nazi who, when they occupied Austria, had confiscated the holdings of his family and had put to death several of his immediate relatives.

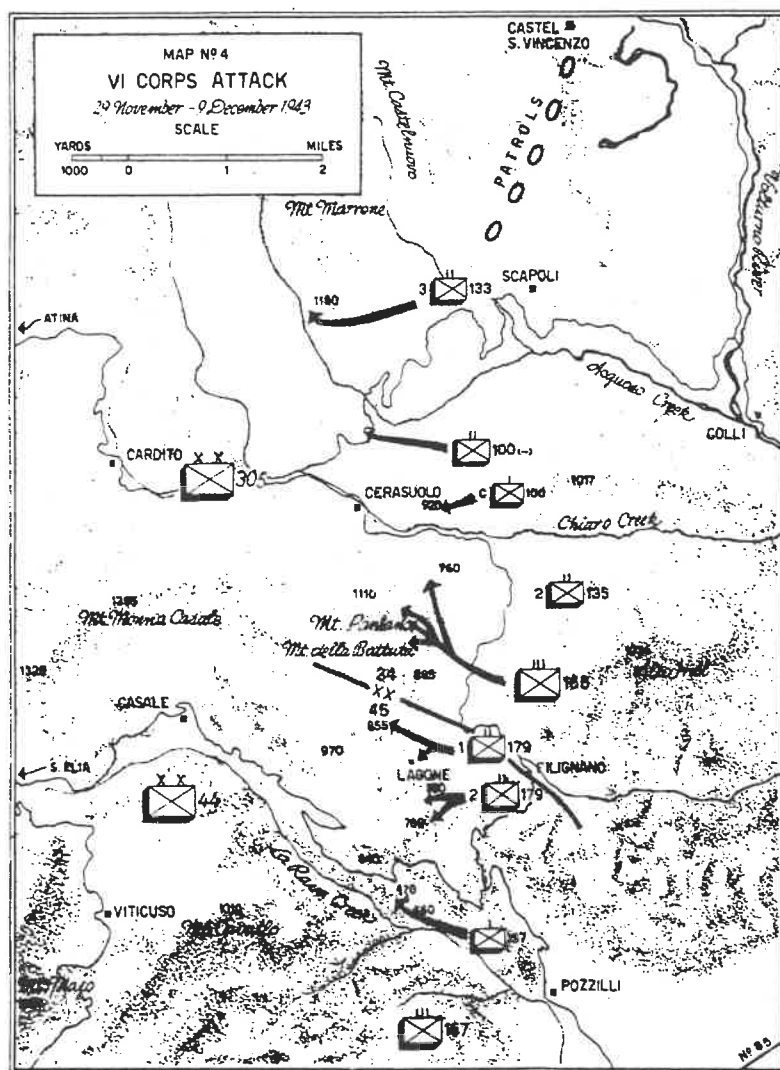
As the advance of the 2nd Battalion was held up before Roccaravindola, von Ripper, as Acting Intelligence Officer of the Battalion, took a twelve-man patrol on reconnaissance to determine obstacles ahead. With four men, von Ripper climbed the steps of the hill and entered the village. Here the patrol heard commands being given in the English language but the voices were detected as those of Germans. The enemy hoisted a white flag,

but the cautious patrol was not to be deceived. Locating the group of the enemy, von Ripper demanded their surrender; a demand which was only complied with when the patrol had thrown grenades and when von Ripper had shot the officer in command through the shoulder with his pistol. The patrol brought back 17 prisoners. With this, the enemy withdrew and Roccaravindola was occupied by noon on that day.

Again and again, throughout the balance of the Italian Campaign, von Ripper was to distinguish himself by acts of individual heroism, and before the war had ended, this man had avenged the death of members of his family by the killing of many Germans and the capturing of many prisoners. He will always be remembered by men of the 34th as the "fabulous von Ripper," a name given to him by the famous war correspondent, Gordon Gammack of the "Des Moines Register and Tribune," who spent many days of hardship accompanying our troops in order that the folks back home might be informed of the deeds and the fortunes of their sons.

## Chapter XV

# THE ASSAULT ON THE GERMAN WINTER LINE



In this third crossing of the Voltorno, Lt. Paul V. Lawson of the 135th Infantry had discovered a German overlay taken from the dead body of an enemy battalion commander. This valuable document disclosed the German's defensive position and influenced greatly our entire plans of operation once the river had been crossed.

The 1st Battalion called up from reserve, crossed the river on the night of the 3rd of November, passing through the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, advancing across the heavily-mined areas, finally not only capturing Hill 518, with the assistance of the 1st Battalion of the 135, but advancing to Hill 559 as well. On the 5th of November, the Division Artillery laid concentration on Hill 520, following the 1st Battalion of the 168th which stormed to its heights.

The 133rd Infantry continued to struggle up the hills north of Santa Maria Olivetto where they met with a most stubborn resistance. High in the mountains, these troops were supplied by man-power, for not even mules were able to scale the rocky heights.

Their situation grew gradually more precarious until, on the 12th of November, troops of the 135th and the 45th Division came to their support.

On the 7th of November, General Ryder placed Brigadier General Benjamin F. Caffey in command of Task Force "A" which consisted of the 135th Infantry, the 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company "A" of the 3rd Chemical Battalion, the 191st Tank Battalion and Company "B" of the 109th Engineer Battalion.

The mission of the Task Force was to drive up Highway 85 and to scale a high mountain upon whose summit stood the ancient and quaint village of Montaquila. The assault mission, assigned to the 135th Infantry directed the Regiment to attack and capture the town and the neighboring Hill 864, to the west.

On the morning of the 8th of November, the 3rd Battalion of the 135th led the attack capturing the town and the hill against short but sharp resistance. Life on Montaquila was a most weird sort



of existence: artillery fire from both sides constantly passing over the hill with an occasional one from the enemy's side falling short; spurts of machine-gun fire rattled and echoed through the hills. The 2nd Battalion, in the meantime had passed through Montaquila and occupied hills west of the town.

In cold rain and snow, the 135th continued to send out patrols across the Rio Chiaro as far west as the terraced, cultivated hills in the vicinity of Mennella and Selvone, keeping constant contact with the enemy. On November 12th, elements of the Regiment made contact with the 504th Parachute Infantry which had advanced as far as Colli, the 504th maintaining contact with the Eight Army to its right.

By this time, November 15th, all units of the Fifth Army had reached the German Winter Line of 1943. Realizing that for the time being, further advance against the impregnable position of the Germans would prove too costly, and, knowing that his troops were exhausted from the relentless drive which had commenced with the first crossing of the Voltorno River on October 13th, General Clark, on the 15th of November, halted the advance and limited the activity of VIth Corps to patrols and defense missions. From October 7th to 15th of

November, the American units of the Fifth Army had suffered 6,846 casualties, of which the 34th Division had sustained a loss of 1,658 in killed, wounded and missing.

At 0600 hours on the 29th of November, the Division again renewed the attack. On that day, the 125th Field Artillery sustained 21 casualties and the loss of three 105 Howitzer guns, over five hundred enemy shells falling within their area.

During this phase of the campaign, for the first time in Italy, our men were equipped with bed-rolls and were being served hot meals. Food was brought up by mule pack trains and on the shoulders of men over such areas as the mules were unable to travel.

By the last of November, the 135th was in Division Reserve near Montaquila, and the 133rd was preparing to attack Zerasulo on the right, while the 168th was poised to strike at the formidable Monte Pantano. Plans for renewing the attack unfolded. The 2nd Battalion of the 135th, re-inforced with additional mortars from the Regiment, was to support the Division's attack from positions on the high ground to the east of the line extending between Selvone and Monnella.



## BLOODY MONTE PANTANO

The story of the bloody fight for Monte Pantano remains one of the most dramatic episodes of the war. On November 28th, General Ryder issued orders directing the 168th to seize Monte Pantano, and thereafter drive forward and seize Hill 1225. The 3rd Battalion was directed to support the advance of the 1st Battalion from its present position. Mortar Platoons of "D" and "H" Companies were attached to the 3rd Platoon for the mission. What follows is taken largely from the records of the 168th.

On November 29th, the 1st Battalion with the mission of seizing and holding Monte Pantano, the important north anchor of the German Winter Line, crossed the river at 0600 hours, closely following a rolling barrage. Monte Pantano consisted of four knobs in the shape of a square which we shall number for convenient reference from 1 to 4 in a counter-clock-wise direction, starting with Knob 1 at the southeast of the square. The mass of hills rose precipitously 1600 feet above the valley below, and its rocky, muddy slopes rapidly became treacherous under the plodding feet of the men of the Battalion. However, spirits were high and the ascent was rapid.

Elements of the Battalion reached the crest of Knob 1 at 0900 hours, there to discover that the Germans were still in their block houses, under cover from our Artillery. In the skirmish that followed, five Germans were captured and several others killed. The prisoners were closely questioned. It was learned that Monte Pantano was strongly defended by a full strength Battalion, but that most of the enemy were located in a well or draw pocketed between the four knobs. This depression, crossed with gullies offered excellent position for dug-in and concealed enemy mortar positions. Moreover, from

his position on Knob 3, the enemy could sweep Knobs 1 and 2 with fire and from there he commanded full gun-view of the draw.

The Germans had fortified Knob 1 as an outpost but the sudden, surprise attack by Company "A," following as it did, so closely behind our artillery barrage, threw the enemy off balance. Company "A" promptly organized its position and prepared to defend the knob.

Within a few moments, with the first of what later was to prove to be an almost unending series of counter-attacks, the enemy struck the position. This first attack was a diversionary effort in front of our position, fire coming from numerous automatic weapons. The main effort was made on the right flank of Company "A" by an estimated reinforced Company.

Our right flank was pushed back slightly, and two squads which had been in support were sent to re-inforce the position. This force drove head-on into the Germans, firing at point blank range. The hand to hand fighting was savage, but the Germans, taken somewhat by surprise at the ferocity of the on-rushing Americans, retreated over the slope. Following the counter-attack, the commander of Company "A" found at least five instances where a dead American lay side by side with a dead German.

By this time, the rest of the Battalion had arrived. Orders came to leave Company "A" in position. One platoon of Company "B," supported by a platoon of machineguns from Company "D," covered the exposed right flank. The rest of Company "B" took up positions on the left, and Company "C" was placed in reserve.

Sporadic small arms fire continued throughout

sent out a patrol to reconnoiter on Knob 2. The patrol was fired upon, and some of its members wounded and captured. They were taken to a German aid station, not more than 150 yards from our lines, indicating the extreme closeness of the fighting. As the visibility improved, Germans were observed in front of the 45th Division position. The men of the 1st Battalion sniped at them with rifles and machine-guns, dispersing a mule train. A patrol of fifteen Germans advancing towards the 45th Division, was completely destroyed by one machine gunner from Company "B."

That night, the fog again closed in the area. Then occurred one of the most severe mortar poundings the Battalion had ever received. As soon as the barrage was lifted, voices of many Germans could be heard below. Intense small arm fire was received. Communications, always a tremendous problem, were blanked out by enemy mortar fire. About four hours earlier, the Battalion Commander had dispatched a message to the Regimental Command Post, advising that red flares would be the signal for protective artillery fire and that green flares would be the signal to lift that fire. The messenger had not yet returned, and the Battalion Commander

had no assurance that his message had gotten through. However, the situation was desperate and all protective fires were called for. The red flares appeared in the sky. The answering salvo from our artillery was a welcome reply to the Battalion Commander's message. As the enemy closed in close duels, raced up and down the line. The Battalion grimly dug into its fox-holes.

There were many casualties on both sides. A penetration was effected in the sector of Company "B." Our supporting troops soon launched a counter-attack and at bayonet point, regained the lost ground. For five hours the hand-to-hand fighting continued unabated, as the Germans advanced in seven assault waves. Each was stopped, the enemy finally retreating down the forward slope. Knob 2 was ours and the great German Winter Line was crumbling.

On the 1st of December, it snowed and turned much colder. The Commanding Officers of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, Lt. Col. Edward W. Bird and Lt. Col. Floyd E. Sparks came up the hill for reconnaissance. Lt. Col. Sparks of the 3rd Battalion was severely wounded and evacuated. That afternoon, another German counter-attack was broken up by

Pvt. Thomas Nosse, Honolulu, Hawaii, 100th Battalion, holds the helmet of a dead German killed in battle for Pratella, Italy. November 1, 1943. Caserta, Italy.





Major Pierre Le Moynes, French Liaison Officer with the 34th in North Africa, and Italy.

the afternoon, and in the evening more severe artillery and mortar barrage pounded our position. Knob 1 was systematically covered with enemy fire. Many supply points were struck and badly damaged. At 2200 hours, another intense artillery and mortar barrage followed heavy fire of automatic weapons at very close range. A thick fog had settled over the front making it impossible to distinguish Germans from Americans. Pitched hand grenade battles at ranges from 15 to 20 yards became general. Some penetrations were made in Company "A's" sector, but the Company Commander, organizing his support into a fierce bayonet assault, drove the enemy from the position. After several hours of severe fighting, during which the enemy attacked wave upon wave, the Germans withdrew.

The rest of the night was spent in re-organization and in the evacuation of the wounded. Supplies had become an acute problem. There was only one trail to the crest, and already it was slippery and treacherous. Mules could ascend only two-thirds of the way up the mountain and, beyond that point, supplies had to be carried by hand. It took four to six hours to evacuate a single casualty from the crest, over trails which were under close mortar fire. The Germans had divided the trail into zones, and the pattern of mortar fire moved continuously up and down the trail. The water point was wrecked by German artillery fire. As a result, the only water the men had for over two days was collected by spreading shelters during the rain. It was



Lt. Colonel Edward W. Bird, who commanded the 2nd Battalion, 168th Infantry.

difficult to maintain a supply of sufficient ammunition to repel the incessant counter-attacks. In one instance, the troops were reduced to throwing "C" ration cans and stones in lieu of hand grenades. Intense, penetrating fog thoroughly soaked every man on the hill.

Medical aid was extremely difficult. Because of the difficulty of evacuating the wounded, the Battalion Surgeon moved his aid station to a point some 200 yards below the crest of Knob 1. Here he administered blood plasma often on the actual scene of battle. On one occasion, the Battalion Surgeon crawled under fire through an enemy minefield to treat men wounded by anti-personnel mines. This skillful and courageous work by the aid men, under intense fire, saved many lives and reflected great credit on the Medics, who throughout the war, performed their duties with a zeal and courage unsurpassed by none.

The morning of the 30th of November was relatively quiet, with some harrassing artillery fire and mortar fire. In the afternoon, while reconnoitering the flank of the 1st Battalion preparatory to attacking Knob 2, Lt. Col. Wendell H. Langdon and the Commander of Company "C" were severely wounded. The fog lifted somewhat, followed by a German counter-attack which was quickly broken up by accurate small arms and mortar fire. During this attack, one courageous automatic rifleman wiped out eight Germans with one twenty-round burst of his automatic rifle. Later that afternoon, in conjunction with the planned attack, Company "B"

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accurate small arms and mortar fire, as the fog cleared sufficiently to improve the observation. The evening was fairly quiet, except for German artillery and mortar concentrations. Some German patrols were active but were turned back before they could inflict much damage.

On the 2nd of December, the 1st Battalion was subjected to considerable sniper fire, and, in the afternoon, to an extremely heavy pounding by German mortars. That night the Battalion was relieved by Company "I" and Company "G" of the 168th Infantry. Picking up their wounded, the 1st Battalion drew back to an assembly area some 800 yards below the crest of Knob 1.

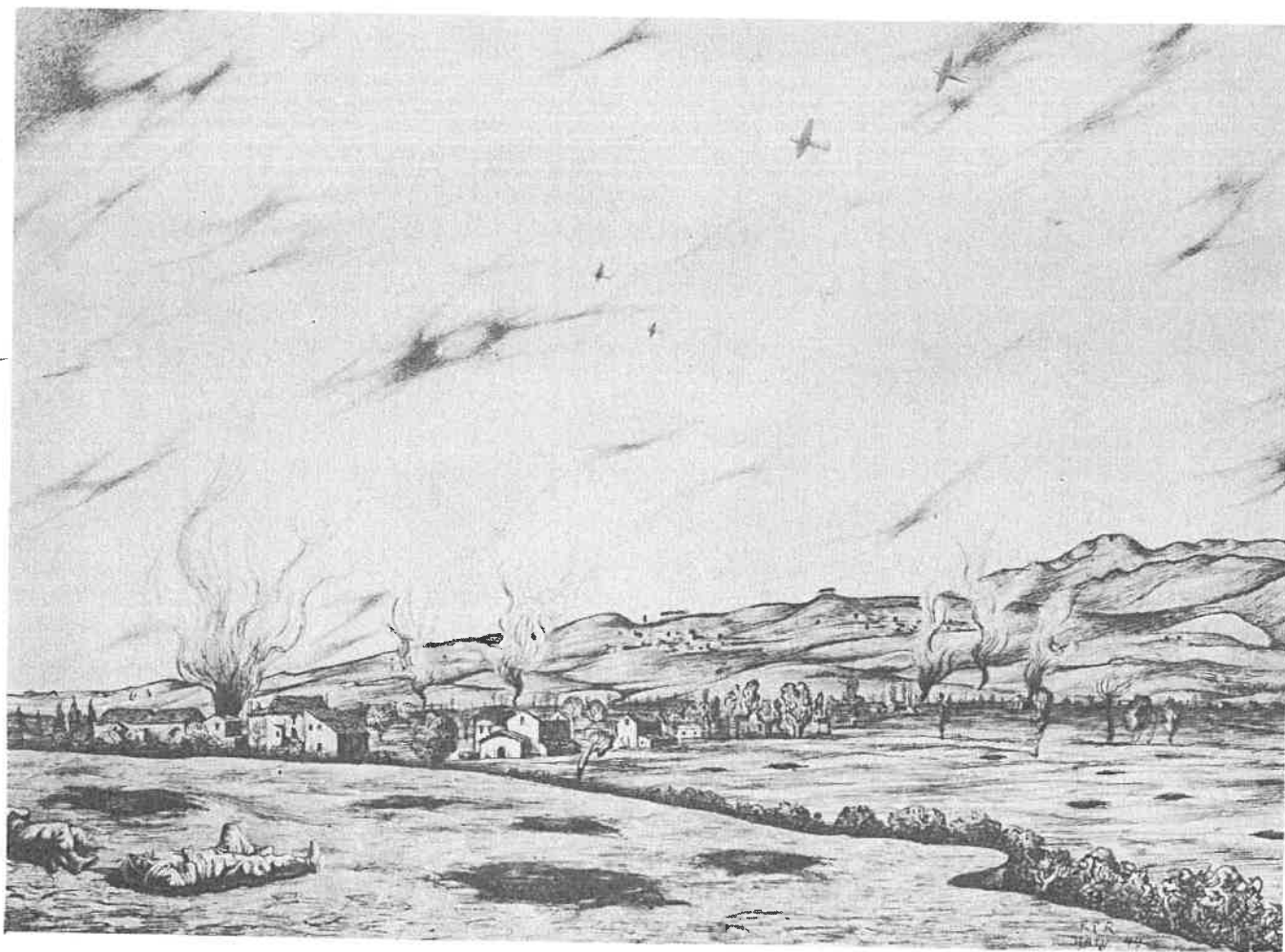
Despite the adverse conditions and the severe nature of the fighting, the spirits of the men were still high when they were relieved from their positions. They had fought almost ceaselessly for four days and nights and taken an objective which disrupted and forced the abandonment of the German Winter Line. Their casualties had been high, but their courage and spirit in the face of severe obstacles had written a most noteworthy chapter in

the history of the Battalion.

During the furious engagement, all three Battalion Commanders were wounded and evacuated. Lt. Col. Wendell H. Langdon and Col. Floyd E. Sparks received terrific wounds; their lives hanging in the balance for days. Both survived. Lt. Col. Edward Bird, on a forward reconnaissance mission, ran head on into an enemy machinegun which, strangely, did not open up on him until he had nonchalantly walked down a trail some yards. Then the gunner opened up, blowing a map board and two fingers from the Colonel's hand. The Colonel fell to the ground, playing possum, later springing up and racing to friendly lines, a machinegun burst boring eight holes through his shirt sleeve.

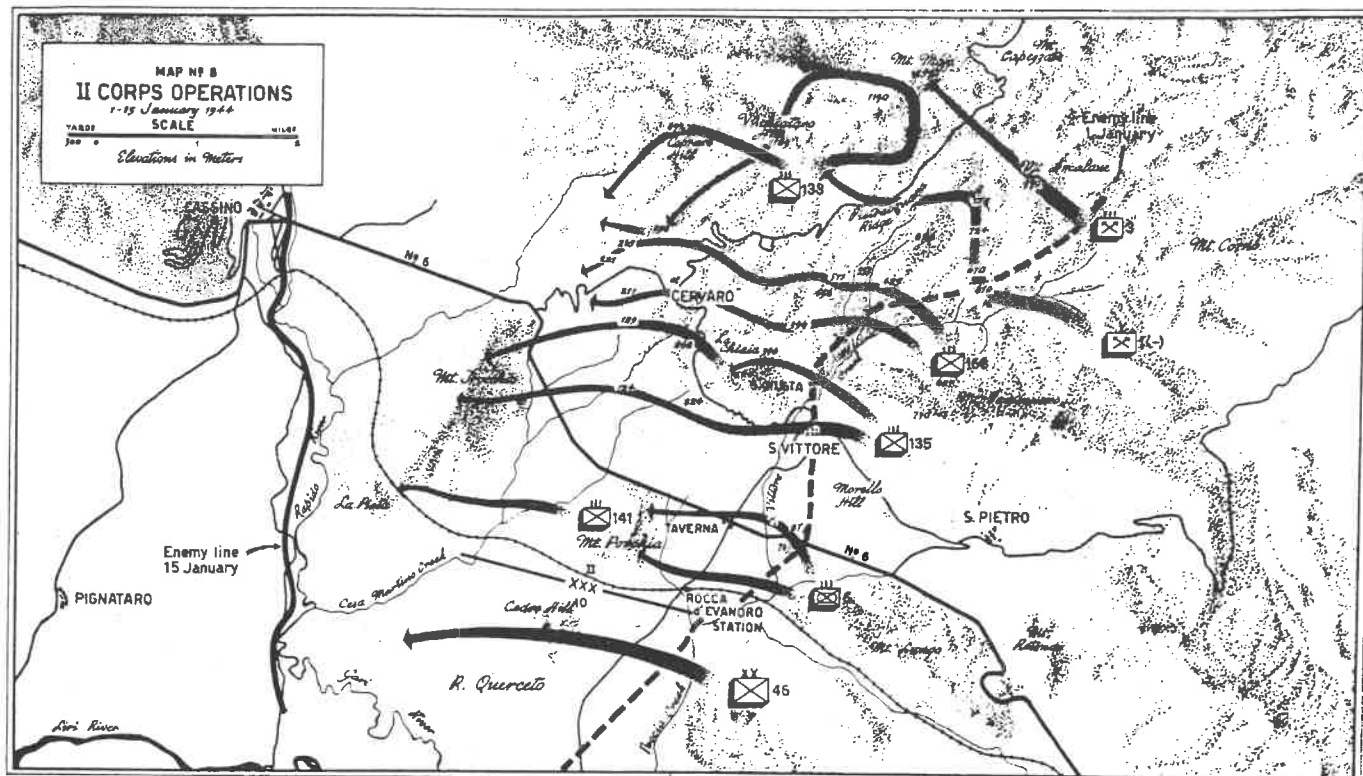
Monte Pantano was an unforgettable scene of carnage. Emotions of men ran high during those furious days of fighting. Even the seemingly unemotional General Butler was greatly moved as he beheld the awful slaughter of his men and officers. But the bitter battle had not been in vain for here the 168th had unhinged the north anchor of the German Winter Line.

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Campo Morto, Italy.

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## Chapter XVI

# The Drive to the Rapido River SAN PIETRO, SAN VITTORE DEL LAZIO, CERVARO AND MONTE TROCCHIO

The German winter Line of 1943 consisted of a series of well prepared positions in high altitudes extending from the vicinity of the Garigliano River on the Western Tyrrhenian shores, eastward through the mountain ranges to the Sangro River on the eastern Adriatic shores. We have seen that the fall of Monte Pantano had served to unhinge the eastern anchor of the German Winter Line. By this time the 3rd Division had struck westerly along Highway 6 but was now held up where that road passes through a narrow defile between the huge Monte Lungo on the left and Monte Rotondo on the right. A great mass of fountains rises to the right, dominated by Monte Sammucro, which stands some 3700 feet above sea level.

Before further advance could be made along

Highway 6 to the objective of Cassino, this formidable corridor must be breached. Across the path of our troops stood the famous Panzer Grenadiers and the Hermann Goering Division. After bitter fighting, the 36th Division occupied Monte Sammucro, which the enemy repeatedly attempted to recapture, but without success. In the meanwhile, the Italians, who had now joined the Allied Forces, grouped their 67th Regiment, the 61st Bersagliere, and its 11th Field Artillery Regiment, and prepared to strike Monte Lungo. The Italians' attempt to capture Monte Lungo failed, though they did gain and hold adjoining hills, with assistance from the 36th Infantry Division and the 194th Field Artillery Battalion.

# THE FALL OF SAN PIETRO INFINE



San Pietro.

High on the banner of the 36th Infantry Division will forever be emblazoned, the capture of San Pietro, an incident immortalized in the famous film production which will live to tell the story to succeeding generations for years to come.

There were two tremendous engagements in which the 36th Division attempted to capture the battered village of San Pietro. After one of the most furious battles of the war, with heavy casualties resulting, to both the 36th and the enemy, San Pietro fell on the night of December 16th, 1943. A counter-attack to attempt to regain the town was repelled. San Pietro lay in abject ruins.

Following the failure of the Italians to capture Monte Lungo, the 36th Division captured that important bastion and also cleared out and occupied Monte Rotondo.

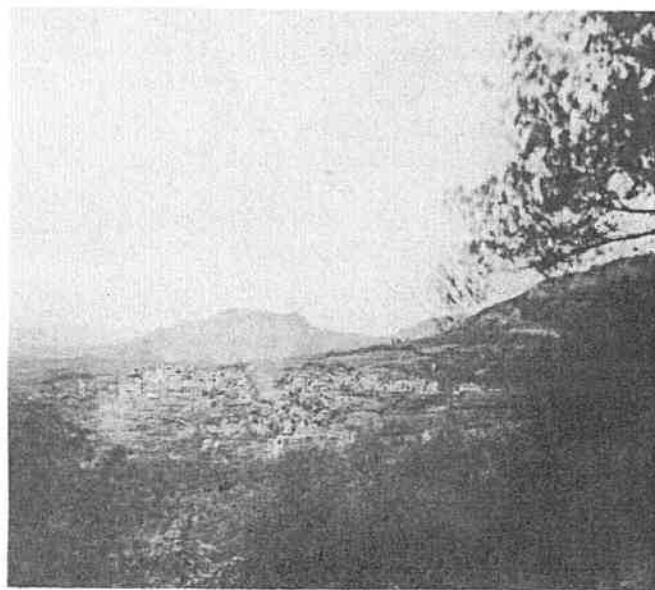
Now, at last, the formidable corridor along Highway 6 had been breached, but before the 36th Division stood yet other fortified hills and mountains which must fall before the Winter Line would collapse and the troops reach the Rapido River. In one final desperate effort the 36th Division struck towards San Vittore, but the exhausted troops became pinned down in the olive groves and in the hills, stopped short of their goal.



## THE 34TH RELIEVES THE 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION

On the 30th of December, 1943, the 34th Division moved in to relieve the exhausted 36th which had now been engaged in six weeks of constant mountain fighting. To the 34th, however, was attached the 142nd Regimental Combat Team of the 36th Division which had been enjoying a brief rest after the capture of Monte Lungo. On the 31st of December, a heavy rain fell over the area which was transformed into snow—snow which was to prove a problem to our troops, for in their dark clothing, men became easy targets silhouetted as they were against the white background, in contrast with the Germans who, by this time, were wearing white clothing affording excellent camouflage. Here again, began the oft repeated phrase of "mud, mules and mountains," the life of the doughboy, so graphically described in that famous series of G.I. Joe cartoons by Bill Mauldin.

The 34th Division now passed to the command of II Corps. Only a bare five miles lay before the II Corps front to the Rapido River, but before our troops lay a terrain of hills and high mountains, each fortified by a determined and stubborn enemy. To the left of the valley, through which ran Highway 6, lay the smallest of these hills known as



During attack by 34th Infantry Division in background (left) is Mount Trocchi, San Vittore Area, Italy. January 5, 1944.

Cedro some 500 feet high; and the higher Monte Porchia. Rising high behind San Vittore rose a mass of hills and mountains known as Monte La Chiaia, beyond which the German defense extended still higher and deeper into a range dominated by Monte Majo.

The main attack was to be undertaken by the 34th Division, with Monte La Chiaia as the main focus. The attack was to be coordinated between the 135th and 168th Infantry Regiments, the 135th to seize San Vittore and then drive towards Monte La Chiaia; while the 168th was to drive from the vicinity of Monte Sammucro to attack and capture Hill 396 which stood close to Monte La Chiaia.

Two task forces were now formed: Task Force "A" consisting of the 6th Armored Infantry, reinforced with the 1st Armored Division, with the mission of capturing Monte Porchia; and Task Force "B," consisting of the first Special Service Force, the 36th Division Artillery, our own 100th Battalion and the 3rd Battalion of the 133rd Infantry, with the mission of veering to the right and north and to capture the dominating peaks around Monte Majo. In the meantime, the British 10th Corps was to assault and capture Cedro Hill. With plans completed, anxious troops again awaited zero hour.

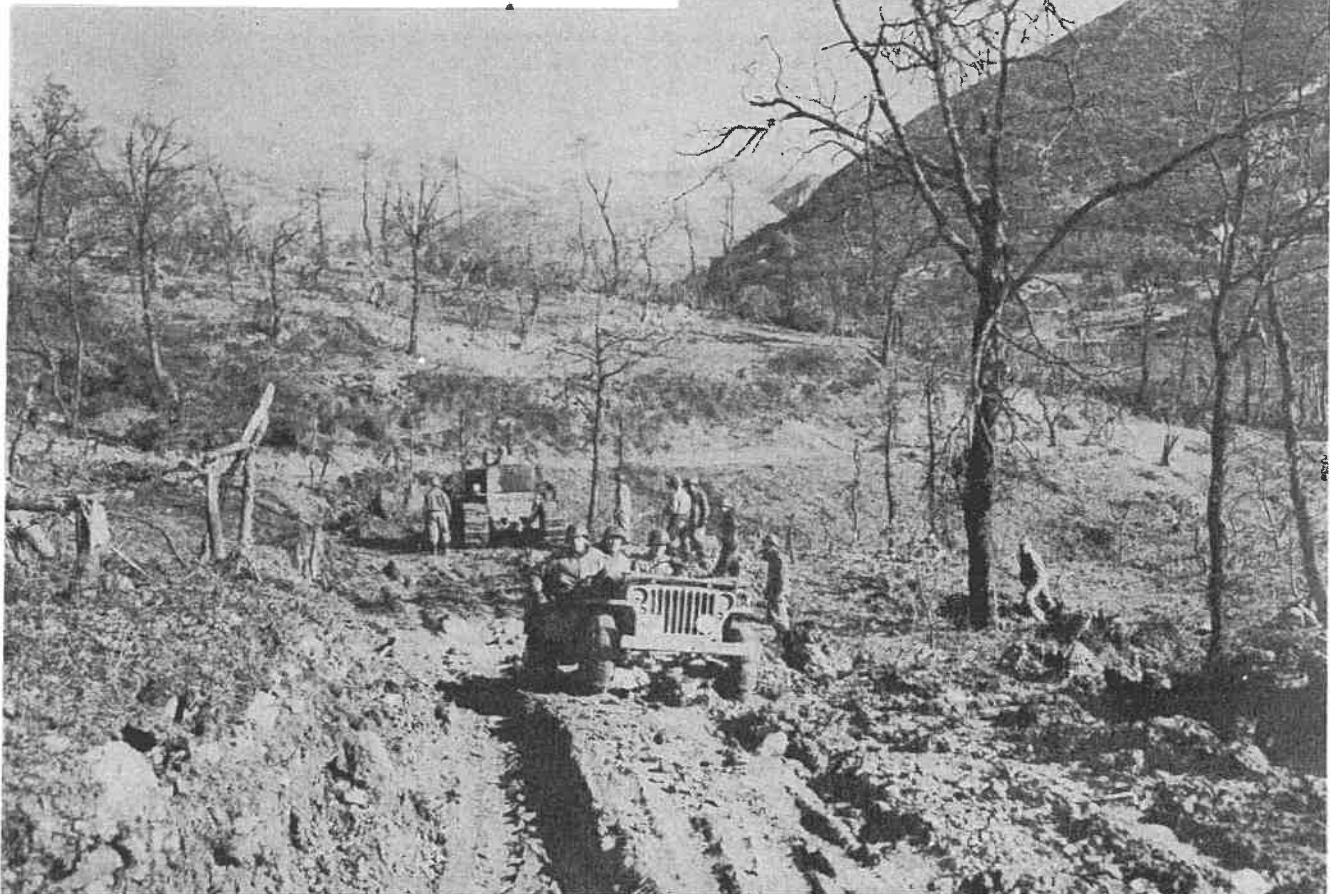
In the early morning of January 7, Task Force "B" moving with almost unbelievable rapidity, immediately captured Monte Arcalone. From there, the 3rd Regiment of the Special Service Force, followed by Company "I" of the 133rd, struggled through the snow-covered terrain gaining the summits of Monte Majo on the early morning of the same day. For the next three days the Germans made repeated and desperate efforts to regain the

summit, but each assault was hurled back by the infantrymen, assisted by some remarkably accurate firing on the part of the 93rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion. Scarcely stopping for breath, the troops of Task Force "B" fought on, securing the high ground overlooking Cervaro. Task Force "B" had won its objectives before the close of the 2nd of January.



Major General Ryder with Brigadier General Harry B. Sherman, Assistant Division Commander.

Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder en route to the front. Cervaro Area, Italy. January 15, 1944.



# 34TH MILITARY POLICE COMPANY

During this phase, as was true throughout all of the war, the work of the 34th Military Police Company was outstanding. Under command of Major (now Lt. Col.) Leslie M. Brown, our M.P.'s gave an excellent account of themselves in every engagement. They directed all rear and forward road and crossing movements. Their job was often of the most hazardous type. Placed at road and crossing positions, often under continuous or intermittent enemy fire, troops would pass through these areas of danger, the M.P.'s to remain in positions which continued to be particular targets for the German artil-

lery. Men of the 34th will particularly recall how ably their M.P.'s performed at that very hot road-junction near San Pietro, where Major Brown's men, from deep fox-holes, waved on passing traffic, so timing the movements to permit troops and vehicles to pass through between the methodically intervaled rounds of artillery thrown in by the Germans. Our M.P.'s suffered heavy casualties. Among the fighting troops, M.P.'s assumed a battle dignity sharply in contrast with the antagonistic attitude displayed by soldiers towards the spit-and-polish M.P.'s patrolling rear base and rear areas.

## THE 168TH STRIKES

From its assembly area in the vicinity of Monte Sammucro, the 168th Regiment stood poised to strike. Theirs was a difficult assignment. Before them lay a rough terrain crossed by ravines and deep gullies. The objective was to outflank Monte La Chiaia overlooking Cervaro. The 3rd Battalion had been assigned the initial effort. At 1820 hours on the 4th of January, Company "I" set out only to run into an ambush in the first ravine they were to encounter. The crafty enemy permitted part of Company "I" to pass through, then closed in capturing 67 men and 2 officers. But this unfortunate incident was not to stop the plans.

By 0550 hours on the 5th of January, the balance of Company "A" and Company "K" jumped off behind a rolling barrage thrown in by the 185th Field Artillery. Enemy machinegun fire from a farmhouse pinned down the advancing troops. Assistance came from Company "L" and Company "C" who came up in support on the right flank. Finally, the 3rd Battalion was able to spear its way forward to a great gorge, permitting the 1st Battalion to then move to higher ground into a greatly improved position.

But the morning of January 6th found the 1st and 3rd Battalions still pinned down. With the assistance of a rolling barrage laid down by the 175th and 185th Field Artilleries, a combined attack was made by the 1st and 3rd Battalions in an effort to capture Hill 396 which lay ahead, but the enemy hung on grimly, though by afternoon of that day he showed signs of breaking. Late in the day, the 2nd Battalion moved through the 3rd Battalion with orders to capture Hill 396 at all costs. Bitter close-in fighting with grenades and small arms and hand-to-hand fighting ensued. Many were killed on both sides, but on January 6th the redoubtable 2nd Battalion drove the enemy from the Hill digging in immediately to defend against counter-attacks.

In this engagement, as in all engagements, many men distinguished themselves. There was Sgt. Rafael P. Hernandez of Company "E" who, alone, destroyed a machinegun crew. There was 1st Sgt. John A. Hayes, Jr., who with total disregard for his own safety, drove forward, maneuvering his troops and directing their fire so as to effectively break up a dangerous counter-attack. There was the story too, of Staff Sgt. Fred Trotters, whose platoon of Company "E" had exhausted its ammunition. Out

before him, exposed to the enemy, Sgt. Trotters could see ten bandoleers of desperately needed machinegun ammunition. Trotters crawled some thirty yards receiving a severe gun-shot wound in the leg as he dragged the precious bandoleers back to his hole. While raising to throw the ammunition to his men, enemy machinegun fire ended the life of a gallant soldier.

Other hills, against great opposition, were gained by the troops of the 168th. This gallant Regiment which had distinguished itself over and over again throughout the Tunisian and Italian Campaigns, again achieved a signal victory. It had advanced and occupied the mountain chain which runs above and beyond Monte Chiaia and which overlooked Cervaro. As was the case in the capture of Monte Pantano, the 168th again had unhinged a key position in the enemy's Winter Line, making his eventual further retreat inevitable.



Sgt. Charles Russell, Rochester, Minnesota (Foreground) of the 135th Infantry, covers Sgt. Barney Wright, Ottawa, Canada, as they progress through the rubble filled streets of Cervaro Area, Italy. January 12, 1944.



# THE 135th DRIVES ON TO SAN VITTORE AND MONTE LA CHIAIA

In the co-ordinated plan of attack, the 135th Infantry Combat Team was to capture San Vittore and Monte La Chiaia, which rose abruptly behind the village. To the 3rd Battalion was assigned the task of taking the village; to the 1st Battalion was given the mission of crossing a small river and assaulting the mountain.

San Vittore was characteristic of the small, ancient villages of Italy. Huddled at the base of Monte La Chiaia, the town consists of narrow, crooked streets running through rows of stone buildings, admirably adapted to close, defensive street fighting. The village took a fearful artillery pounding reducing much of it to rubble, but the destroyed buildings afforded even better protection to the enemy who had defended in similar situations on his slow withdrawal northward.

The assault was initiated by the 3rd Battalion at 2330 hours on the 4th of January. This time without artillery preparation, two platoons of Company "K" under command of the redoubtable combat leader Captain Emil Skalicky, jumped off in the direction of San Vittore. Progress of both platoons was slowed down by machineguns and snipers, but by evening of the 5th, troops were fighting in the very streets of the village. Through all of the 6th of

January, bitter grenade, close rifle and machinegun fighting continued from house to house and street to street; the enemy finally retiring from the scene, leaving behind, as prisoners of war, some 175 men of the tough 44th Grenadier Division. San Vittore was a ghost town, the silence interrupted only by our moving troops and the rat-tat-tat of machineguns in the hills beyond.

Attacking towards the hills of La Chiaia behind the village, the 1st Battalion advanced behind a rolling barrage. The enemy's resistance was so determined that a slight withdrawal was ordered to permit the artillery to rake the hills. Fighting continued throughout the 4th, 5th, and 6th, the enemy thwarting the Battalion's efforts to cross San Vittore creek.

The 2nd Battalion was now thrown into the breach. Troops thrust through, driving the enemy from the lower hills. With the aid of bombers, the 3rd Battalion swept on to clear the Germans from Monte La Chiaia. The withdrawal was almost a rout. The 135th had again sustained its record of a hard-hitting combat team.

While the 135th, 168th and 133rd were engaged as described, Monte Porchia and Cedro Hill to the south of Highway 6 had fallen to the 6th Armored Infantry and the 46th Division of British X Corps.



## CERVARO AND MONTE TROCCHIO

By now, January 8, 1944, only two enemy strongholds remained between II Corps and the Rapido river: the village of Cervaro and surrounding hills, and the lone Monte Trocchio to the south. The enemy appeared to be determined to offer all-out resistance to defend these final bastions defending the river.

Again, the principal attack mission was assigned to the 34th: the 135th was to advance on Cervaro from Monte La Chiaia; the 168th was to strike from its high position in the hills to the east of the village; while Task Force "B," which included the 133rd, was to strike further westward to clear out the enemy still lodged in small groups in the higher mountain spurs which ranged from north of Cervaro towards the Rapido.

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 168th jumped off into the attack in the morning of January 10th meeting stiff opposition as they assaulted hill after hill. By evening the 2nd Battalion had dug in within a short distance of Cervaro. Allied planes came in to virtually pulverize the village. On the morning of the 11th, both Battalions moved towards the village, the 2nd (followed by the 1st Battalion), from the north and the 3rd from the west.

While the 135th was threatening an encirclement of Cervaro and Task Force "B" was keeping enemy re-inforcements from arriving on the scene, troops of the 168th forced their way through the rubble streets of ancient Cervaro. The stubborn village was ours, but only after three days of rough fighting.

One last great obstacle remained of the formidable German Winter Line—Monte Trocchio. Standing adjacent to Highway 6 and close to the south bank of Rapido, this lone mountain loomed high in the sky, its approaches still defended by a most obstinate enemy. The 168th and 135th Combat Teams fought their way towards the mountain in bitter engagements, driving back reinforcements across the Rapido. A final great blow had been planned for January 15th by II Corps—a blow which was never struck, for when the assault was made, the enemy yielding to his better discretion, had abandoned Trocchio and moved across the Rapido to his more securely defended Gustav Line.

The battle for the stubborn Winter Line had cost a total battle loss of 8,844 Fifth Army Americans, and a non-battle casualty loss of 50,000. Fifth Army had been fighting both man and elements.



36th Division MP's herding German prisoners before taking them to Prisoner of War camp, Italy, October, 1943.



**CAPTURED GERMANS IN ITALY**—The German sniper on the wagon in the center didn't live to be captured. The American soldiers standing by are Cpl. Walter F. Plagene, Detroit, left, and Sgt. Morris O. Aaser, McVillie, Md., both members of the 135th Infantry Regiment, 34th Division, units of which captured San Vittors, where this photo was made. January 6, 1944.

## Chapter XVII

# IMMORTAL CASSINO

With the fall of Monte Trocchio overlooking the Rapido, the drive towards Rome was to be resumed. Early in January, 1944, General Alexander ordered that previously determined plans for establishing a beach-head at Anzio should be executed. The strategy was designed to cut the German lines to the north of Cassino, with the hope of pocketing the enemy. The drive of the Fifth Army upon the Gustav Line, the heart of which was the Cassino sector, was to be so co-ordinated with the Anzio beach-head landing so as to divert the attention of the enemy from the latter operation. The broad peninsular plan called for the British Eight Army to make a sufficient show of attack strength on its eastern sector as to prevent the Germans from shifting any of their strength to Anzio or to the Cassino area.

A glance at the strength and dispersion of Field Marshal Albert Kesselring's troops in Italy at this phase of the campaign, will serve to throw some light on the prodigious task which confronted the Allied Armies. In all, it was estimated that Kesselring's Command consisted of 24 Divisions: The German Fourteenth Army, comprising 11½ Divisions under General Eberhard von Mackensen, occupied North Italy above a line running from Grosseto on

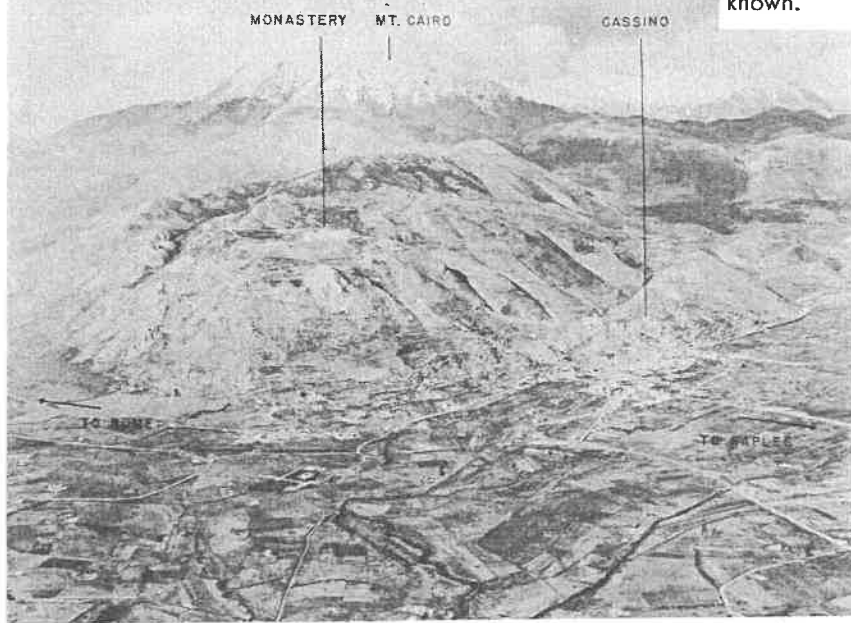
the west, to Ancona on the east; the German Tenth Army, consisting of 13 Divisions, commanded by General Hans von Vietinghoff genannt Scheil, was situated farther south with the mission of opposing the Allied Armies' advance up the Peninsula. Four Divisions, comprising the LXXVIth Panzer Armored Corps stood before the British Eight Army; while on the Fifth Army sector stood four Divisions of the XIVth Panzer Corps. In reserve, the Germans held the 90th Panzer Grenadier (Armored Infantry) Division, a highly mobile unit, prepared to re-inforce wherever needed at any point along the Gustav Line.

The German Winter Line had served as a stubborn buffer to what was to prove one of the greatest defense lines in all human warfare—the famous "Gustav Line."

The Fifth Army sector of the Gustav Line commenced at Monte Scauri on the western coast, ran north and parallel with the Garigliano river through San Ambrogio; thence, northerly on the north side of the Gari and Rapido rivers through Cassino and Cairo; thence, northeasterly to Monte Marrone to the boundary line between the Fifth and Eight Armies.

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## CASSINO AREA



Aerial view of the Cassino Area, Italy showing the Monastery, Mt. ~~Cairo~~ *Cairo*, and the town of Cassino. Date not known. *Luico*

French mule pack train serving troops in the mountains.



## RUGGED TERRAIN

As seasoned veterans of the Fifth Army gazed across the Garigliano, the Gari and Rapido rivers, there arose before them a barrier so formidable as to not only challenge the stoutest hearts, but a tactical barrier of such magnitude as to challenge the utmost ingenuity of Higher Command.

The rivers constituted the first of these natural barriers: the Rapido river has its source high up north in the vicinity of Monte Santo Croce, flowing southward some ten miles where it is joined by the smaller stream, Secco; the Rapido then turns south of Cassino where it twists east and south again, crossing Highway No. 6; four miles south the Cesa Martino Creek joins the Rapido to form the Gari

river; two miles below, the Liri river enters, the combined streams forming the Garigliano which flows southward to the sea.

The Rapido flows rapidly through the mountains, sweeping past Cassino through a valley varying in width from two to three miles, a valley cut by numerous lateral streams and canals.

Looming high over the Rapido, stood a tremendous mass of mountains and hills, dominated by the gigantic, snow-covered Monte Cairo, flanked at the right by the Belvedere Hills and, at the north, by Albate Hills. This great mass of mountains and hills, terminated at the south with the famous Cassino Hill crowned by the ancient Abbey.

# ENEMY FORTIFICATION

The German Winter Line had been designed to delay our progress northward and to permit the enemy to thoroughly entrench himself along the Gustav Line. The famous construction organization of the Germans known as the Todt Organization, supplemented by civilians and prisoners, had constructed a tremendous belt-line of defense in great depth, extending from Monte Marrone on the north, thence, southwest to the Belvedere Hill; thence, south to Cassino, to San Ambrogio and, finally, west to Monte Scauri on the Tyrrhenian Sea. Throughout these mountains and hills, the enemy had set his mortars and machineguns on the reverse slopes, while automatic weapons, well camouflaged, were emplaced on the forward slopes. The very strongest sector of the entire line, extended from Cairo south to San Ambrogio.

To add to our difficulties, the enemy had so diverted the waters of the Rapido as to make the whole flat valley area a sea of vertible mud. All approaches to the river were heavily mined and now, with a new type of box mines made of wood and plastic which could not be detected by our mine sweepers; strands of wire were stretched across the west banks and vast areas of mine fields were laid between the river and the foot of the mountains. As in Africa, the enemy had now burrowed his gun emplacements into deep rock positions, affording him unusual protection. Dug-outs were reinforced with steel and concrete, so built

as to withstand even direct artillery fire. Between gun emplacements, he had constructed within the solid rock, corridors through which troops could pass unmolested by our guns firing from the other side of the Rapido. Such commanding positions permitted inter-locking bands of fire upon all crossings of the Rapido and upon all approaches up the shoreline leading to the foot of the mountains. To climax all this, the enemy had commanding observation posts which looked down in all directions upon the plains and valleys below.

The city of Cassino itself, was the most strongly fortified position of all. Here was a city of some forty thousand people in times of peace. Its stone buildings and narrow streets were admirably suited for defensive fighting. Snipers were located everywhere throughout its streets and buildings, augmented by carefully placed and concealed machinegun positions.

The Gustav Line had been well chosen. Here, for years, the Italians had engaged in practice field operations. In these, at no time, had an attacking force ever been able to break the Gustav Line.

The Road to Rome lay northward through the Liri Valley flanked on both sides by mountain passes. Up this valley ran the important Highway No. 6, paralleled by a railroad; while along the coast ran Highway No. 7, both roads leading to Rome. To penetrate these two corridors was the ultimate but colossal mission of the Fifth Army.



## THE 36TH DIVISION

General Keyes, Commanding General of the II Corps, on January 16, 1944, ordered the 36th Texas Division under Major General Fred L. Walker, to cross the Rapido and establish a bridgehead in the Sant Angelo-Pignataro area. Once the bridgehead was established, the Division was to push towards Aquino and Piedimonte. Simultaneously, the 34th Division was ordered to make a demonstration of force in the vicinity of Cassino so as to prevent the diversion of enemy troops to the 36th Division's assault line. All infantry troops and artillery were enjoined by strict order to refrain from firing upon the sacred Abbey of Montecassino.

On the night of 19-20 of January, based on information gained by patrols, engineers and infantry sought out crossing sites. Engineers cleared the chosen lanes of enemy mines, which were quickly re-laid by the alert Germans, necessitating

repeated efforts by our engineers to keep the crossings open. Both the command and the troops were aware that the marked lanes afforded no guarantee of safe passage.

On January 20th, XII Air Support Command flew 188 bombing sorties at enemy strongpoints in front of the line of attack. Diversion of Allied Air Force to the Anzio beach-head landing cut down the amount of air preparation that otherwise may have come to our support.

The crossing of the 36th was also preceded by a tremendous artillery fire from guns of the II Corps, consisting of the 34th and 36th Division Artillery, augmented by guns of the 6th and 194th Field Artillery groups, the 2nd and part of the 15th Field Artillery Observation Battalion, the 936th, 937th and the 2nd Battalion of the 77th Field Artillery.

# THE FIRST CROSSING ATTEMPT BY THE 36TH

Surprise was impossible. Elements of the 141st, 142nd and 143rd Infantry Regiments launched their attacks on the 20th of January. All were subjected to tremendous enemy fire; all encountered mines as they crossed and when they gained the opposite shore; all sustained heavy losses, the enemy pouring in all manner of fire, including the nefarious Nebelwerfer shells, a silent rocket, thrown from multiple

mounts, which fell on assembly areas as well as on the crossing troops.

Troops became disorganized; some isolated on the opposite shore. The first attempt to cross the Rapido had been completely thwarted and by morning of January 21st, the remnants of the troops were back in their original positions to the east of the river.

## THE 36TH TRIES AGAIN

Demonstrations by the 34th had successfully kept the enemy from diverting troops from the Cassino area, but German re-inforcements were brought up from the rear. The second attempt by the 36th was to be rendered more difficult than the first.

On the morning of the 21st of January, elements of the 36th renewed their attack. Again mine fields and concentrated fire took their toll as troops crossed Rapido. Those who gained the other side were subjected to murderous fire; boats and bridges were

destroyed; troops again became isolated and annihilated. Finally, no American fire could be heard. Late that night some 40 troops returned to the east side of the river. All other troops had been killed, wounded or captured. The second attempt to cross the Rapido had failed and the 36th had paid the awful price of 1681 casualties; 143 dead; 663 wounded; and 875 missing. How many of the 875 survived was not to be known for months ahead, if ever.

American soldiers of mortar squad, Company M, 133rd Infantry Regiment fire into Cassino from north edge of town. Italy, February 24, 1944.



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# THE FRENCH EXPEDITIONARY CORPS

To understand more fully the role to be played by the 34th in this gigantic undertaking, it is necessary to summarize the action taken by the French on the north end of the Fifth Army Sector.

The strong resistance of the enemy at the Sant' Angelo crossing and his known great strength in the Cassino area, suggested an enveloping movement towards Cassino from the north.

Accordingly, on January 21, General Juin, Commander of the French Expeditionary Force, planned to attack along the Monte Beanio-Atina axis, co-

ordinating the attack with the 36th Division's second attempt to cross the Rapido.

General Juin's Command consisted of Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian troops, fighters of fierce, proven ability.

The French assault jumped off just before day-break on the 21st of January. By 0730 hours, the Moroccans had gained important hills in the vicinity of Santa Croce, but that great bastion resisted the onslaught of the French, necessitating a re-organization as a prelude to renewing the attack.



Crew of Tank Retriever T-2 (756th Tank Battalion), wait for someone to tow them out of bomb crater they ran into during the night. Cervaro Area, Italy, January 20, 1944.



Marlene Dietrich was a frequent visitor to the 34th Infantry Division in Italy, April, 1944.

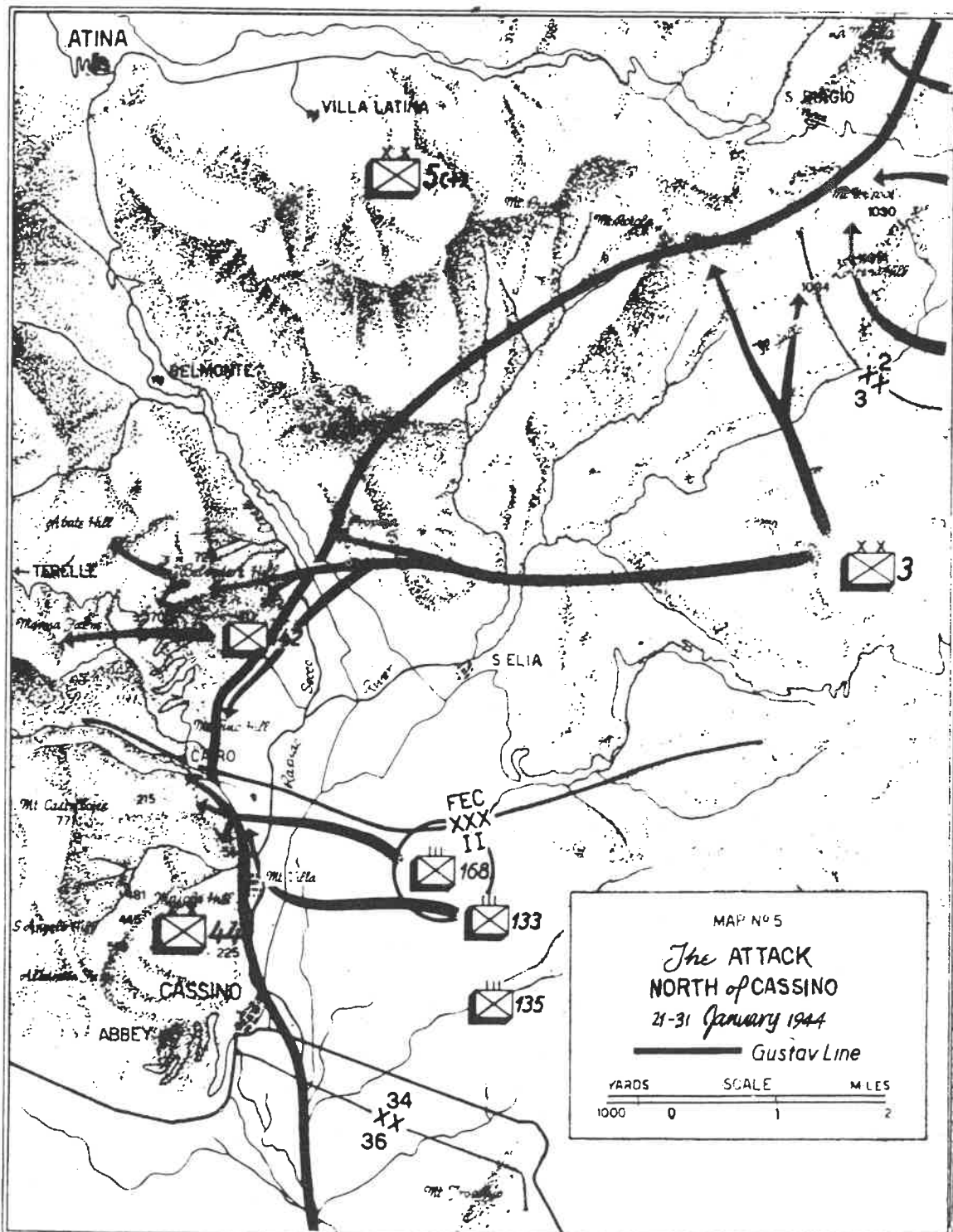
# THE 34TH DIVISION CROSSES THE RAPIDO

Realizing now, that further direct attack through the Liri Valley would prove too costly, if not impossible, General Clark ordered the 34th to coordinate with the French in an effort to envelop Cassino from the north.

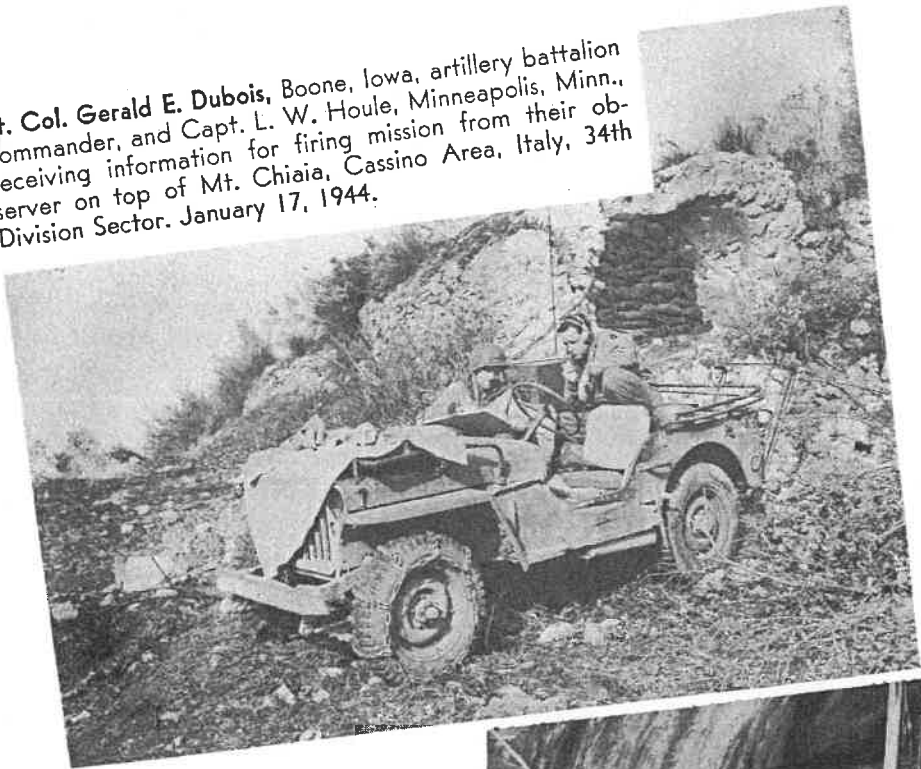
The mission of the 34th was to cross the Rapido, penetrate the hills, then strike south, with one column to advance down the road and enter Cassino, while other elements were to gain the heights above and to the rear of the city, finally debouching to the enemy's rear in the vicinity of Piedimonte. It

was a prodigious and ambitious assignment.

At this time, the known German strength before the 34th consisted of the 44th Grenadier Division, deployed on a line running from the village of Cairo, south through Cassino to the Liri Valley. The enemy division line was composed of the 131st, 132nd and 134th Grenadier Regiments, with supporting artillery, stretched from north to south along the described line. In reserve, the Germans held elements of the Hermann Goering and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions.



Col. Gerald E. Dubois, Boone, Iowa, artillery battalion commander, and Capt. L. W. Houle, Minneapolis, Minn., receiving information for firing mission from their observer on top of Mt. Chiaia, Cassino Area, Italy, 34th Division Sector. January 17, 1944.



View of Artillery Battalion Command Post in a cave on a mountain in Cassino Area. Major Eugene S. Surdyk, directing artillery fire. Chiaia in Cassino Area, January 17, 1944.



## THE 34TH ESTABLISHES BRIDGE-HEADS

The enemy was ready. Before the troops lay the deep, icy cold, swift-flowing waters of the Rapido, with all strategic crossings heavily laid with mines. High up the river the enemy had blown a dam, diverting the stream so as to render the valley an area of quagmire. Incessant rains fell, often turning to sleet. Beyond, loomed the great wall of mountains into which the Germans, with their famous Todt Organization, had dug in to entrenched positions. Before those hills lay endless fields of mines, trip wires, booby traps and merciless enfiladed fire. Again, as with the 36th, surprise was impossible.

On January 23rd, orders for the attack were issued. That next night, Col. Carley L. Marshall moved the 133rd forward to its assembly area, prepared to strike across the Rapido in the vicinity of Monte Villa, about one-half mile north of Cassino. The massed artillery laid down heavy concentrations on targets beyond the river, causing the enemy to throw up colored flares announcing to his troops that an attack by the 34th was imminent.

At 2200 hours on January 24th, the 133rd commenced its attack, the 1st and 3rd Battalions striking on schedule, the 100th Battalion being delayed 30 minutes by enemy fire. The crossing of all troops, however, was held up by mine fields cleverly laid by the Germans along the east bank in anticipation of the attack. Tanks of the 756th Battalion then attempted to clear the lanes before the 1st Battalion, but failed because of inability to ford the high stream.

Despite this initial set-back, the resolute General Ryder on January 25th ordered the 100th and 3rd Battalions to cross, with the 1st Battalion to remain on the east bank of the river. By noon of that day, against terrific enemy opposition, all three Battalions had reached the west bank, there to encounter mine fields and wire. But the troops hung on, meanwhile, effecting re-organization.

Later, on the 25th of January, General Ryder issued new orders. The 133rd was to resume its drive to capture Hills 56 and 213, and the Italian





**Cpl. Joseph Digatons**, Minneapolis, Minn., serving with the artillery section of the 34th Division, sends a message from the command post, located in a cave near Cassino, in the Mt. Chiaia Area, Italy, January 17, 1944.

barracks which lay some 2000 yards north of Cassino. The going was tough for the 133rd. Through the balance of the 25th and throughout the 26th, the Regiment made gains towards its objectives, but by night-fall, the troops were driven back to the river bank where they stood in determined, defensive position.

In the early morning of January 27th, Company "C" of the 135th Infantry effected a crossing of the Rapido slightly north of Cassino, striking immediately towards and reaching the very north edge of the city before being repelled by enemy wires, mines and flooded ditches. Here, the struggling 100th and Company "C" of the 135th waited in vain for armored support, but the 756th was unable to move its tanks across until engineers had improved the way. The troops withdrew to the west bank.

While the Division assault had thus far failed to achieve its objectives, enough information had been gained to plan a renewed attack on the Gustav Line. By noon the 3 Battalions of the 133rd had established precarious bridge-heads on the opposite shore. The crossing thus far had been costly, the 133rd having sustained over 300 casualties. But the dauntless 34th was not to be denied.

Orders came to renew the attack on the 27th, the immediate objective again being Hill 213. The plan called for the 168th to pass through the 133rd, preceded by elements of the 756th Tank Battalion, without whose assistance little progress could be expected. The attack was preceded by one hour of heavy artillery preparation. At 0730, elements of the



**Captain James C. Dye** of Louisville, Ky., dresses scalp wound of woman injured in Tragone. Private John De Grad of Newton, Iowa, assists the doctor. Both were members of the 2nd Battalion, 168th Infantry, Italy, October 21, 1943.

1st and 3rd Battalions of the 168th, led by tanks of the 756th, commenced the crossing one-half mile south of Cairo, advancing behind a rolling barrage. By 1300 hours, four tanks had crossed the river, all soon being immobilized: two by direct enemy hits, one by mines and the fourth becoming helplessly bogged down in the infernal mud. But the efforts of the tanks were not in vain: four companies of the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 168th, crossed the Rapido over the bank cleared by the tanks. Joined in the night by Company "C," the troops reached the base of Hills 56 and 213, elements of Company "C" even reaching the summit of the latter hill. The losses being heavy and the positions of our troops appearing untenable, Company "C" withdrew across the river, but Companies "A" and "B" were held at the west bank.

Companies "I" and "K" of the 3rd Battalion recrossed to the east side of the river, but that night again crossed over to the enemy's side some 500 yards north of the tank lane, two platoons advancing to dig in just short of the village of Cairo. Our bridgeheads showed signs of being made secure.

On the 29th of January, General Ryder organized a special Combat Team that was now to be thrown into the breach. Preceded by tanks of the 760th Battalion, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 168th, with the latter serving as the spearhead, were to capture the saddle between Hills 56 and 213. Other units assigned to the team were the 175th Field Artillery and all II Corps Engineers.

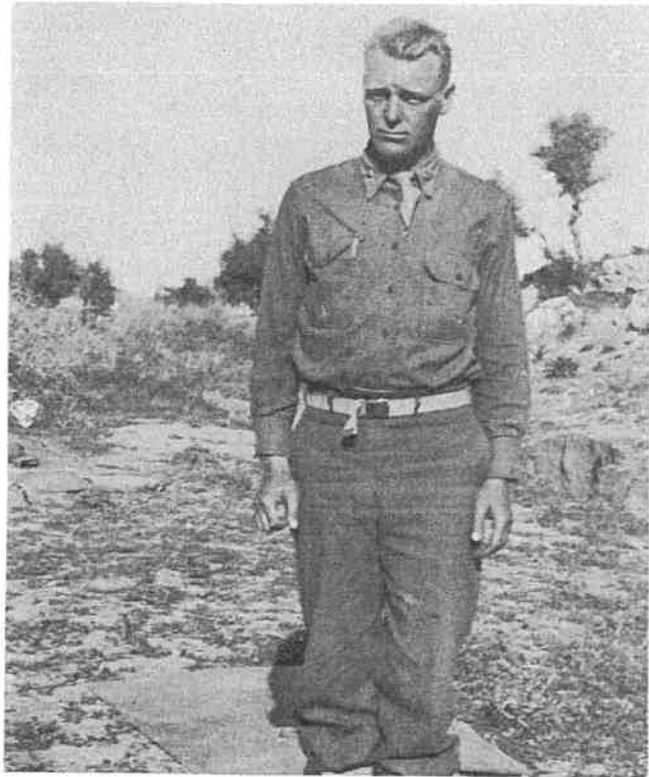
The Engineers, working as always under the most adverse conditions created by the rushing stream and constant fire from the enemy, had laid out three additional crossings. Tanks and troops moved over, encountering resistance which immobilized five of the seven vitally needed armored monsters which had gained the other shore.

Once across, however, the Infantry struck rapidly towards their goal: all three Battalions of the 168th reaching the base of the coveted Hills 56 and 213. Before dawn the 2nd and 3rd Battalions had fought

their way to the top of Hill 213, while the 1st Battalion drove the enemy from Hill 56. Troops mopped up the area and dug in to repel determined counter-attacks. By noon of that day, Company "K," assisted by tanks of the 760th Battalion, had assaulted and captured the village of Cairo. The bloody days of the Rapido took on a brighter outlook: the first defense positions of the Gustav Line had been cracked, though the ultimate breaking of that line lay many bloody months ahead.



Major Samuel Kelsall, Division Veterinarian



Major Lester M. Brown, Division Provost Marshall.



On the Gustav Line, north of Cassino, Italy, Pvt. William McGimmis, Huntington, W. Va., and MP of the 34th Division, is directing traffic while under enemy observation. He is receiving such an artillery pounding that he has been forced to perform his duties from a dugout entrance at the side of the road. February 10, 1944.

# THE FRENCH AT BELVEDERE

The success of the 34th brought renewed action and success to the French in the north. Marrone Hill fell to the Moroccans; the Tunisian troops captured Belvedere and Abate Hills; and the Algerian Infantry pushed the enemy out of Propaia.

This French success, however, left their right flank exposed. To cope with the danger, General Clark attached the 142nd Regimental Combat Team, un-

der command of Brigadier General Frederick B. Butler, to the 34th Division. The Combat Team not only came to the aid of the French, but drove south capturing the famous Manna Farm and striking further south towards Monte Castellone.

The way was now cleared for a more direct assault on Cassino.



## ATTACK ON THE CASSINO AREA

Realizing the immediate threat on Cassino, the Germans had brought in fresh reserves in the form of the 211th Grenadier Regiment in February, the opposing forces stood poised for the renewal of a contest which had proven so bitter and costly to both sides.

By now, the eyes of the entire world were focused on the scene at Cassino. A realization had come to people everywhere that here was occurring one of the greatest battles in all human history.

Immediately above the city, now battered by artillery and air to a veritable rubble-heap, stood Castle Hill, crowned by an ancient castle fortification of Roman days. To the north and to the rear of Cassino, stood numerous high hills and mountains, dominated by the majestic, snow-covered Monte Cairo to the north. For the most part, the hills are barren of vegetation with numerous gulches cutting down their slopes and with olive groves crowding the foot-hills.



## THE ABBEY OF CASSINO

High above Cassino stood the ancient Abbey of Montecassino founded in 529 A. D. by the Benedictine Order. Here men of God had carried on their devotions for centuries. From Cassino, men of that famous Order had carried His name and His message to peoples all over the globe. Here, were preserved some of the greatest of paintings and works of sculpture, of the Primitive, the Renaissance, and later eras of Italian Art. Here were preserved some of the world's finest examples of Cathedral and altar construction. To the Italians and to the

world Montecassino was an Holy Shrine.

Under the Abbey ran an intricate pattern of caves and passage-ways, some of which led out to openings in the mountainside.

Though the enemy was suspected of using the Abbey as an observation post, as a storage place for supplies and ammunition, and as a setting for probable gun positions, the Allies strove to avoid the destruction of this famous shrine, realizing the impact such an unfortunate result would have upon the Christian World.



## THE SECOND PHASE OF CASSINO

The next phase of the terrific, bloody and historic battle was to be confined to a small area. To the northeast stood Monte Castellone (Hill 771) and Hill 575, known as Sant' Angelo Hill, while to the south and to the rear of the Abbey lay the mighty Majola Hill, the strongest bastion in the outer defenses.

On the 31st of January, 1944, General Ryder ordered the 135th Infantry to attack Castellone and Majola Hills, the 142nd to follow in and occupy Mt. Castellone when that Hill had fallen.

The 168th was to remain in position on Hills 56 and 213, but supporting the advance of the 135th with protective fire. The 133rd would renew its attack on Cassino from its position at the Italian Barracks.

At 0630 hours on the morning of the 1st of February, the 2nd and 3rd Battalion of the 135th jumped off into the attack. From Cairo, the 3rd Battalion struck swiftly, capturing Monte Castellone within three hours. The 2nd Battalion met tremendous artil-

lery resistance, but, favored by a friendly fog, captured Majola Hill.

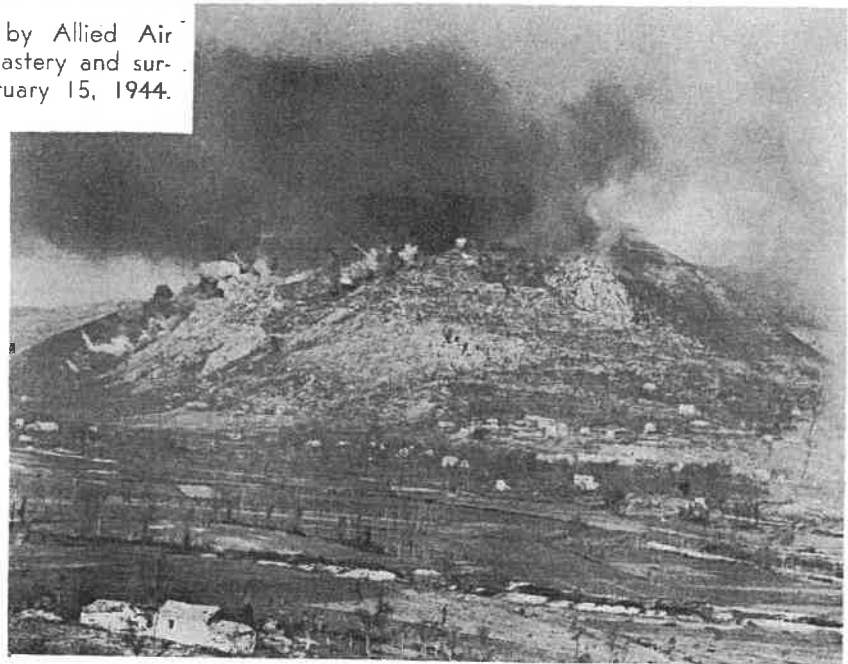
But there was to be no rest for the exhausted, depleted troops. The 135th Regiment struck southward, the 2nd Battalion gaining a part of Hill 593, and the 1st Battalion capturing Hill 324. General Ryder now sent Col. Boatner with the 3rd Battalion of the 168th to reinforce a drive that was hoped would cut across the important Highway No. 6. That drive was cut short by just one and one-half miles from the highway, fresh enemy resistance coming from reserves which had been rushed in to repel the dangerous advance. Here, the tired, dauntless troops withstood vigorous counter-attacks.

The 133rd, in the meanwhile, having cleaned out the Italian barracks, struck with its 3rd Battalion for Cassino, its troops following in the wake of tanks from the 756th. The town was penetrated at the north end by evening of February 2nd, but with the capture of two tanks and the destruction of three, the Infantry withdrew. A second attack launched



Cassino Battlefield.

Benedictine Monastery being bombed by Allied Air Force, to clear the enemy from the Monastery and surrounding area. Cassino Area, Italy. February 15, 1944.



on February 3rd was likewise repelled, but a third attack by the 1st Battalion was successful only after the 3rd Battalion had scaled the heights overlooking the city known as Hill 175.

In three days of terrific fighting, the 34th had made momentous gains. Not only had we won a great area to the rear of Cassino, but troops were now entrenched in the north part of the city itself.

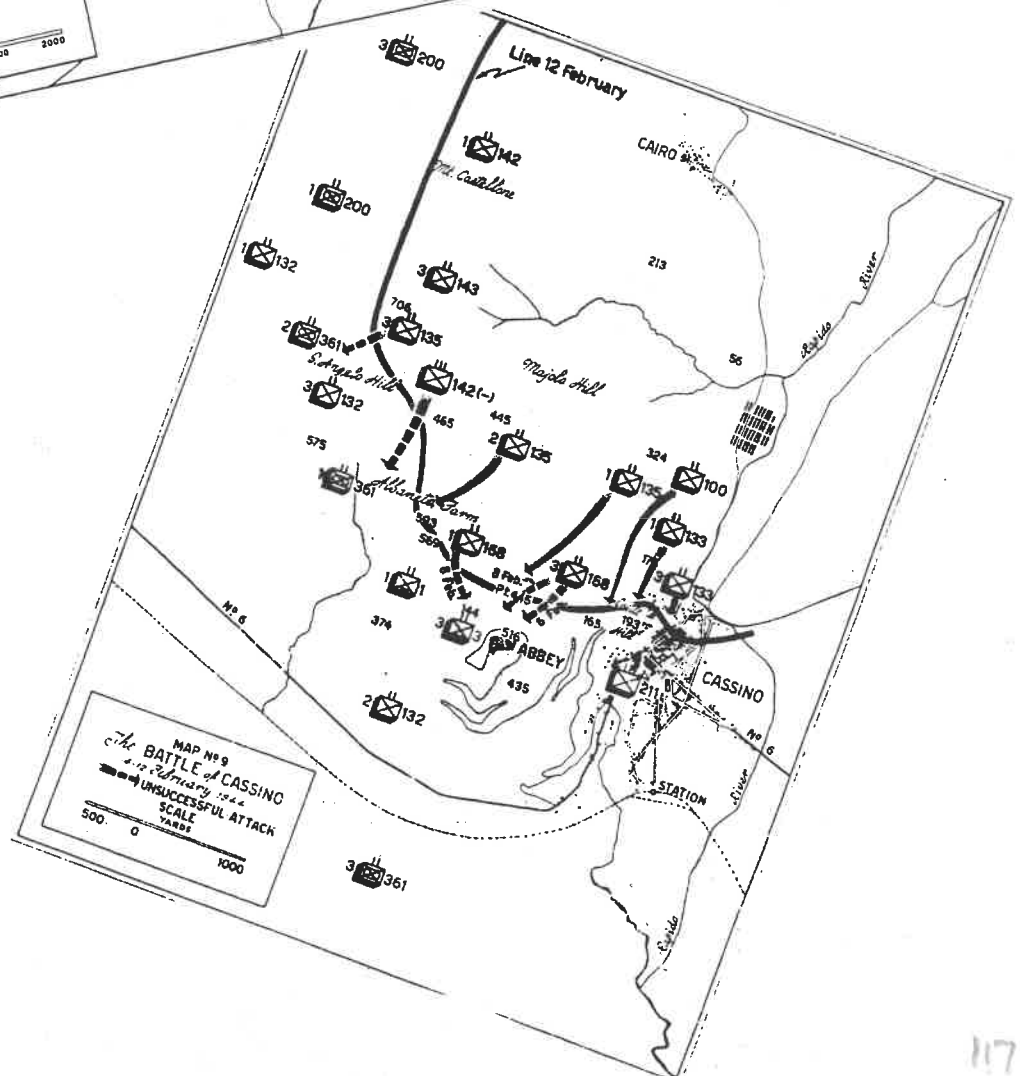
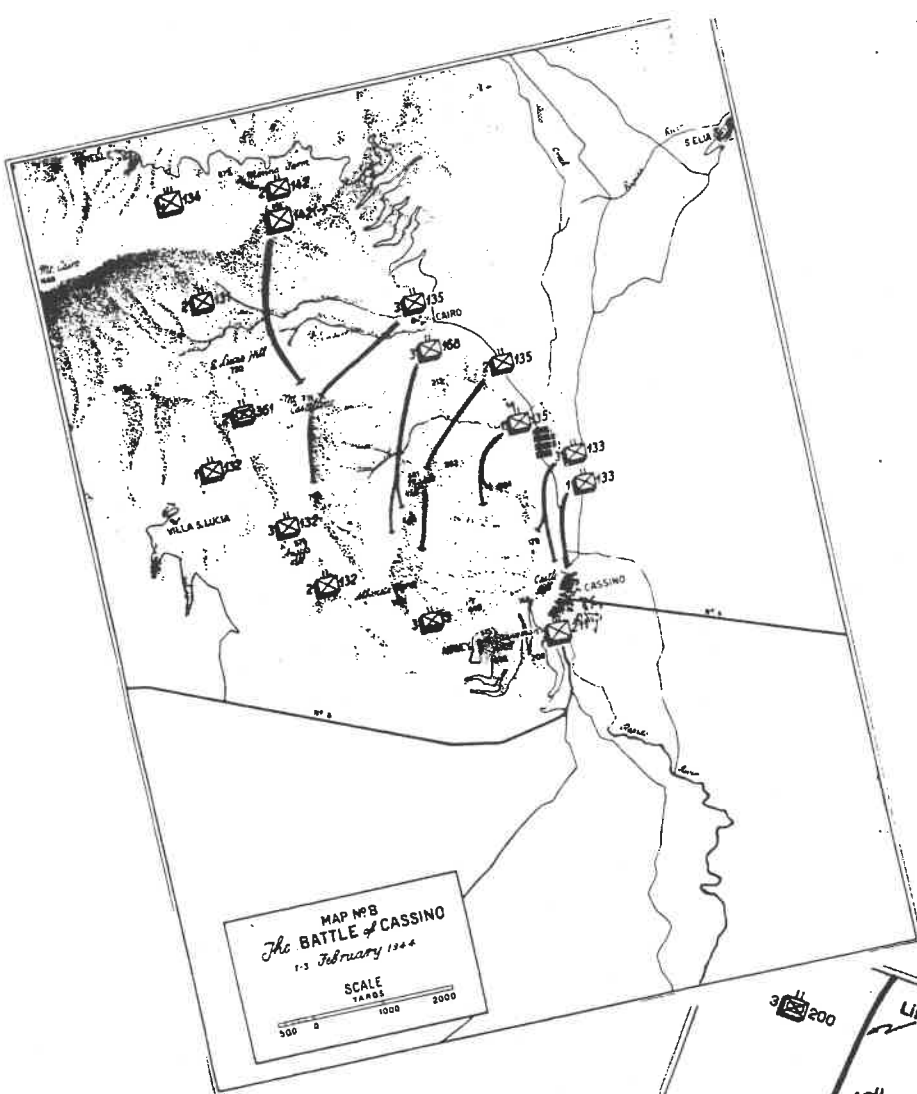
On February 4th and 5th, the 135th fought desperately to force its way across Highway 6, but its advance was repelled. Never were fresh reserve troops more greatly needed. None came. Indeed, thus far in the Italian Campaign, reserves were an almost unknown quantity. One fresh Battalion at this juncture might well have cut Highway 6 and forced a general withdrawal of the enemy. Men wondered then and wonder now, how planners of the Campaign failed to have sufficient reserves on hand at all times to meet such situations which would obviously arise.

The 168th and the 2nd Battalion of the 135th turned their efforts toward Monastery Hill. At daybreak on the 6th of February, Company "L" of the

168th led the attack. The storming of the Hill was bloody, the troops advancing part way up the narrow defile only to be stopped in their ascent. Here they hung on desperately.

During this phase a platoon of the 1st Battalion of the 135th actually reached the walls of the Abbey returning with 14 prisoners captured in a cave nearby. Another platoon under Captain Jack Sheehy of the 168th also reached the walls of the Abbey but was forced to withdraw.

During the fight for Cassino, Col. Robert L. Ward received a serious leg wound. The 168th Command then passed to Lt. Col. Charles Everest, who led the troops until the Division was withdrawn from the engagement. Col. Everest, a red-head, possessed of a magnetic personality, held the deep respect of all officers and men. Throughout all the Tunisian and Italian Campaign he had distinguished himself as Regimental Executive Officer. Just why he was not permitted to retain the command of the Regiment will always be a matter of speculation among those who knew him and his proven abilities.





Lt. Col. DeLoss Marken, Division Chaplain.



Lt. Col. Charles B. Everest of Council Bluffs, Iowa.

## SUPPLIES AND MEDICAL AID

The desperate plight of men of the 135th and 168th was such as to appall the most seasoned of fighting men: worn to exhaustion by continuous fighting and terrible exposure, struck down by illness and the devastating trench-foot, difficulties in moving up sufficient food, and the constant harassing by the enemy—all this, and still no relief.

During this great episode men of the Medical Corps performed heroically bringing up medical supplies, attending to wounded and sick on the scene and evacuating casualties down the tortuous mountain passes. Under the enemy's very guns they performed their arduous duties with a bravery and efficiency that shall always be regarded as one of the gallant achievements of the war. Always our Medics performed outstandingly, but the deeds performed by them at Cassino transcend all in its

great accomplishments.

There were heroes too who struggled up these mountains with food, ammunition and supplies, often to places not accessible to mule packs. Many men died on these missions, but the lines never faltered. These efforts aided the exhausted fighting men to hold on, and to yet again attempt one more desperate attack.

So depleted was our fighting strength that Company cooks and clerks, mess hands and others from both Division forward and rear echelons were called to the line. Some joined their fighting comrades; others served as litter bearers, carrying the wounded men down the steep mountain sides, a descent often requiring from 7 to 8 hours. Many of these men gave their lives in order that the gains won could be held until relief arrived.

# FIGHTING RESERVES

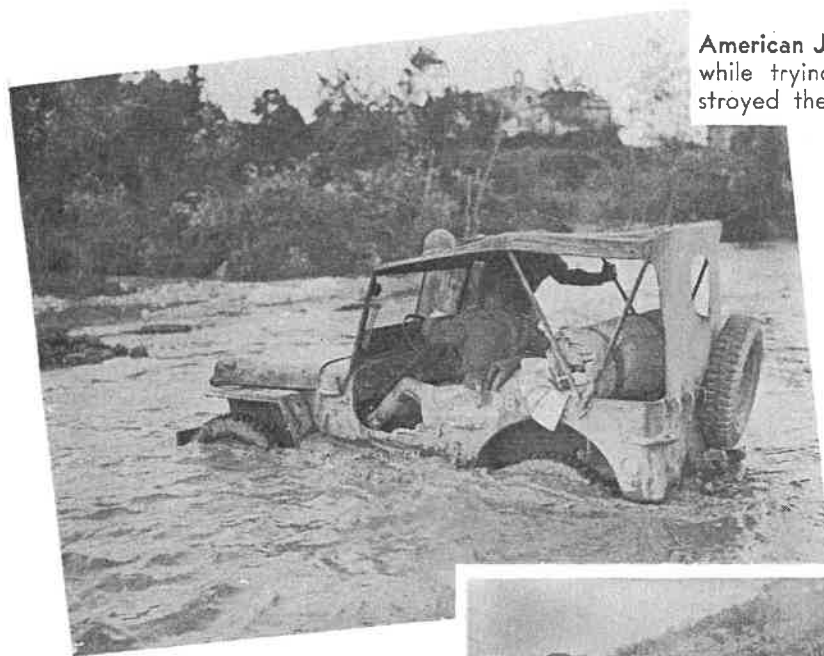
While the 133rd continued to penetrate Cassino, literally fighting from wrecked building to building, the 135th and the 168th prepared to renew the assault against Monastery Hill. The 135th was occupied with meeting vicious counter-attacks, necessitating the attack being made by the 168th. On the 8th of February, the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the famous Iowa Regiment jumped off on its second assault on Monastery Hill. Heavy rain, which turned into a furious blizzard, impeded our troops, worn to complete exhaustion.

Now, at last, relief was on the way. On the night of 14th-15th of February, Indian Troops relieved the 135th and 168th Regiments. The 133rd was still desperately fighting in Cassino and was not to be relieved until after the bombing of the Abbey, when

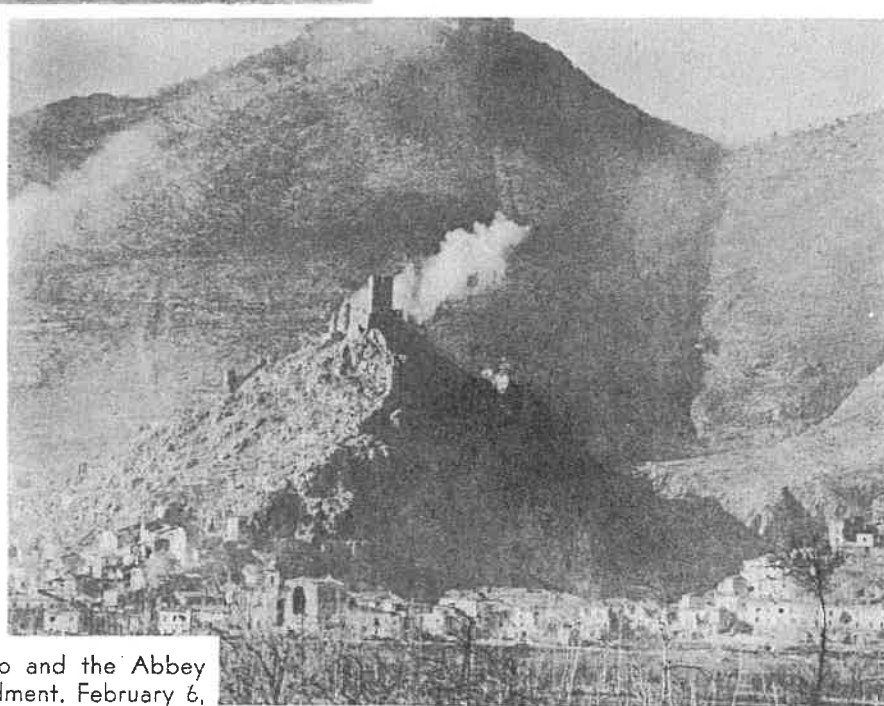
the New Zealand Corps came in to replace our men on February 22nd.

With orders for withdrawal of the 34th came a dramatic and painful episode of the war. Hundreds of men of the 135th and 168th were too exhausted to move, let alone negotiate the steep descents. Scores were hoisted out of fox-holes and carried down by their buddies; hundreds were carried down by litter bearers. A few who, though they had lived through murderous enemy fire in combat, now were made casualties or killed as the enemy covered the trails with mortar and machinegun fire.

The days of horror at Cassino for the 34th were ended, but never the memory of it all, a memory which will live in the hearts of Americans for always.



American Jeep with British soldiers, caught in mid-stream while trying to cross the Rapido River. Germans destroyed the bridge.



Close-up scene of the city of Cassino and the Abbey under Artillery fire before air Bombardment. February 6, 1944.

## THE BOMBING OF THE ABBEY

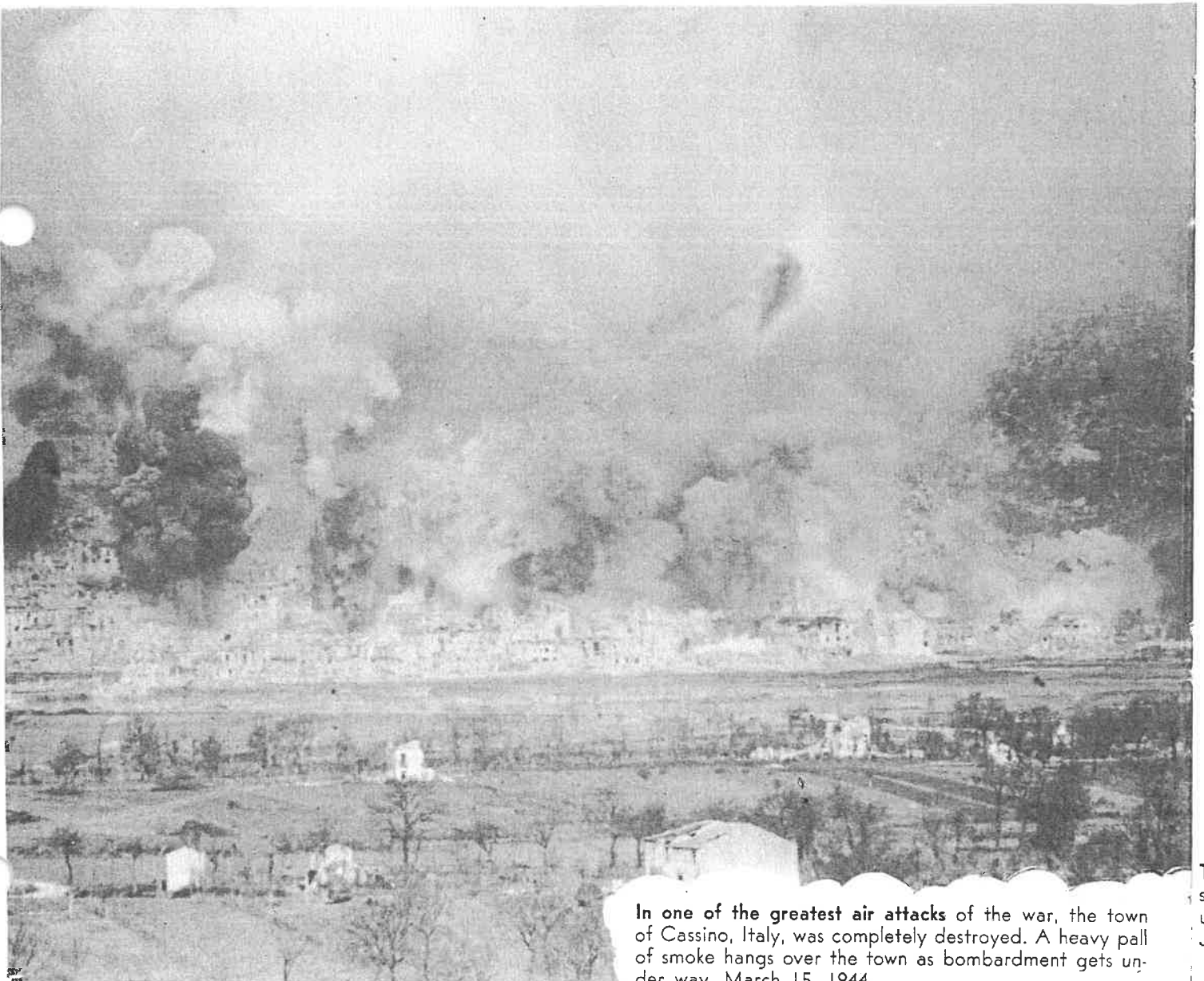
While the embattled 133rd Infantry was still doggedly fighting from building to building in Cassino, the fateful decision to bomb the Abbey was made. Upon Lt. General Sir Bernard C. Freyberg of the New Zealand Corps fell the great responsibility of determining the fate of the Abbey. A study of the enemy's position and his apparent use of the Abbey convinced General Freyberg and High Command that the Abbey must be bombed before the Gustav Line could be broken. The bombers came on the 15th of February, demolishing the sacred shrine and laying the remnants of Cassino in total and utter destruction—scarcely a stone remaining on a stone.

Men of the 34th witnessed that tragic bombing.

They wondered then as they wonder now, what strategic advantage was gained, for accounts relate how the enemy was not dislodged and how the ruins afforded him even greater protection.

Cassino and the Abbey remain symbols of the awful havoc of war. The Abbey is slowly arising again, but Cassino will ever remain a citadel of ruins.

Cassino was to resist until the middle of May. Thousands of Polish troops were to give their lives in the effort to dislodge the enemy, as were several thousand New Zealand and French troops. The Gustav Line and Cassino will live in history, and Cassino and the Abbey stand forever, immortalized!

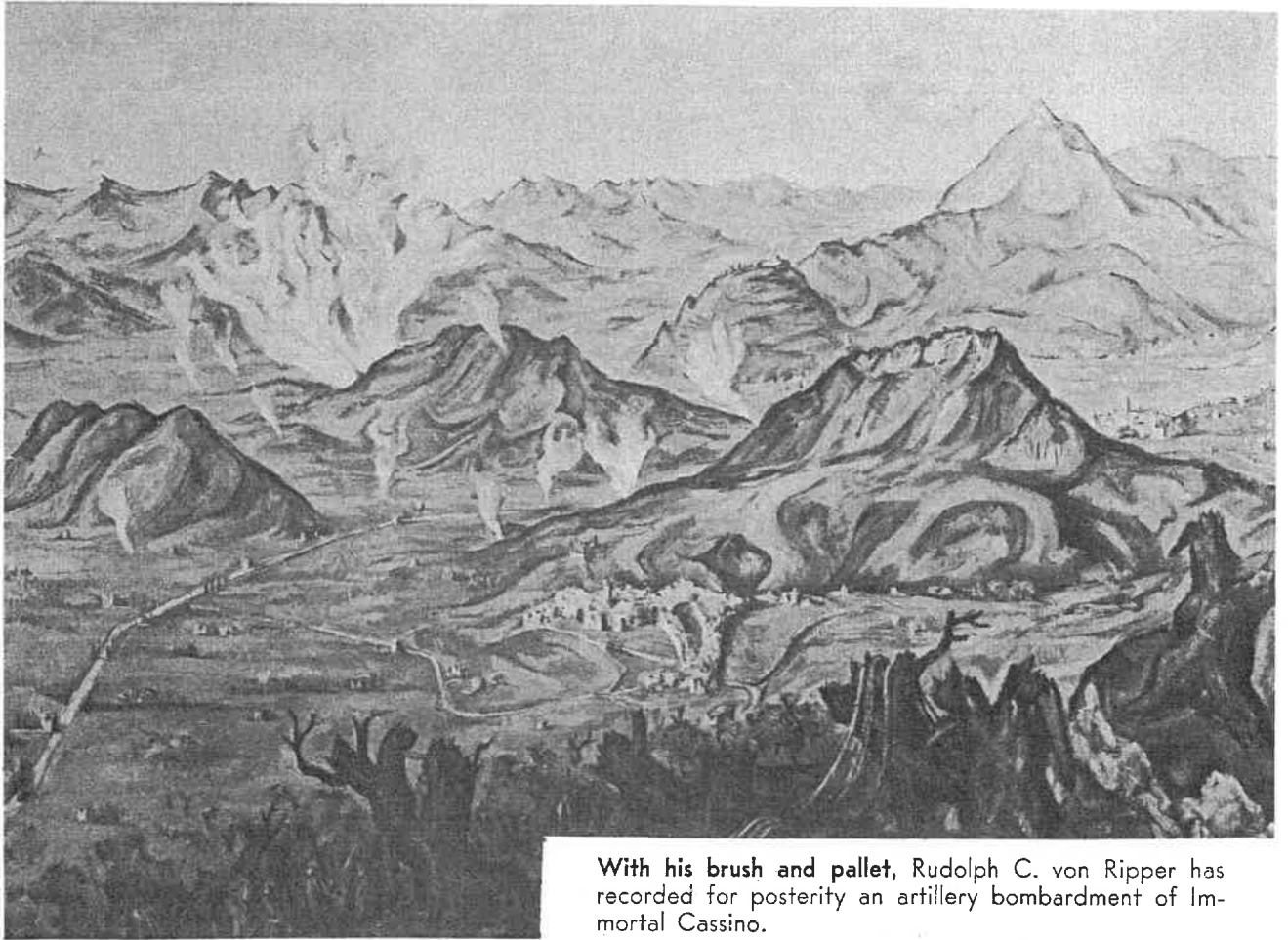


In one of the greatest air attacks of the war, the town of Cassino, Italy, was completely destroyed. A heavy pall of smoke hangs over the town as bombardment gets under way. March 15, 1944.

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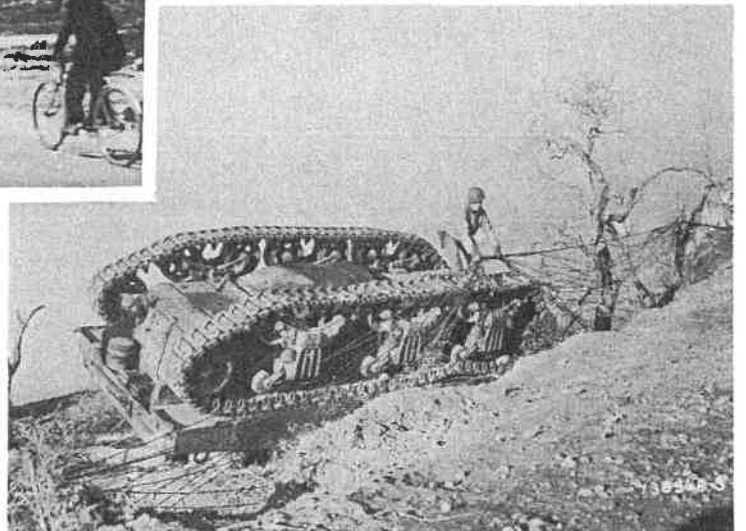
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With his brush and pallet, Rudolph C. von Ripper has recorded for posterity an artillery bombardment of Immortal Cassino.



Ruins of the Monte Cassino Monastery in the background of this view of Cassino, Italy.



Though wrecked and over-turned, this U. S. tank still serves a purpose as Cpl. Ivan Baake, Bemidji, Minnesota, uses it to string signal wires in the Cassino Area, Italy. January 17, 1944.

## Chapter XVIII

# THE ANZIO BEACH-HEAD

Following the bitter, relentless days of Cassino, the 34th had retired to its "rest" area in the vicinity of familiar San Angelo d'Alife, troops being dispersed along the Volturno Valley as far south as Piedimonte de'Alife. The rest was of short duration for, within a week, orders came directing the Division to move to an area near San Giorgio, near the Calore River, and Benevento, the scene of the early battle experiences of the intrepid 133rd. Here, the famous Hawkeye Regiment was rejoined by its 2nd Battalion, late the honor guard of General Eisenhower's Headquarters at Algiers.

The 2nd Battalion was fresh and vigorous, with the challenge of "no combat" before it. Lt. Col. Bruno G. Marchi and his troops were really under the magnifying glass of battle scarred veterans who viewed the askance, "Palace Guards" who, however, despite their efficient performance as smart guards at an English Airport, and as elite guards of Allied Headquarters in Algiers, had yet to experience the rigor of bloody combat. It was a time to test men's souls. How gallantly the 2nd Battalion acquitted itself will unfold as the story progresses.

## DANCE AT BENEVENTO

Only one night of diversion was permitted men of the 34th at San Giorgio, and that, dances at Benevento—one for the enlisted men and one for the officers. The affairs were delightful to battle weary men, but both were marred by hungry, starved civilians who raided the loaded tables,

carrying away vast quantities of food to their families, consuming what was left, and denying the celebrating G.I.'s more than a look at the sumptuous tables which had groaned with a fare fit for prince or king.



Lt. Col. Hunert H. Des Marais, Division G-2 and Nancy Kimberly of the American Red Cross. Their marriage was a memorable romance of the War.



Vesuvius in action, March 1944. Ashes caused over 40 deaths at Sorrento, 30 miles away.

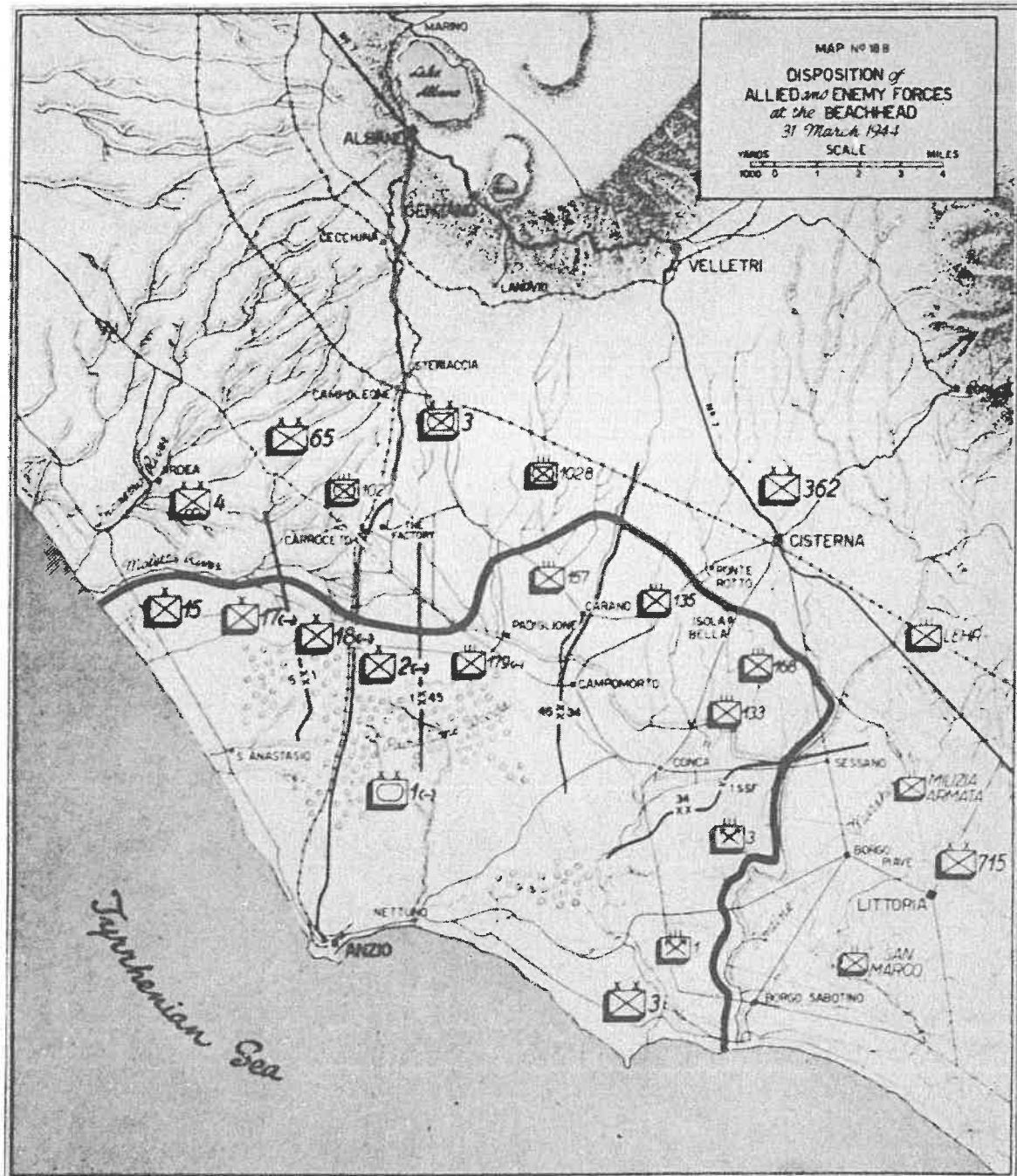
# THE 34TH MOVES TO THE ANZIO BEACH-HEAD

On the 11th of March, orders came for the veteran 34th to move to the Anzio Beach-head which had been established by American troops in early January, as we have seen.

Due to casualties, sustained up the Italian Peninsula, the three crossings of the Volturno, the crossing of the Rapido and the terrible Cassino engagements, the Division was drastically reduced in strength; and, now, a few days before embarkation for Anzio, new recruits were pouring in from the States, presenting an almost insurmountable problem of absorbing and indoctrinating men of no bat-

tle experience. Immediately, seasoned veterans launched into instruction of these fresh recruits who, but for the accident of fate, might well have been experienced fighters by this late date.

Troops of the 34th left the port at Bagnoli, (a port of other days), for Anzio commencing March 17th, the movement being completed on March 26th. The 168th moved in first relieving our old friends, the 3rd Infantry Division. The 135th followed in a few days later, while final units of the 133rd arrived on March 26th.



# THE TACTICAL SITUATION AT ANZIO



The Catacombs of Nettuno furnished some protection on the Anzio.

"Operation Shingle," the assault on the Anzio Beach-head, caught the enemy completely by surprise. It should be recalled that this spectacular landing was designed, in its broad concept, to assist in breaking the Gustav Line at Cassino, and to either trap the enemy to the south or to cause his retirement north of Rome. The great prize of Rome itself, of course, was the ultimate goal of the operation.

First to land on January 22, 1944, was the 3rd

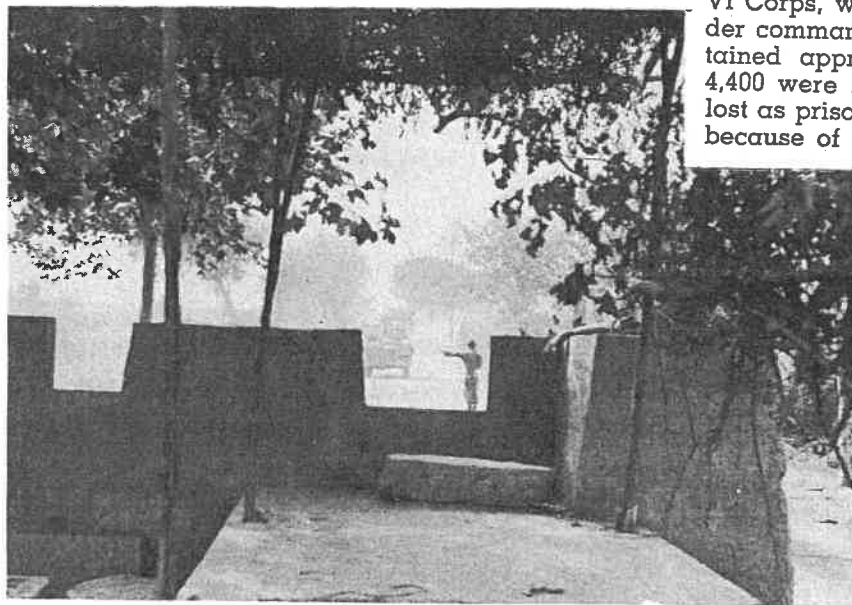
Division under Major General Truscott, which stormed up the shores east of Nettuno. General Clark, the Army Commander, landed with the assault waves. The Ranger Force, under the command of our former Division Aide, Colonel William O. Darby, swarmed over the beaches at Anzio, followed by the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion under Lt. Col. William P. Yarbrough. Northward, the British, who constituted part of VI Corps, landed without opposition. By midday, all elements of VI Corps were firmly established on the beach.

Troops continued to pour in on the Beach-head until all elements, both British and American were well forward, prepared for the inevitable resistance and attacks to be offered by the Germans.

The Anzio-Nettuno Beach-head terrain consists of a low coastal plain extending from Terracina on the south to the ancient Tiber river on the north, the whole ringed about by hills and mountains. Inland, some twenty miles, the range of hills and mountains, is guarded at the north by Colli Laziali, a mountain mass rising some 3100 feet above the sea, receding downward towards Highway 6 to the vicinity of Velletri and Valmontone. To the south, rise the Lepini Mountain ridges which encompass the Pontine Marshes and sweep to the sea at Terracina. Figuratively, American and British troops were in the bottom of a half-bowl, from the rim of which, the enemy literally looked down our throats.

While the original landing had been virtually unopposed, the battle of the beach-head remained a constant grim and deadly struggle. For four months, from January 22, 1944, through May 22, 1944, the battle raged, the Allies slowly enlarging their area against bitter resistance. Twice the Germans launched superior assaults in an attempt to drive the Allies into the sea. Constant patrols, often in force, by both sides, took their toll.

No detailed account of this entire operation can be given here, but casualties suffered by VI Corps during that period tell all too clearly the story of bitter fighting. In the four month's period, troops of VI Corps, which together with all Allied Forces under command of Major General John P. Lucas, sustained approximately 30,000 casualties, of which 4,400 were killed, 18,000 wounded in action, 6,800 lost as prisoners of war, and the balance evacuated because of sickness.



Corporal James E. Killeen, MP of the 34th Division, Aitkin, Minnesota directs traffic, Italy

# THE 34TH ON THE BEACH-HEAD



Unloading of vehicles, equipment and men onto beach from boats. South of Anzio, Italy. January 22, 1944.

The Division moved into line south of Cisterna, an ancient city which, in Roman days, served as a source of water supply, as its name implies. The line now ran roughly as follows: commencing at the coast-line at the border of the Pontine Marches, the line paralleled a canal for about 10 miles in a northeasterly direction; thence, it swung in an irregular arc through Isola Bella, sweeping in a westerly direction to the sea near the mouth of the Molleta river. The accompanying map shows the location of the various units of VI Corps.

Here, the 34th was to experience an entirely new type of warfare. There had been a life of continuous attack, epitomized by the Division slogan: Attack! Attack! Attack! Now men dug into the sides of ditches and canals where they remained under cover for the most part, during day-time, a precaution made necessary by the continual harrassing fire laid down by an enemy who could observe our every movement. At night, men would come out of their cave homes to relieve their cramped bodies.

Despite this period of comparative combat inactivity, the next two months were spent in schooling men in the manning of defense positions, in the posting of guards and in actually piercing the enemy's forward positions with patrols, time and time again.

Here the artillery perfected a new type of fire known as T.O.T. or "time on target," in which shells from scores of widely dispersed guns would all reach the identical target at the same moment. Engineers were kept busy, laying barbed wire, setting out mine-fields, building revetments with sand bags, the 109th filling and laying over a million bags during the two month's period.

An attack school was organized through which troops rotated for intensive training. Under the command of Lt. Col. Charles P. Greyer, this school sent strong raiding patrols into the enemy's lines. Physical fitness of the men was emphasized in all training and exercises, and intelligence concerning the enemy became a paramount consideration, with special training in the actual capture of prisoners. The Signal Corps was instructed in the installation of its centers of communication underground, an ex-

perience that was to be put to effective use throughout the balance of the Campaign.

The "Red Raiders" of the 133rd became famous for their successful forays into enemy territory, on one occasion sustaining a heavy counter-attack which was repulsed. The 168th had its "Rattle Snakes," a Commando type and a devil-may-care outfit which gave good accounts of itself and which developed a technique of riding tanks "bare-back" in order to be placed in immediate fighting position as tanks reached an objective. The "Charlie Plan" of the 135th was a combined, artillery, tank and "smoke" attack on a strongly defended house in the vicinity of Santa Maria. The raid was successful; the troops, in addition to the valuable lessons learned, returning with prisoners and important information concerning the enemy.

Monotony on the beach-head was further relieved by nightly raids and the consistent dropping of shells, which too often fell into troop areas with a casualty attrition which mounted with the days. Two shells made direct hits on the Division Headquarters, the one completely demolishing the kitchen; the other hitting a dug-out and killing an officer of our photographic section. So numerous were the shells and bombs which fell on the beach-head that, after the war, flying over the area one could see literally a million holes and craters. Indeed, Count Borghese, owner of the great estate upon which VI Corps had established its headquarters, estimated it would cost him more than his land was worth to fill in and level off his fields.

Almost in the center of the open beach, the several field hospital units had pitched their tents. Fully exposed to enemy fire they sustained a number of hits in the area with severe casualties. Their only recourse was to dig in their tents and surround the walls with revetments of sand bags. Perhaps a safer, if not as convenient a place for these hospitals would have been the electrically lighted, heated tunnels and caves occupied by VI Corps Headquarters under the hill near Nettuno. A deep and lasting admiration for the American Army nurses will always be cherished by men of the 34th.

## Chapter XIX

# THE BREAK-THROUGH AND DRIVE ON ROME

On the morning of May 12, 1944 the main Spring offensive against the Gustav Line was launched. For this phase, the Fifth Army which now included the 85th and 88th Divisions, took over the western sector, while the British Eighth Army took over the Cassino sector. Within a week of hard fighting the Gustav Line, at last, commenced to crumble. The Eighth Army advanced up the Liri Valley and the Fifth Army drove up along the coast-line, attacking the Hitler Line. The time for offensive action on the Anzio beach-head had arrived. The "quiet" days were over, days which had nonetheless taken a substantial toll in dead and wounded.

On May 22, 1944, just one day before the launching of the break-through from the Anzio beach-head, the 36th Infantry Division arrived. VI Corps now was constituted of seven full Divisions, together with many supporting elements of tank, engineer, anti-tank, ack-ack and ordnance outfits.

Before VI Corps stood elements of the German Tenth and Fourteenth Armies. Kesselring kept his 26th and 29th Panzer Grenadier Divisions in reserve south of Rome prepared to rush to Cassino or to the beach-head as the situation demanded.

The plan for the break-through was called "Buffalo." The initial assault was assigned to the 34th Division which was to strike through toward Cisterna cutting Highway 7, and thence, toward Lanuvio. The 45th Division was to drive north toward Campoleone, the 1st Armored Division was to attack Velletri and the 3rd Division was to drive on Valmontone and cut Highway 6. The 36th Division was to be held in reserve to exploit the break-through at the most advantageous point. The British 1st and 5th Divisions, at the extreme west end of the perimeter, were to make deceptive thrusts to the north of their sector to keep the enemy from diverting troops against our main effort.

## THE 135TH ATTACKS

The 135th Infantry Regiment was detached from the 34th Division and attached to Combat Command "A" of the 1st Armored Division, with the mission of spearheading the attack on Cisterna and beyond. The plan of Combat "A" was threefold: (1) to cut the Cisterna-Albano railroad; (2) cut across Highway 7; and (3) secure the area below Velletri.

At 0600 hours on the 23rd of May, 1944 a tremendous barrage was laid down by VI Corps Artillery units, heralding the attack which had been awaited for two months by the restless men of the Red Bull. Every man knew that breaking through the perimeter would mean death, wounds and hardship, but all seemed to welcome the attack alternative as a relief from the game of serving as sitting-duck targets for the pot-shooting enemy who had relentlessly been throwing in upon them every kind of fire in the military books.

With the lifting of the barrage, the attack was launched, the 1st Battalion on the left, the 2nd Battalion on the right, with the 3rd Battalion in reserve. This time, the element of surprise had been achieved, the enemy anticipating that our major effort would be made from the British Sector in the direction of Albano. Moreover, Kesselring had held back important reserves believing that another beach-head landing by the Allies might be attempted to the north of Rome.

With beautifully co-ordinated air and tank support, the two Battalions drove forward, the drive being retarded by wide mine-fields and heavy anti-tank fire. Despite the loss of tanks and rugged resistance, the troops had cut across the Cisterna-Albano railroad by 1200 hours, gaining their first objective.

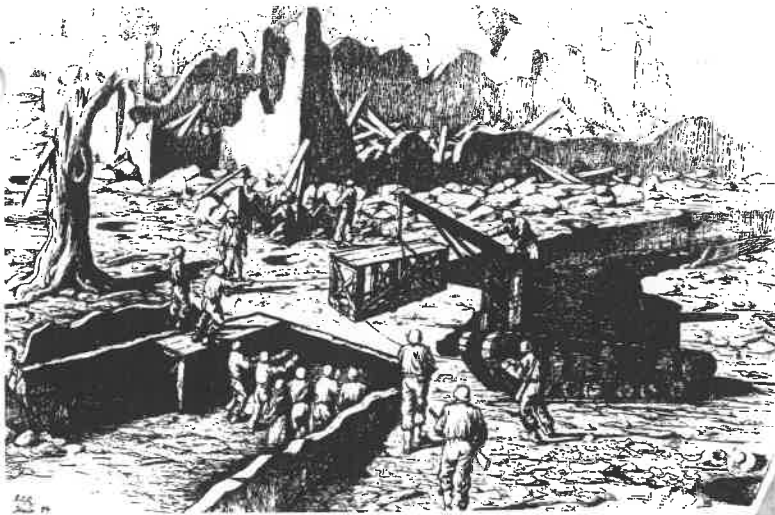
During the day's fighting, two enlisted men from

Company "B," Sergeant George G. Hall and Tech. Sergeant Ernest A. Dervishian, distinguished themselves with such acts of courage and initiative as to gain for each the Congressional Medal of Honor. The record of their deeds is told in the following recitals:

Shortly after the jump-off, Company "B" was pinned down by grazing fire from three machine-guns. Sergeant Hall set out alone, taking advantage of slight depressions and shell-holes, and from a distance of 50 yards, hurled hand-grenades into the first enemy gun emplacement. Two Germans were killed and four others surrendered, and Hall turned his attention to the second gun. Exhausting his own grenades, he picked up some German "potato mashers" and killed five members of the crew. Five more surrendered. As Sergeant Hall crawled toward the third gun an enemy artillery shell exploded, shattering his leg which he severed with his own sheath knife as he worked his way back to our lines. With two guns out of action, Company "B" by-passed the third gun and continued its advance.

"Sergeant Dervishian's exploit took place near the Cisterna-Albano railroad embankment where his platoon, by aggressive action, had advanced far ahead of the balance of the Company. The Sergeant and four of his men captured 25 Germans, sending them to the rear. Dervishian went on alone to a vineyard to capture 6 Germans after his men had wounded three others. Moving forward through the vineyard, a machinegun drove the men to the ground. Sergeant Dervishian then ordered his men to the rear while he crawled forward to within grenade range of the guns. He grasped his opportunity when the gun ceased firing at him, rushing forward



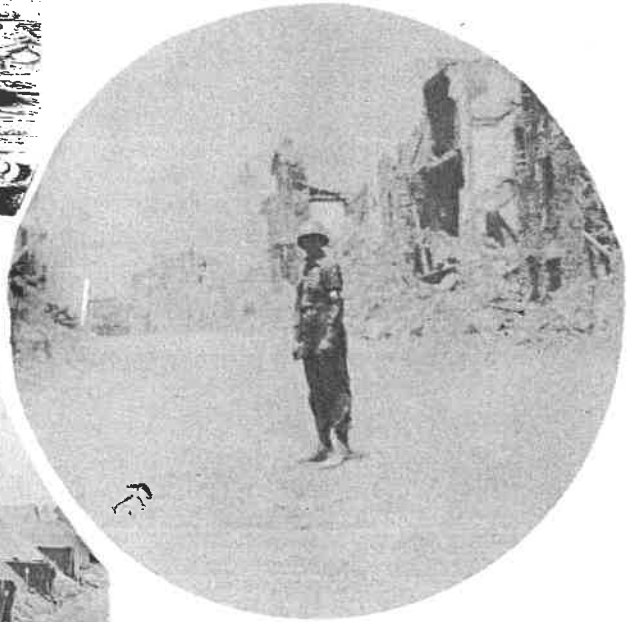


Engineers constructing bridge at Cassino.

Rows of ward tents of the 94th Evacuation Hospital, Anzio Area, Italy. May 8, 1944.



German artillery shells frequently fell in the hospital area on the Anzio Beachhead, resulting in serious casualties. April 6, 1944.



This happened to Cisterna when our troops broke out from the Anzio Beachhead.





Members of the 1st Special Service Force Patrol, of which elements of the 135th Infantry were a part, firing automatic rifles in close engagement with the enemy. Anzio Beachhead, April 14, 1944.



Enemy tanks strewn out on "Purple Pathway" Italy.

## THE DRIVE ON ROME

The break-through on all sectors having now progressed even better than hoped for, General Clark issued an order for an all-out drive on Rome by VI Corps, up Highway 7. The 45th Division was to drive on the left towards Campoleone and the 34th, on the right, was to force its way to Lanuvio. The enemy was to defend Rome to the bitter end, for the fall of the city would constitute a terrible loss of prestige to the Nazis.

On the night of May 20th, the 3rd Division moved in to relieve the 3rd Battalion and to carry out its mission of capturing Velletri. At this juncture, the 135th retired to Cisterna, there to rejoin the 34th.

The enemy was re-grouping to meet the renewed, impending attack. On the 27th of May, the 2nd Battalion was detached from the 135th and attached to Combat Command "A" of the 1st Armored Division, while the 100th Battalion replaced the 2nd with the Regiment. Lanuvio lay in the lower foothills of the mass of the Colli Laziali mountains. Through these hills ran Highway 7 leading to Rome. Here, the Germans had built a mighty defensive position.

At 0500 hours of the 30th of May, the 3rd Battalion of the 135th again spear-headed the attack, moving under cover of darkness, over a rolling terrain, without previous reconnaissance. The Battalion reached Pastroela Creek, a deep, muddy gully which shall always be remembered as "Bloody Gulch." Here they ran into intense automatic fire. The progress had been retarded by troops losing contact in the dark. Despite this set-back, the men operated effectively in separate groups until re-organization had been effected.

Slow progress up "Bloody Gulch" was rendered inevitable by the heavy mortar and machinegun fire poured in by the enemy from his commanding position.

On the 31st of May, along a narrow zone of action between the 45th Division of the 133rd Infantry, the attack was renewed by the 135th. Against withering fire, the 3rd Battalion advanced some 800

yards towards Lanuvio. Much hard fighting ensued. We lost five light tanks and otherwise sustained very heavy casualties. By night-fall the 3rd Battalion had penetrated the Lanuvio line.

There were numerous acts of bravery performed by officers and men alike, in this bloody episode. Private Furman L. Smith of Company "L," with his platoon, knocked out two enemy machineguns, killing 8 and capturing 18. The Company pulled back, but Private Smith, dragging two of his wounded comrades to safety, stood up and, with rifle at shoulder fought it out alone against advancing Germans, finally receiving a volley of shots which dropped him to the ground, dead but still clutching his rifle. Smith's act of heroism inspired the troops who rallied and repulsed the enemy. Posthumously, Private Smith was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Staff Sergeant David Lopez of Company "L," was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. He had crawled forward alone and wiped out two machinegun nests, killing five Germans. One of his legs was shattered and he was taken prisoner. Later he was rescued by our troops and gave valuable information concerning the enemy's strength and positions.

Private Francis J. Laurain, a runner with Company "K," rallied a faltering group and was killed while leading them back to the line. He too, received the Distinguished Service Cross, posthumously.

Here again, as always, the Medics performed heroically, attending men under intense fire. Litter bearers who, despite their Red Cross insignia, were subjected to constant fire, won the lasting respect of the regiment. Captain Charles W. Mills, alone, performed repeated deeds of heroism. This Medico treated several hundred casualties, a superhuman task which left the Captain in a state of complete physical exhaustion.

The formidable Lanuvio line had been penetrated but at terrible cost. Dead bodies of men of the 34th and of the enemy lay strewn over the path in appalling numbers.

While Company "L" had been carrying on the assault mission, Company "K" and Company "M" were meeting similar experiences and with equal courage and success. On the bloody evening of June 1st, they repelled counter-charge after counter-charge. In repelling these, 2nd Lt. Charles J. Saucier of the 125th Field Artillery, from a forward observation post, contributed vitally in directing artillery fire to block the advance of the enemy.

On the never-to-be-forgotten 1st day of June, the 3rd Battalion was subjected to an unmerciful pounding. During this day, the Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Fillmore K. Mearns stood shoulder to shoulder with his men firing his carbines and inspiring his troops. One shot splintered his carbine barrel wounding him in the chest and face. He fought on, finally sustaining a shoulder wound that forced his evacuation.

The 2nd of June was comparatively quiet for the 135th, though the brilliant 100th Battalion moved well into the hills towards Albano.

On the 3rd, the enemy requested a truce to bury the dead. Fearful of trickery, the request was denied.

At 1100 hours on the 3rd of June, the 2nd Battalion was ordered into the attack, its mission to fill in a gap and protect the flank. Progress was slow in the face of the persistently intense enemy mortar and machinegun fire. Our tanks were knocked out and the casualties were heavy. News came that the 133rd had entered Lanuvio and was moving beyond with little resistance. The enemy appeared to be withdrawing to avoid encirclement.

On that morning, the 135th and the Division suffered a great loss in the death by enemy action of Lt. Col. Ray Erickson, Regimental S-3. He and two enlisted men were killed on reconnaissance. With

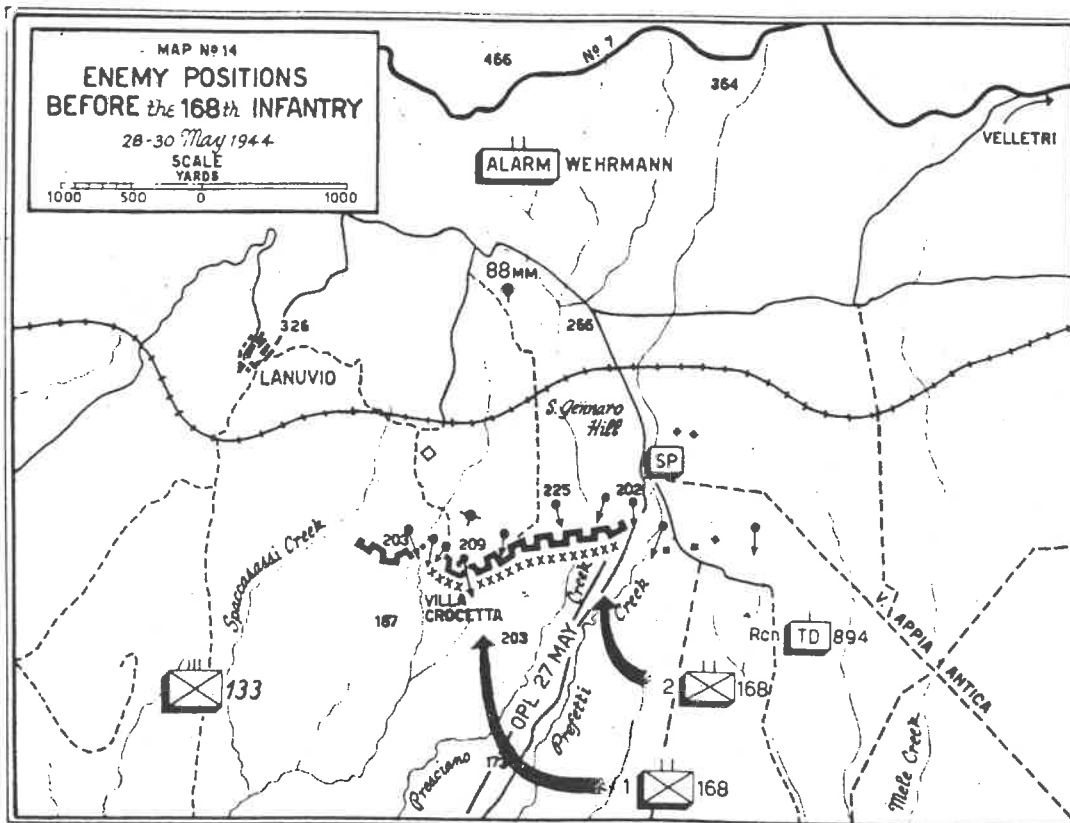
his death, the Division lost one of its most gallant fighting officers. In civilian life, Ray had been a boy-scout executive; in combat, he had been a daring, courageous and inspired leader whose repeated deeds of heroism had become well-known throughout the Division. His passing was mourned by his admiring comrades.

On June 4th, only small forces of the enemy were encountered. The Germans had withdrawn through Rome and across the Tiber river. By evening, troops of the 135th had entered through the historic gates of the eternal city.

On the morning of June 5th, Colonel Sweeting, while attempting to contact his 1st Battalion, ran into an ambush. His destroyed "peep" was discovered and his fate remained uncertain for months, until finally word reached the Division that he and his driver had been captured and were prisoners of war. Col. Sweeting was replaced by Lt. Col. Charles P. Greyer as commander of the Regiment.

In this terrific series of engagements, from Anzio to Rome, the 135th Infantry Regiment had achieved one of the most signal victories in all the long war. Theirs was a brilliant military accomplishment, performed under the most adverse circumstances. They had fought with a spirit and fatal determination which epitomized the fighting of the old Minnesota 1st Volunteer Infantry at Gettysburg. Like their famous predecessors, the 135th had almost literally fought "To the last Man."

If it is true that the 36th Division's capture of Velletri opened the road to Rome, then it is even more true that their opportunity for doing so had been made possible by the brilliant success of the 34th and particularly the 135th Infantry Regiment which had broken the enemy's defense line.





**1st Special Service Force Patrol** of 135th Infantry in break-through from Anzio Beachhead.

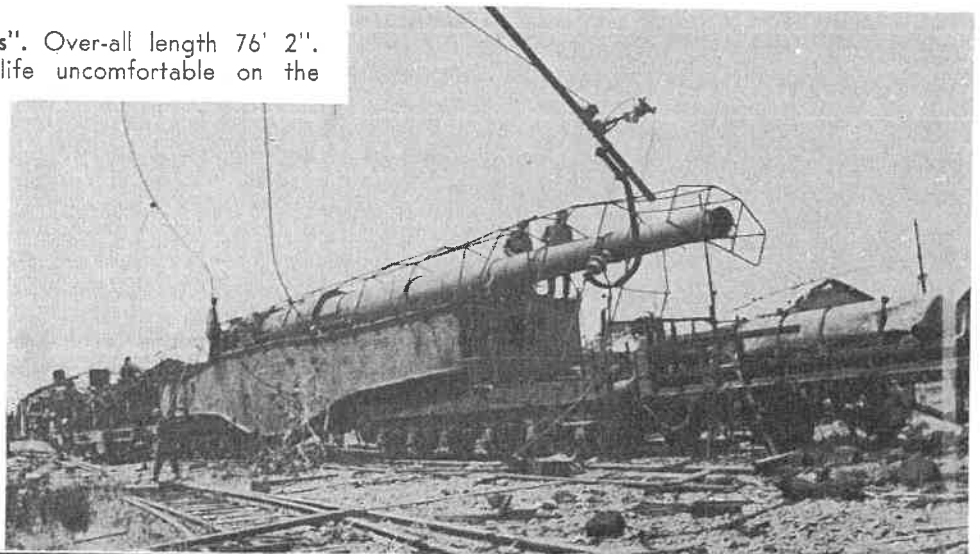


**Lt. General Mark W. Clark** speaking at Memorial Services at Cemetery, Anzio Beachhead.

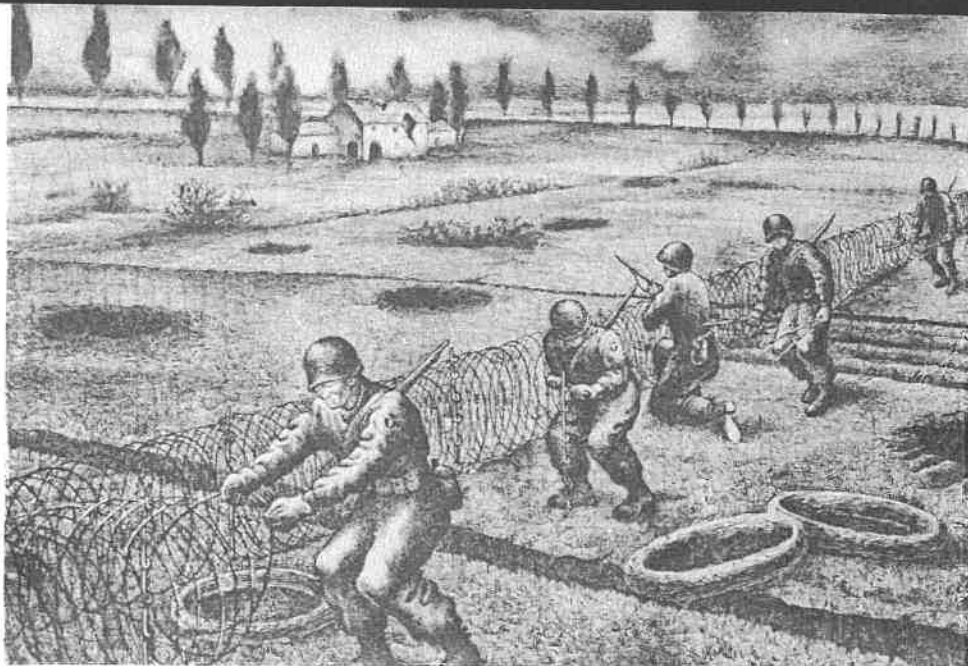


**Enemy Dead**, who attempted to cut our roads during the break-through from the Anzio Beachhead, met their doom. March 6, 1944.

**The German "Anzio Express"**. Over-all length 76' 2". These guns helped make life uncomfortable on the Beachhead.



# THE 168TH AND THE BREAK-THROUGH



Laying concertina wire in Italy.

On the 24th and 25th of May, the 168 Infantry occupied flank blocking positions north of Cisterna.

The Regimental objective was to attack and seize a part of the heights over-looking Lanuvio. Company "C" of the 109th Engineers, Company "C" of the 894th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and Company "D" of the 791st Tank Battalion were attached to the Regiment for the mission.

Commencing on May 26th, and for five days thereafter, the attack continued with battalions passing through one another as the advance progressed. The 1st Battalion led off into the assault, meeting sharp resistance, but pressing on to occupy several hills and gaining the heights near Fosso di Mole. Here Lt. Col. Wendell H. Langdon, who had been so seriously wounded at Monte Pantano, resumed command of the 1st Battalion. The 3rd Battalion moved in to relieve the 1st and at once, resumed the attack capturing other hills and contacting elements of the 133rd Infantry.

On the morning of the 27th of May, the 2nd Battalion was ordered into the line on the right flank of the 3rd. The 2nd advanced, but over difficult terrain including a gorge where they met with strong enemy fire. That day Lt. Col. Richard C. Parker took command of the Battalion, Major Fred D. Clarke having been evacuated because of serious wounds.

On May 28th, the 1st Battalion commenced its attack on the famous and stubborn Villa Crocetta. The resistance broke up the attack necessitating reorganization, and a renewed attempt on the afternoon of that day was again repelled. By night, Villa Crocetta stood firmly in the hands of the enemy.

A third attack against the position was launched by the 1st Battalion on May 29th. Under intense fire, the troops became disorganized and units separated. After reorganization, four attempts were made to storm the position. Each failed, the men falling back in confusion with heavy casualties resulting. It was difficult to rally the men. The records of the 168th state that the troops were "no longer confident in the eventual success of the operation." The story is replete with attempts to rally and capture

the stubborn Villa Crocetta, and though a patrol reached the heights, it was driven off, the Germans resisting each attempt. It was obvious by now that Villa Crocetta was the strongest point in the enemy's line of defense. During that day Captain Benjamin J. Butler replaced Lt. Col. Parker in command of the 1st Battalion, the latter being evacuated as a result of recurrence of an old injury. On May 30th, the attack on Villa Crocetta was called off.

Colonel Mark M. Boatner was now relieved by Colonel Henry C. Hine, Jr., as commander of the 168th Regiment. Lt. Col. Joel J. Padgett became Regimental Executive Officer and Lt. Col. Virgil L. Lewis and Lt. Col. Joe Bourne assumed command of the 1st and 2nd Battalions, respectively.

Colonel Hine was a soldier's ideal of a combat leader. A lean, trim, rugged individual, his quiet but vigorous bearing became an inspiration to men of the Regiment. His record throughout the balance of the Campaign was to mark him as a man of great combined fighting and tactical ability.

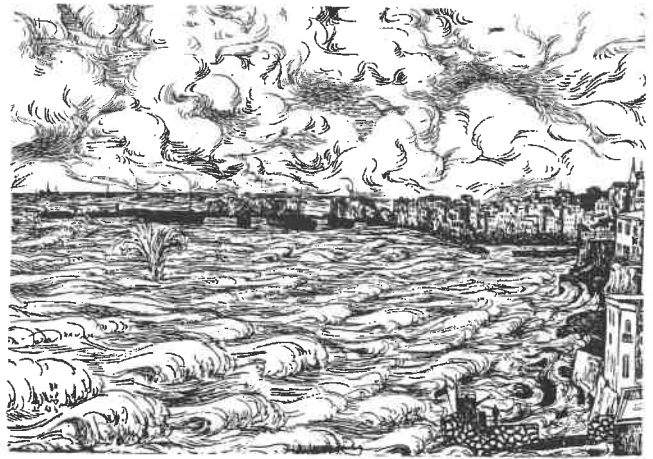
On the 1st of June, the attack was renewed. The 3rd Battalion was to attack Gennaro Ridge, while artillery was to incessantly pound Villa Crocetta, below which stood Company "C" of the 109th Engineers who now, as often throughout the war, put aside their tools and joined the riflemen.

Artillery continued to pound Germans both at Gennaro Ridge and Villa Crocetta all that day. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the resistance of the enemy was broken by the guns of the famous 175th assisted by other artillery units. The enemy withdrew from the Gennaro Ridge with the attack of the 133rd and when the "Rattle-snakes" patrol of the 168th reached Villa Crocetta, the enemy had gone.

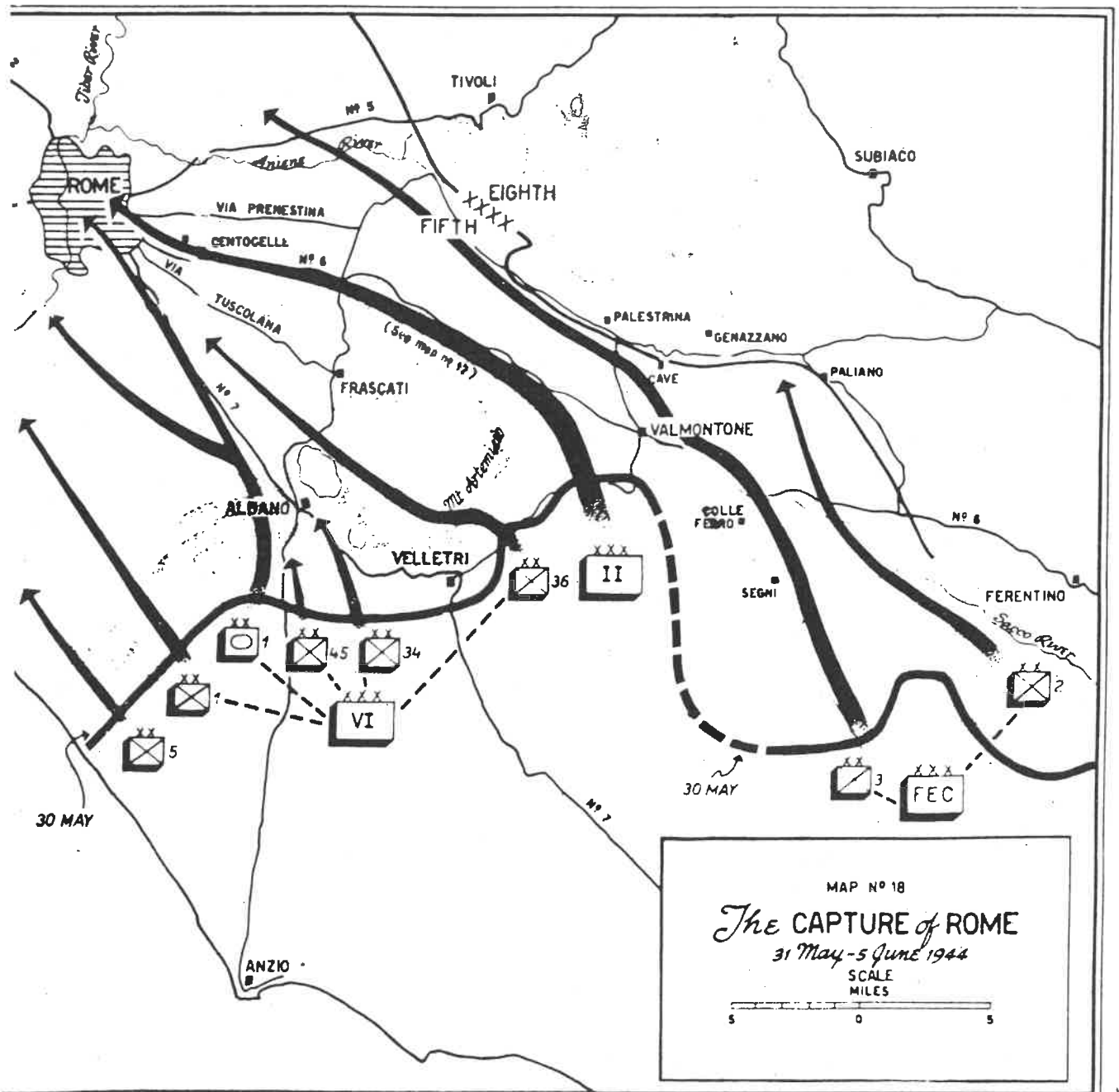
Sporadic resistance in the form of machinegun bursts and mortar fire continued throughout the 2nd of June. The high ground above Lanuvio became the objective. At noon, the 109th Engineers passed through the "Rattle-snakes" and fought their way to Jacobina Hill. By June 3rd, the Regiment had gained the hills overlooking Lanuvio, moved into the city and posted all approaches. On the 4th of June, the 168th passed through the 133rd and led the 24th Division column into Rome.



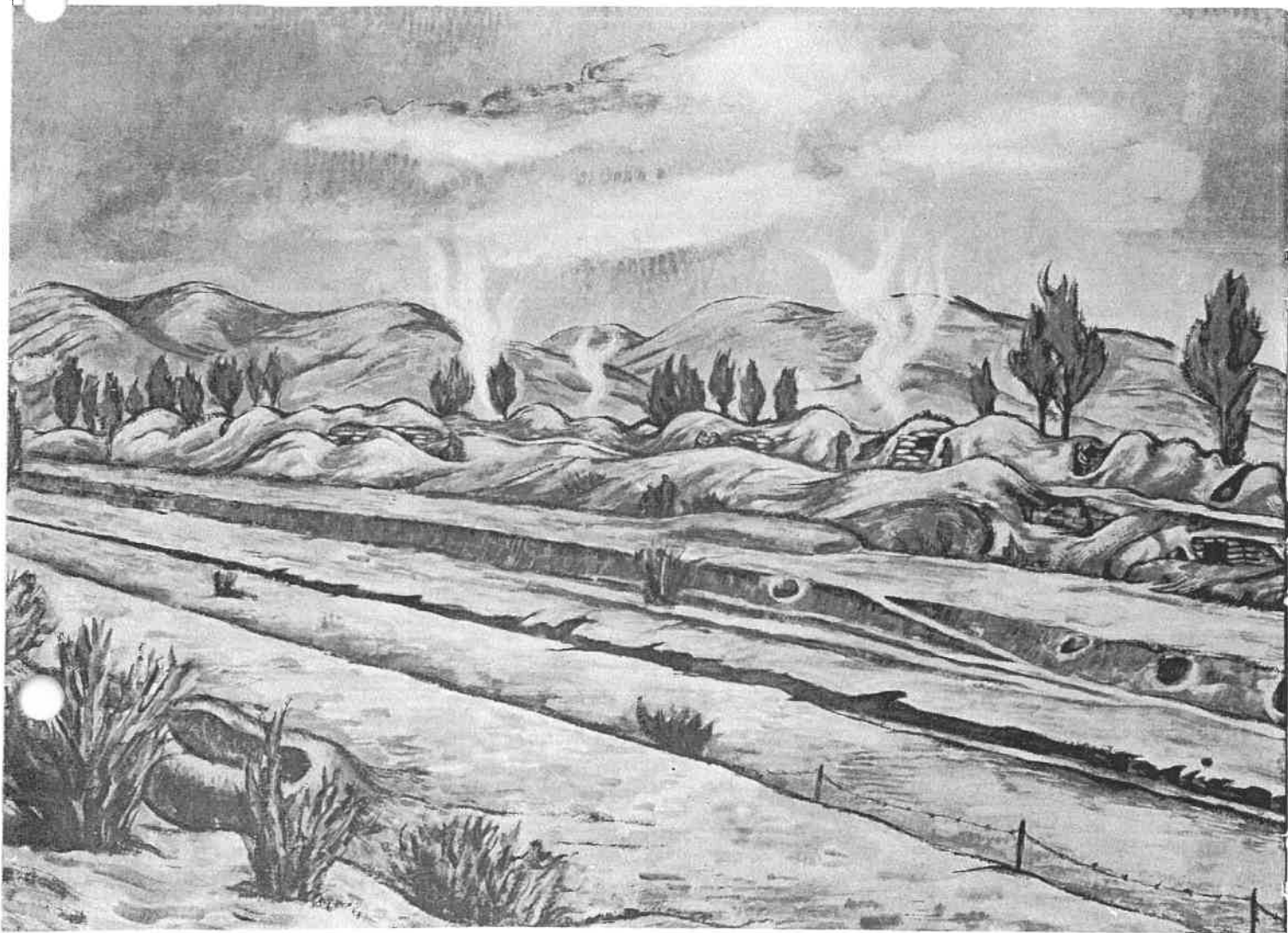
Life along the Mussolini Canal on the Anzio Beachhead.



Port of Anzio.



# THE 133RD BREAK-THROUGH FROM ANZIO



View of the Mussolini Canal

On "M" day, May 23rd, the 133rd reached Highway 7 where it supported the 1st Special Service Force. On the 24th, Col. Schildroth sent the 1st Battalion forward to cross the Highway and by morning of the 25th, the 1st and 3rd Battalions had accomplished the mission, reverting to Division control.

At 1100 hours on May 26th, the Regiment attacked Lanuvio, with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions followed closely by the 1st Battalion. Resistance, while vigorous, was spotty, but the unfamiliar terrain, together with mine fields and enemy fire, slowed down the advance.

On May 27th, the attack was renewed. The enemy resistance stiffened but the troops gained several hills only to be held up by fire from the infernal Villa Crocetta. Fighting continued throughout the 28th, but on the 29th, the Regiment withdrew to consolidate its position and effect re-organization. The day was otherwise spent in supporting the effort of the 135th.

On June 1st, the Regiment resumed its attack on Lanuvio. Before them stood the elite German 4th

Parachute Division in a well-prepared defense line. The 3rd Battalion commenced the assault across fairly level ground aiming for Hill 193 southwest of Lanuvio. The fighting became intense and the 3rd sustained heavy casualties. That night the 2nd replaced the 3rd and joined the 1st Battalion, prepared to resume the drive in the morning.

Following heavy artillery preparation, the 1st Battalion drove on at 0930 hours, 2nd of June, gaining Hill 193 and 203, the 2nd Battalion in the meantime pushing up the railroad which led into Lanuvio.

On the 3rd of June, with tank support, the two tired Battalions pressed on, the 2nd finally forcing its way into the city, while the 1st swept around Lanuvio and proceeded on to Genzano.

The night of 4-5 June, the Regiment spent in Albano along whose streets lay scores of bodies of fallen Germans. The 100th Battalion pushed on to take Ariccia. On the 5th of June the Regiment marched on foot into Rome over hot, dusty roads and a rough, rocky railroad bed.

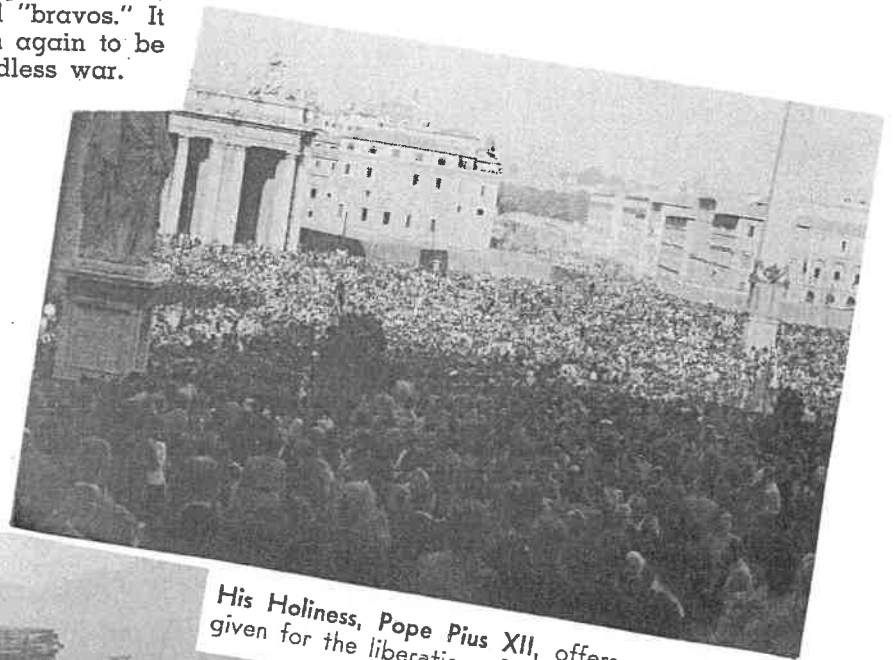
# ROME FALLS

The triumphant Fifth Army had entered Rome. This long sought for goal which, throughout history, had so often been the coveted goal of other armies, was at last securely in our possession. Often, during those preceding tragic months, the capture of the eternal city seemed impossible of attainment. The joy of the troops was only surpassed by the seeming joy of the people of the city liberated from a foe that had ground his heels upon them with a cruel ferocity designed to wreck revenge on a former ally which the Germans felt had betrayed them.

The streets became crowded with surging throngs bent on according our troops a welcome. Flowers were strewn in our pathway; civilians greeted soldiers with embraces; enthusiastic Roman girls kissed the G.I.'s and everywhere along the streets, troops were greeted with "vivas" and "bravos." It was a triumphant entry, but one soon again to be transformed to the grim reality of endless war.



Loading wire at the Anzio Beachhead.



His Holiness, Pope Pius XII, offers a prayer of thanks given for the liberation of Rome.



Pfc. Kenneth E. Bennett and Pfc. James E. Jordan, 34th Division combat men on a rest period in Rome, Italy, descend stairs for a closer look at the old Roman Forum, January, 1945.

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## Chapter XX

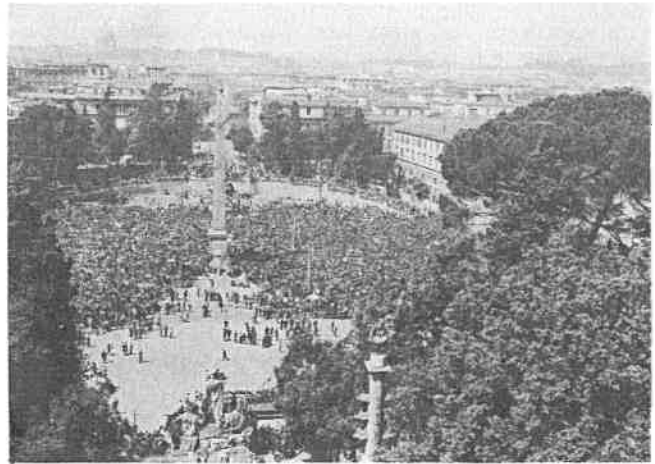
# THE DRIVE UP THE COAST TO LEGHORN



Sitting on the steps of a damaged church in Castellina, Italy, are: Pfc. Leonard L. Graham, Jasper, Tenn., and Sgt. George M. Grant; Richmond, Va. Pvt. Archie C. Adams, Olive Hill, Tenn., is standing in the doorway. All are members of the 1st Battalion, Company "B", 168th Infantry, 34th Division. July 9, 1944.

Looking back for a moment to the early phase of the break-through from Anzio, it will be remembered that that tactical phase had been co-ordinated with the final assault on the Gustav Line from Cassino to the Tyrrhenian Sea. Along the west coastal sector the 85th (Custer) and the 88th (Blue Devils) Divisions under II Corps, had broken the line in the vicinity of Minturno and Santa Maria Infanta, driving up and effecting a junction with Fifth Army after breaching the Hitler Line. The actual junction of Fifth Army troops with the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion near Borgo Grappa on May 25th, was delayed to permit General Clark to arrive on the scene with photographers to record the historic incident.

Through the path of advance of these two fresh divisions, which was strewn with wreckage and enemy bodies, the Germans had adroitly extricated their main forces which were now rapidly retiring north of Rome.



Piazza Del Popolo, the favorite meeting place for all popular assembles in Rome. May 11, 1946.



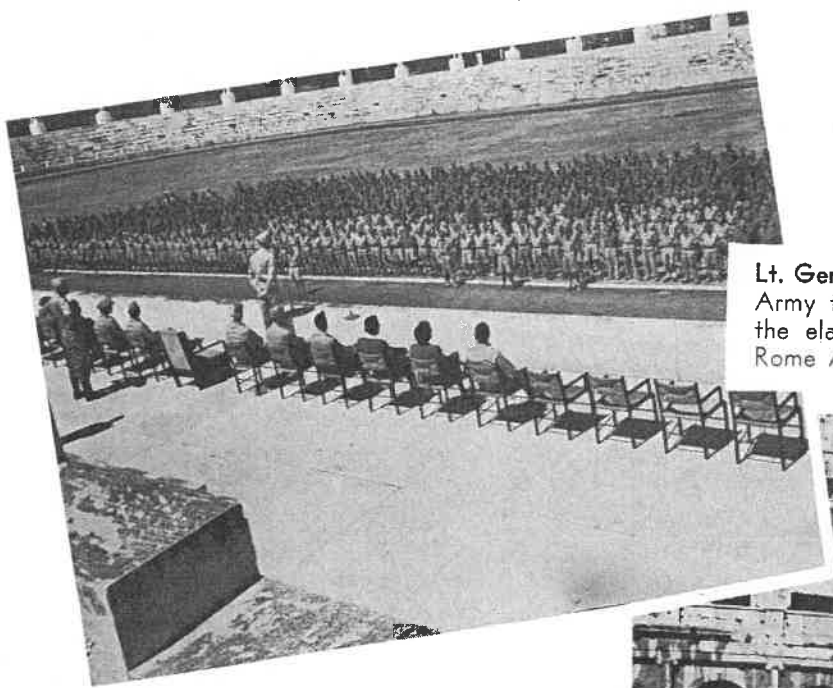
The Ancient Forum in Rome.



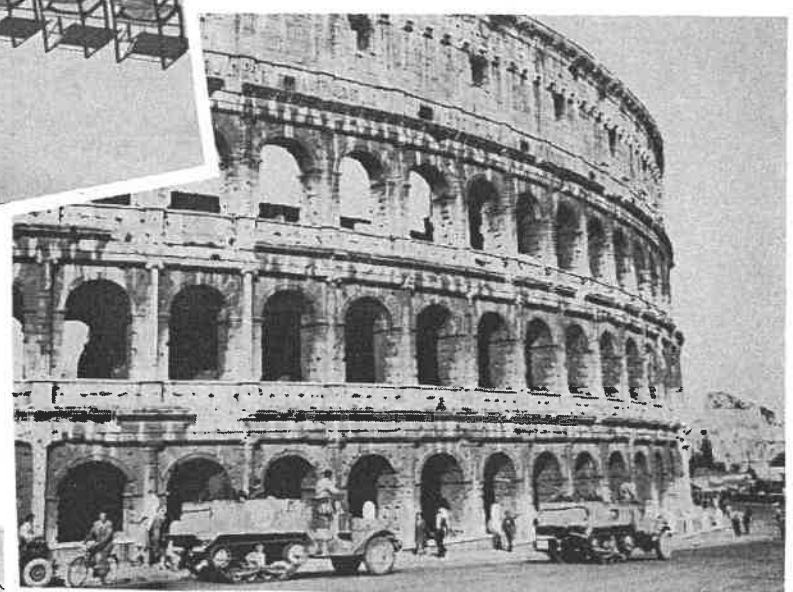
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Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark addresses U. S. and British Fifth Army troops at the rest center dedication exercises in the elaborate stadium ringed with mammoth statuary. Rome Area, Italy. June 13, 1944.



The ancient Colosseum, Rome.



The Monument dedicated to Immanuel I, Rome.



Pope Pius XII speaks to the people of Rome the day after its occupation by allied troops. Rome Area, Italy. June 5, 1944.

# THE BROAD TACTICAL SITUATION

With the fall of Rome, the first European Capital to come into the possession of the Allies, the line across the peninsula ran roughly from Lido di Roma on the Tyrrhenian Sea to a port south of Pescara on the Adriatic. The axis between the Fifth and

Eighth Armies ran northwesterly from Rome through Viterbo, Orvieto, Poggibonsi and Florence, the sector assigned the Fifth Army in its advance towards the Arno river approximately 45 miles in width.

## THE FORGOTTEN FRONT

All eyes of the World were centered on Rome, but only for two days, for, on the 6th of June, 1944, news flashed out that the long-awaited Second Front had at last been inaugurated with the mighty attack on the French Normandy beaches. From then on, Italy remained the forgotten front; forgotten

for the most part in the news and minds of peoples everywhere, but never for a moment forgotten by men of the Fifth and Eighth Armies before whom lay the never-ending chain of the Apennines which grew more rugged and forbidding as the troops fought their savage, weary way up the peninsula.

## PURSUIT OF THE ENEMY

With scarcely a pause in Rome, the 34th Division crossed the historic Tiber in hot pursuit of an enemy now withdrawing in rapid but masterful retreat. The record of the pursuit of the Germans northward is one of confusion. The question of supplying our rapid movement was tremendous, but the 34th Division Quartermaster Company now under command of Lt. Col. Dean Torney, with Division unit organizations, performed the difficult task magnificently. Here too, the quiet, unobtrusive Lt. Col. Stanley Burghardt, commander of the 34th Signal Company, and his able deputy, Major William K. Butcher, in conjunction with unit wire details, followed in with communication lines with remarkable speed. Again, the 34th Division M.P.'s performed in their usual exemplary fashion, directing the rapid movement with a smoothness that always characterized its operations.

Before and during the crossing of the Tiber, much delaying action by the enemy was encountered. Day and night strafing and bombing by the Luftwaffe occasionally interrupted our progress, but the columns moved on.

The 135th Infantry had entered Rome, attached to the 1st Armored Division. For a brief period during the drive north of Rome, the Regiment continued to be attached to the 1st Armored Division. This combined force struck rapidly northward past Lake Bracciano with the objective of capturing the airfield at Titerbo.

On June 6th, the 168th was ordered to follow and support the 1st Armored Division and the 135th, the 34th Reconnaissance troops to lead the column maintaining liaison between the two groups. On the 7th of June, the 2nd Battalion of the 168th was directed to attack and seize Civitavecchia, the important sea-port serving Rome. After a long, hard march, the Battalion reached San Marinello on the sea, there to be informed that the Germans had evacuated Civitavecchia. The city was entered at 0930 hours of that day. With the aid of Partigiani (Italian partisans), "Rattlesnakes" cleared the city of snipers who proved to be chiefly Fascisti (Fascists) engaged in a fratricidal exchange with the Partigiani.

The main body of the Division had been moving

northward along Highway 1. The 133rd Infantry passed through the 168th at Civitavecchia with orders to capture the quaint ancient Roman outpost, Tarquinia, perched high on a hill commanding full view of all road approaches. The Regiment advanced to within 3500 yards of the city when it was ordered halted in position, Tarquinia falling to the 361st Infantry of the freshly arrived 91st Division. But it was the beating given the enemy by the 133rd that made the capture of the city a comparatively easy task.

By the 12th of June, the Division had assembled in the vicinity of Tarquinia for a well-deserved rest and training period of two weeks. The 135th rejoined the Division; replacements arrived; and General Ryder spent the two weeks in effecting re-organization.



Two American Infantrymen of the 34th Infantry Division walk through the town of Rosignano, Italy, with an Italian Partisan. Fifth Army, July 13, 1944

# THE 442ND INFANTRY COMBAT TEAM JOINS THE DIVISION

The brilliantly successful performance of the 100th Battalion, Nisei troops, had persuaded Higher Command at home that more Japanese-Americans should be committed to battle. Accordingly, the 442nd Infantry Combat Team was sent over from the States to join the Division. The battle-tired 100th, still maintaining its identity, joined the 442nd. The 34th was now again a square Division consisting of four combat infantry regiments.

As men of the 34th observed the battle conduct of the Nisei, they grew to resent the treatment accorded the parents and relatives of these little,

brown American fighters. They resented the confiscation of their property and the herding of their families into concentration camps at home, while their sons were dying by the hundreds in the cause of human liberty. They determined then to raise their voices in protest and to demand justice and recompense for the wrongs inflicted upon these people. The Nisei became true buddies of the 34th, and when the 442nd later departed for France, they refused to remove the Red Bull shoulder patch, bespeaking a mutual comradeship which shall endure for always.



A Typical field communications center, North Africa, June 5, 1943.



Left to right: Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark; Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson; Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder; Brig. Gen. Harry Sherman, Asst. 34th Division C.G.; Brig. Gen. Joseph Foster Tate, 34th Division Artillery Commander, and Maj. Gen. Ernest Harmon, C.G. First Armored Division at 34th Division Headquarters near Cassino Area, Italy, July 7, 1944.

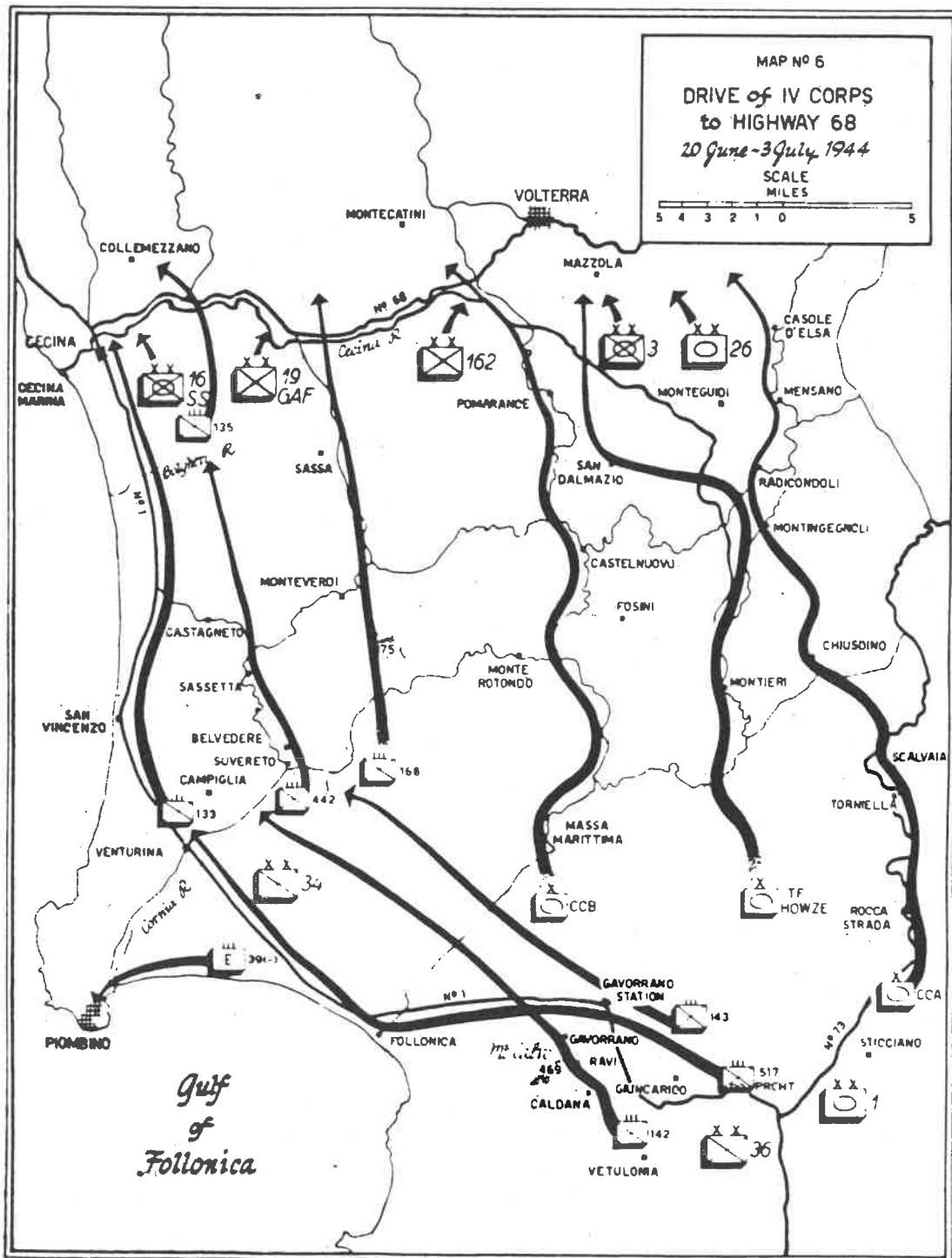
# Chapter XXI

## THE 34TH DRIVES TOWARD THE ARNO RIVER

On June 20th, orders came for the Division to strike north to the Arno Valley along the coastline. The same characteristic rugged mountain terrain lay ahead, all roads being dominated by high ridges and mountains.

Within the confines of this small book, no detailed

account of the fighting accomplishments by the many units of the Division during this phase can possibly be recited. At most, a summary of the achievements of each Infantry Combat team can be set forth here.



# THE 133RD INFANTRY COMBAT TEAM

On June 20th, 1944, the 133rd Combat Team received orders to move to Grosseto on the coastline. Through this city ran the important and expansive Ombrone river. The movement was completed on June 23rd. On the 24th, the Regiment moved to Gavorrano and on the 25th to Follonica from where, on the following day, it proceeded on to relieve elements of the 36th Infantry Division which were in position on Highway 1 just east of Piombino.

The 133rd now launched northeasterly on the axis of Highway 1, capturing San Vincenzo, driving forward to cross the Bolgheri river. Fighting forward, elements of the Regiment advanced to within 1000 yards of the important rail and road city of Cecina which lay alongside of the strategic Cecina river. July 1st, the assault on Cecina was made. After much bitter street-fighting, the 2nd Battalion had captured Cecina and driven the enemy north of the city. The casualties had been heavy in this greatly bombed city. At one time, our troops were required to withdraw because of our own air-attacks.

On July 2nd, troops of the 133rd captured Cecina di Mariana. At this juncture, the 133rd was squeezed out by the 135th and placed in reserve north of Cecina, here to enjoy a five-day rest, during which interval Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, General Clark and General Ryder reviewed the 3rd Battalion and Anti-tank Companies in an impressive review.

Back to combat again, on July 7th, the 133rd relieved the 168th near Riparbella, immediately pushing off into a new attack through high and rough terrain where troops were supplied by mule trains. Monte Maggiore became the next objective which, after bitter fighting, fell to the 1st Battalion on July 10th, while Mont Alto fell to the 3rd Battalion on July 13th.

The Regiment drove on to Tripalle, La Guardia and Colle Lauale, finally on July 19th, capturing Lorenzano. On the 22nd of July the Regiment relieved the 442nd Infantry at Colle Salvetti, and on the 23rd, reached the river Arno line.



Pack mules of the 133rd Infantry Regiment, 34th Division, move up along a mountain trail in Italy, to the 133rd Infantry Regiment, September 12, 1944.

# THE 168TH INFANTRY COMBAT TEAM

From the vicinity of Tarquinia, the 168th Combat Team moved out on June 21st to Grosseto and on to Gavorrano on the 24th, reaching the Pecora river on the evening of the 25th.

Preceded by some of the most accurate artillery fire of the war, laid down by the 175th Field Artillery Battalion, the Regiment took hill after hill against bitter opposition, finally capturing the town of Monteverdi on the 28th of June.

On the 29th of June, the 2nd Battalion closed in and captured the town of Castiglione, a beautiful resort on the sea.

In the meantime, from the south, the 3rd Battalion had entered Bibbona where, joined by the 1st Battalion, the combined forces drove on to the Montescudaio, which had already been entered by the alert 34th Reconnaissance troops now commanded

by Captain Ian E. Turner, Jr.

A crossing of the Cecina river now was assigned the Regiment, the same river, (but at a different point), crossed by the 133rd. Here they met with intense enemy fire which temporarily disorganized the advance. On that day, maps and over-lays were taken from prisoners which disclosed the deployment of the enemy's forces. The Regiment was diverted to an attack on Castellina which, after bloody fighting, fell to the 1st and 3rd Battalion on July 6th.

During the period July 5 to 7th, the 175th Field Artillery Battalion had fired 8004 rounds, paving the way for the rapid advance of the infantrymen.

Fighting continued day after day, until finally on July 15th the 3rd Battalion reached the flats below Lorenzano, where it assisted the 133rd in capturing the village.

The 2nd Battalion moved on to capture Colle Alberti on the evening of July 15th.

The 135th having been ordered to attack Livorno (Leghorn), the 168th was now ordered to support the effort. By the 18th of July, the mission was completed, for the 168th had captured important dominating hills that controlled the approaches to that important sea-port. The Arno river line had been

reached by July 23rd and now for the first time in Italy, our men looked down from heights on an enemy crouched in a valley below.

On the 24th of July, the Regiment was relieved and ordered back to the Division rest area in the vicinity of Quercianella, there to rest and assist in securing the coast-line.



## THE 135TH INFANTRY COMBAT TEAM

Because of the narrow coastal strip, the pattern of advance of all these Regiments ran adjacent to Highway 1. On the 29th of June, elements of the Regiment had advanced through Bibbona. On the 30th of June, the 1st Battalion crossed the Cecina river, followed on the 1st of July by the 2nd and 3rd Battalions. At this juncture, the popular and courageous Lt. Col. Fillmore K. Mearns, Commander of the 3rd Battalion, left his outfit for Fifth Army Headquarters. He was replaced by Lt. Col. Ashton H. Manhart.

The enemy's withdrawal from the Cecina area paved the way for advance of the Regiment up to Rosignano, a city near the famous Italian Chemical Works, with strange international implications, for in all the bombing of this area, the buildings of this gigantic industry stood unscathed.

But Rosignano was vigorously defended. The approaches being heavily guarded made necessary the capturing of high hills to the east—a feat accomplished after heavy losses.

By noon of July 11th, the 135th had forced entrance into the city in a bitter street fight. Many civilians, unable to leave the city, were killed. Bodies of these civilians and of the enemy were strewn throughout the streets, their cremation being made necessary to avoid the danger of an epidemic.

On the afternoon of that day, as a reward for the capture of Rosignano and its outposts, General Clark personally awarded a field promotion of full Colonelcy to Lt. Col. Manhart.

On the 13th, the Regiment sustained a great loss when Capt. Paul W. Blomen, Commander of the gallant Cannon Company, was killed by a mine.

The 135th was now ordered to assault and capture Livorno (Leghorn), a most important sea-port town. With superhuman effort, the 34th had gained the southern and eastern heights which overlooked the wide valley panorama of the Arno.

Below, in the brilliant sun, lay a peaceful and unforgettable scene. Livorno, despite all the plainly visible destruction, sprawled over the valley like a huge multicolored pattern of mosaic. In the distance could be seen the historic white leaning-tower of Pisa with the sparkling dome of the famous Cathedral close by, the one a phenomenon of engineering wonder; the other, a symbol of peace and righteousness. Flowing through the city of Pisa, the Arno river could be seen winding like a silver strand through cultivated lands and orchards to the eastward, where it disappeared towards its source among folds of rolling mountains. It was a day for dreaming, but the rude interruption of cannon exchanges and the far away crack of rifles reminded

the G.I. of the cruel, serious business still at hand. The pause had been long enough though to permit many a soldier to reflect on one of the most profound of all the imponderables in the lives of men—the age-long determination of peoples to settle controversies by resort to the sword.



Lt. Col. Fillmore K. Mearns, 135th Infantry

# THE 442ND INFANTRY COMBAT TEAM

The 442nd Infantry Combat Team (Nisei), with the 100th Battalion a component part, commenced its drive from northeast of Piombino driving on Suvereto where they met sharp resistance after an initial break-through. The Regiment was ordered to infiltrate the enemy's position and to attack the well fortified Monte Belvedere. Here occurred one of the important episodes of the drive towards the Arno River, and one in which the 442nd Combat Team was to experience its first great fighting test; a test which was so completely met as to establish the famous Regiment with a great and lasting reputation. The 100th Battalion, battle-tired and proven as it already was, shared with the 442nd, a common glory in the victory won at Belvedere.

Orders for the attack on Belvedere came on very short notice and before reconnaissance had been effected. With astonishing rapidity, Companies "A" and "B" made a flank attack, capturing a hill to the rear of the village of Belvedere while the rest of the Battalion holed in among olive trees close to the town. A stiff fight ensued, counter-attacks were beaten off and the Germans, to avoid entrapment,

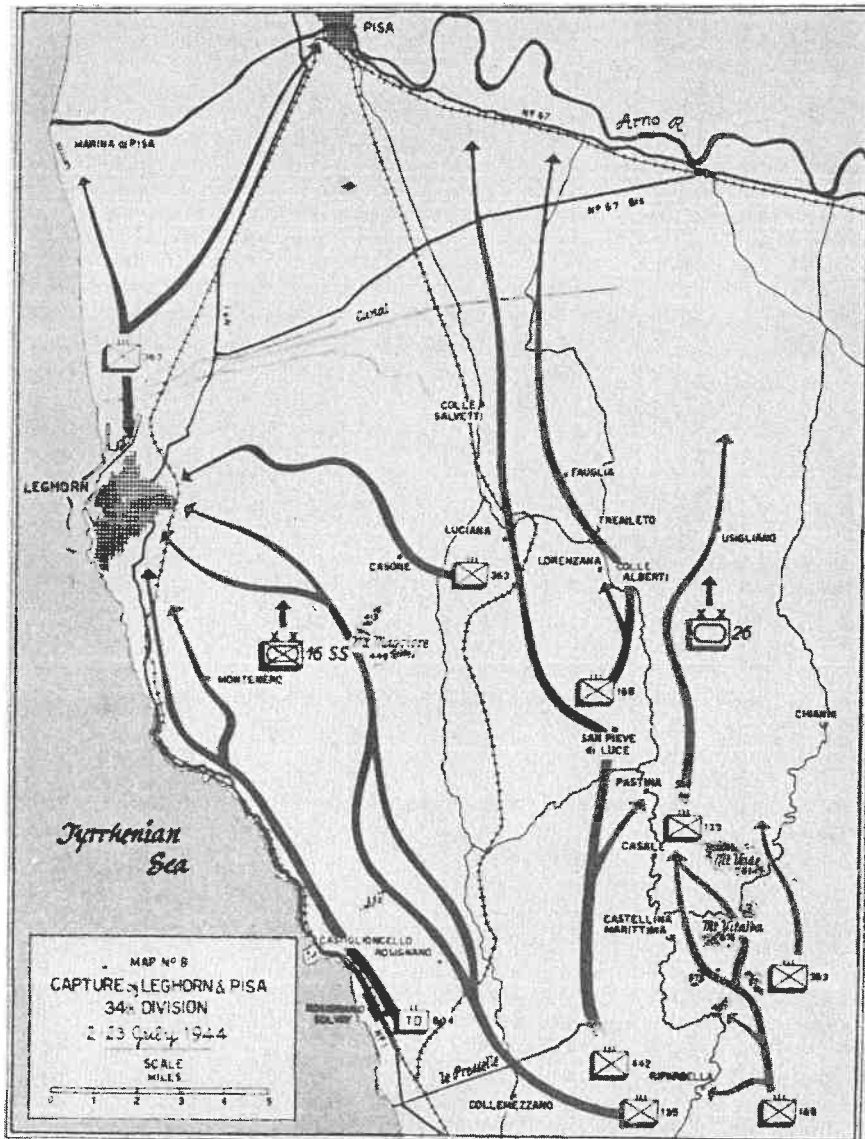
retreated. The incident was remarkable in that the Regiment suffered only one dead and eight wounded, while the enemy lost 178 killed, 20 wounded, and 73 captured.

The Regiment moved on the following day to take Saretta, advancing as far as the Bolgheri river where it was squeezed out by the 135th Infantry.

From an area west of Riparbella, the Regiment continued to sweep northward through San Piero di Luce, through Luciana, reaching the south banks of the Arno by the 23rd day of July.

## SUMMARY OF TROOP MOVEMENTS

A quick summary of the terrific drive from Traquinia to the Arno Valley by the four combat teams of the Division has been presented above. The story of their advance must necessarily suffer for want of space for detailing it. But when this phase of the battle experience of the 34th is written it will tell a story of hardships, toil, tears and death of tremendous magnitude and significance.





100th Nisei Battalion patrolling streets of Leghorn, Italy, July 19, 1944.

Street scene of Livorno, Italy shows how Allied aircraft, strafing the retreating Germans, bombed the city.



Japanese-American troops of the 100th Infantry Battalion, 34th Division, line up on both sides of a street in the center of Livorno, Italy. July 19, 1944.



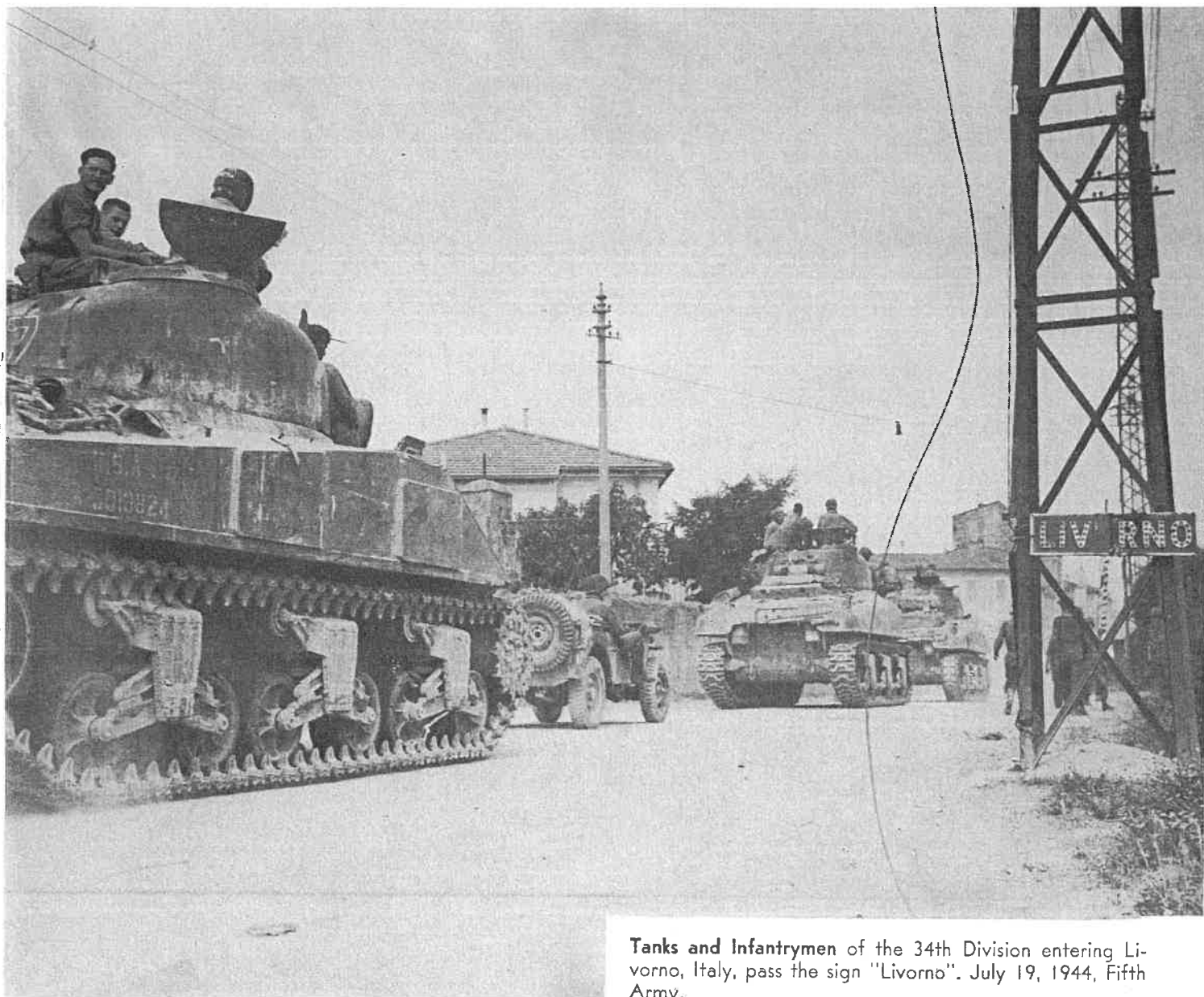
# THE 135TH ENTERS LIVORNO

With the entire Division well advanced towards the Arno, orders came for the final attack on Leghorn. The 135th Infantry committed all three battalions to the final assault, from the vicinity of Mont Maggiore, while the 363rd Infantry of the 91st Division, then under command of the 34th, drove toward the city from Casone.

The advance, which commenced on July 18th, was preceded by heavy artillery fire, including phosphorus shells which set fire to the brush and woods, causing groups of the enemy to withdraw. An enemy strong point at Casone was wiped out by the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 363rd. On the evening of the 18th of July, the 1st Battalion of the 363rd with elements of the 752nd Tank Battalion found an entrance into the eastern outskirts of Leghorn,

the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion breaking through to Montenero, three miles northeast of the city. The 3rd Battalion of the 135th entered the city at 0200 hours on the 19th of July, followed two hours later by the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 363rd Infantry. The main body of the enemy troops had fled northward escaping the trap that had been set for them. While little resistance was encountered as the troops filtered into the streets, booby traps and mines took their toll before being removed by the engineers. The 100th Battalion arrived and took over the policing of the city.

Leghorn had fallen to a combined and co-ordinated attack of the 34th Division which, during this operation (with attached units) numbered over 36,000 troops, almost triple the number of a table of organization Division.



Tanks and Infantrymen of the 34th Division entering Livorno, Italy, pass the sign "Livorno". July 19, 1944, Fifth Army.



Americans of Japanese descent of the 100th Infantry Battalion 34th Division, examine still smoldering German vehicle, after entering Leghorn, Italy, which they helped to capture. July 19, 1944.

An Italian woman puts a floral wreath of roses over the bodies of American soldiers who paid the supreme sacrifice to enter Rome, Italy. Rome Area, June 4, 1944.



American officers and enlisted men of the Medical Department, U.S. Fifth Army, relax on the beach at the Medical Rest Center Castiglioncello Area, Italy, August 15, 1944.



Lt. Col. Raymond E. Lund, Division Assistant G-2. Colonel Lund left the Division in Italy in 1944 to join General Ryder in the Pacific.

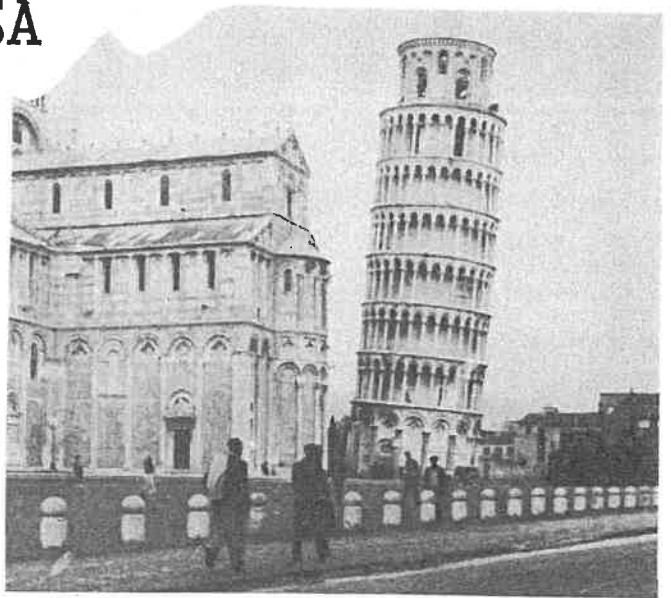
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# PISA

Between Leghorn and Pisa lay several canals which traversed the flat terrain. As the enemy withdrew across the Arno river, engineers under enemy fire spanned these canals at many places. In the meanwhile, troops were regrouping for the drive on Pisa. The 363rd was to push up the coast and capture Marina di Pisa and was also assigned the main assault mission on Pisa; while the 442nd and 168th Infantry Regiments were to parallel their drives to the right and slightly east of Pisa.

At 2200 hours, July 22nd, the 168th and 442nd moved forward reaching the river on the 23rd. While the 34th met with harrasing artillery and mortar fire and considerable fire from automatic weapons, the 363rd Infantry met with stiffer fighting as it drove through to enter Marina di Pisa and Pisa, itself.

On the 23rd of July, the 34th was replaced in the line by the 91st Division, our troops retiring for a well-earned rest to the Rosignano area near the sea.



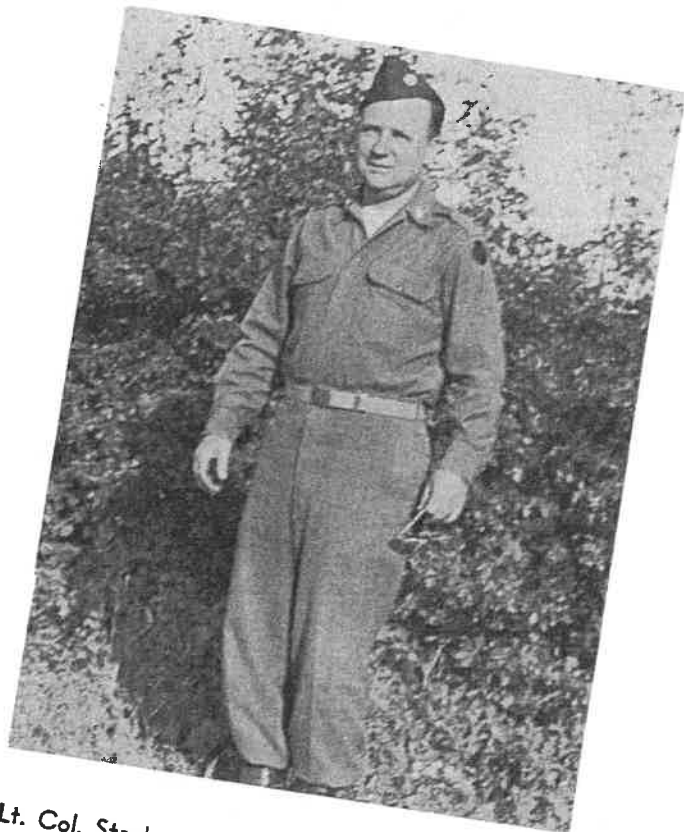
The Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy.



Members of the 34th Division approach the city limits of Pisa, Italy. Fifth Army, July 23, 1944.



Lt. Col. Thomas N. Ritchie, Division Inspector General.



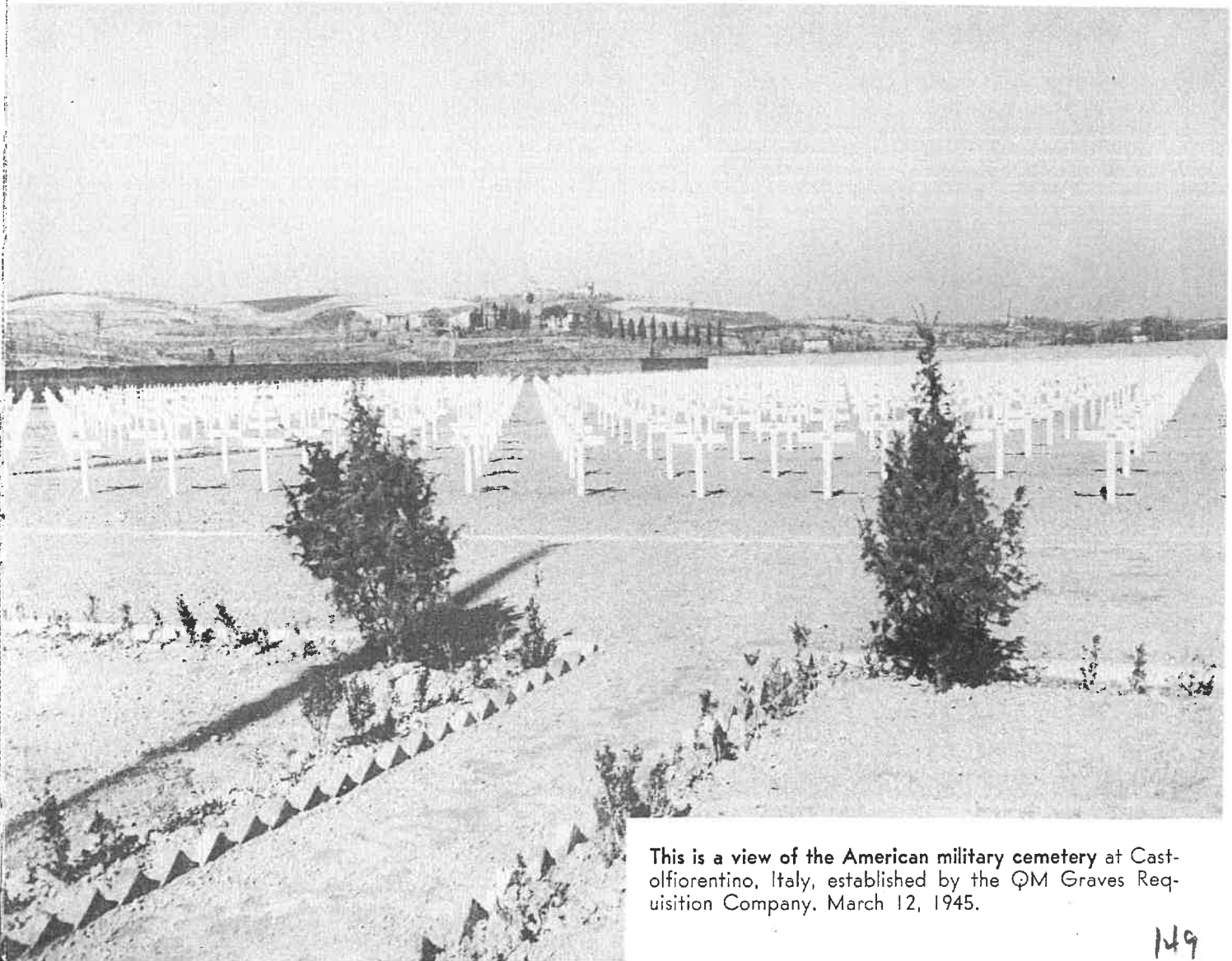
Lt. Col. Stanley L. Burghardt, Division Signal Officer.



Major William W. Prout, Aid to Major General Ryder—  
a soldier's soldier in any language.

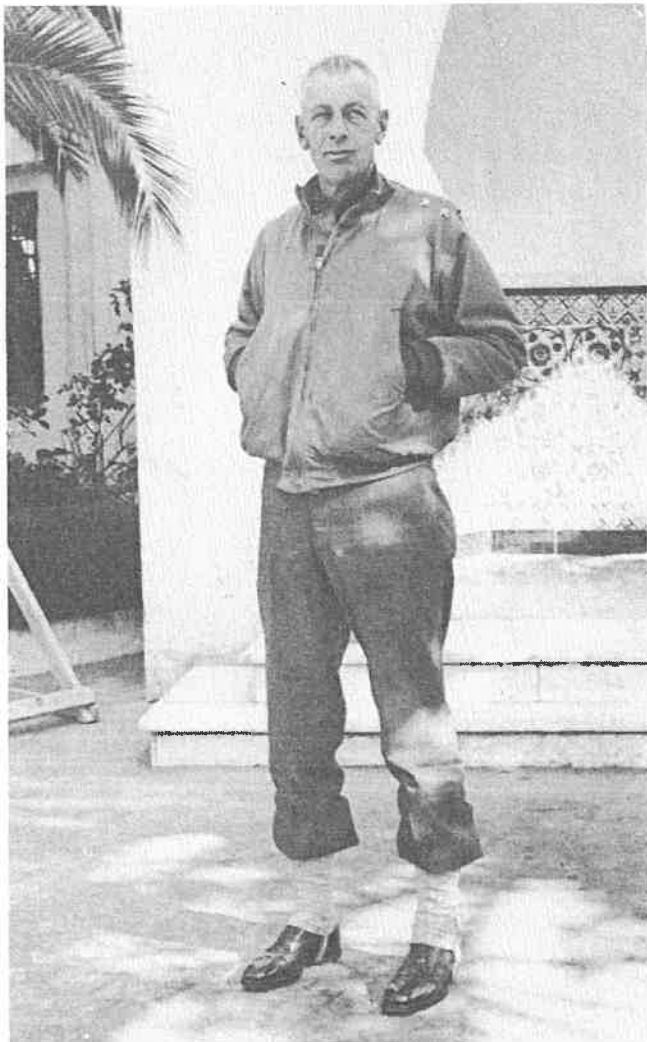


Officers of the 34th Division and Army Headquarters Staffs, also some of the members of Secretary of War's party, are seated at table to enjoy lunch, which has for its distinguished guest, Henry L. Stimson (L); Maj. Gen. Charles W. Ryder at head of table. Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark at left of Gen. Ryder, at Cecina, Italy, July 6, 1944.



This is a view of the American military cemetery at Castelfiorentino, Italy, established by the QM Graves Requisition Company. March 12, 1945.

# GENERAL RYDER LEAVES THE DIVISION



Major General Charles W. Ryder at Tlemcin, Algeria, 1943.

On July 21, 1944, General Charles W. Ryder turned over command of the old Red Bull Division to Major General Charles L. Bolte. On the afternoon of that day, such officers as could be spared from combat, assembled at General Ryder's field Headquarters for a brief but impressive farewell ceremony. The setting somehow afforded a perfect back-ground for the occasion: to the west lay Leghorn, fallen prey to the 34th; to the north, the Leaning Tower of Pisa. It was a gorgeous sun-lit day, with boom of artillery rolling like constant thunder through the quiet air. The officers assembled, seating themselves in a semi-circle in a tall grassy area. General Ryder stepped forward with his characteristically long stride wearing his battle helmet from the back of which hung his famous desert cloth. There he stood, looking down on the deeply bronzed faces of his comrades, his six-feet-three-inch wiry, athletic frame towering above us all. He was a man in the fifties, a veteran of World War I, but well preserved by a ritual designed to keep him always fit, always ready. His face was long and narrow, surmounted

by a high forehead; his grey hair, a bit unruly. Deep lines scarred his sun-burned face—lines which bespoke force and determination, softened by amazingly light blue eyes. He spoke briefly, his voice quavering as he fought his way through words of farewell. It is not to be wondered that tears coursed down many a bronzed face before him. Theirs had been a comradeship forged in the crucible of hundreds of days of relentless and bloody combat. He closed with a few simple words of appreciation and God-speed, turned, and walked abruptly away with long, loose-jointed strides, determined not to trust a visibly faltering control of his emotions.

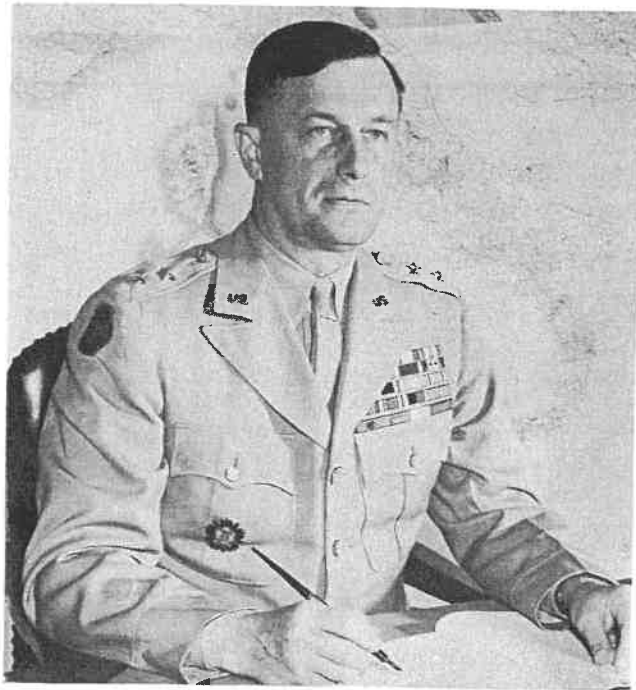
Charles W. Ryder had performed his mission in the true tradition of an outstanding American combat leader. In early Tunisia, his troops had suffered from inexperience, but soon they were to emerge as seasoned veterans, the 34th Division eventually standing forward as one of the best fighting forces in the Allied Armies. For this, much is attributed to the inspired leadership of General Ryder.

Doc Ryder was cast in a fighting mould. The Army was and is his life; he has lived that life with a religious regard for all its rigid precepts. Fundamentally a field soldier, he disdained the shackles of desk routine and plunged himself vigorously into the active, aggressive leadership of men in combat, a leadership symbolized by the Division's slogan, "Attack! Attack! Attack!"

Two weeks later, Col. Norman E. Henderickson (now Major General in command of the newly organized 47th Infantry Division) our Chief of Staff, left to join General Ryder who had been placed in command of IX Corps. The General had chosen this capable officer to continue as his Corps Chief of Staff.

Col. Hendrickson had been reared with the Division. A veteran of World War I, where he served with the 151st Field Artillery, he brought to the Division an experience which contributed greatly to the success of General Ryder's Command. This quiet, calm, calculating officer, beloved by his comrades, together with Major William W. Prout, Aide to the General, were the mainstays upon which Ryder leaned heavily during the Tunisian and Italian Campaigns.

There were other men on General Ryder's staff who most certainly are deserving of special mention: Lt. Col. Harold L. Stipp, the doughty and efficient G-1; Lt. Col. Hubert H. Des Marais, G-2, and his assistant, Major Raymond E. Lund whom Doc Ryder called to serve on his Corps Staff; Lt. Col. Robert B. Neely, the able, young G-3 and his deputy, Major Ernest J. Durr, later killed in a one-man engagement with a group of Germans in the vicinity of Parma in the Po Valley; Lt. Col. Mark T. Martin, Jr., G-3; Lt. Col. Walter H. Wendt and Lt. Col. Ivan G. Walz, both outstandingly able G-4's; Lt. Col. Dee M. White, A.G., the balance wheel of the Division Headquarters, rear echelon; Lt. Col. Thomas N. Ritchie, I.G. and a vital morale booster for the Division; and the beloved front-line Chaplin, DeLoss I. Marken; and most of the officers served on the Division Staff throughout the entire war.



Major General Charles L. Bolte, who assumed command of the 34th Infantry Division on July 21, 1944 and carried through until the end of the Italian Campaign, including occupational service on the French Front and the Venezia-Guilia Area adjacent to Yugo-Slavis. General Bolte holds the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Silver Star, the Purple Heart from World War I, the award of the order of Commander of SS Maurizio e Lazzaro, Italy, the award of the Officer of the Legion de Honneur of France, the French Croix de Cuerre with Palm, the Brazilian Medahla de Cuerra and the British Order of the Bath.



Prime Minister Winston Churchill, touring the Fifth Army front, gets his picture taken by "1st Sgt." Franco, mascot of the 34th Division Hq. CP. Fifth Army, Castiglione, Italy. February 19, 1944.

## THE RETREATING GERMANS

This phase of the Campaign should not be closed without mention of the masterly retreat performed by the Germans. Defending every foot of our determined advance, they had fought an amazing rear guard action. The enemy's motor transport had been partly reduced to ox and horse-drawn guns and vehicles; his Luftwaffe and infantry reserves had been terrifically depleted; his supply lines con-

tinually interrupted by the pounding of our heavy bombers; and his retreat lines repeatedly racked by our hard-hitting fighter planes. Yet, the Germans slowly retreated, always keeping their main body intact. The methods they employed may well serve as strategic lessons, should infantry fighting ever again be the mission of the dough-boy.



**Sergeant Henry Conklin**, mess sergeant for Division Headquarters throughout the War.

**Ponte Allegrozie**, bridge in Florence destroyed by the Germans along with three other bridges. Florence, Italy. August 18, 1944.



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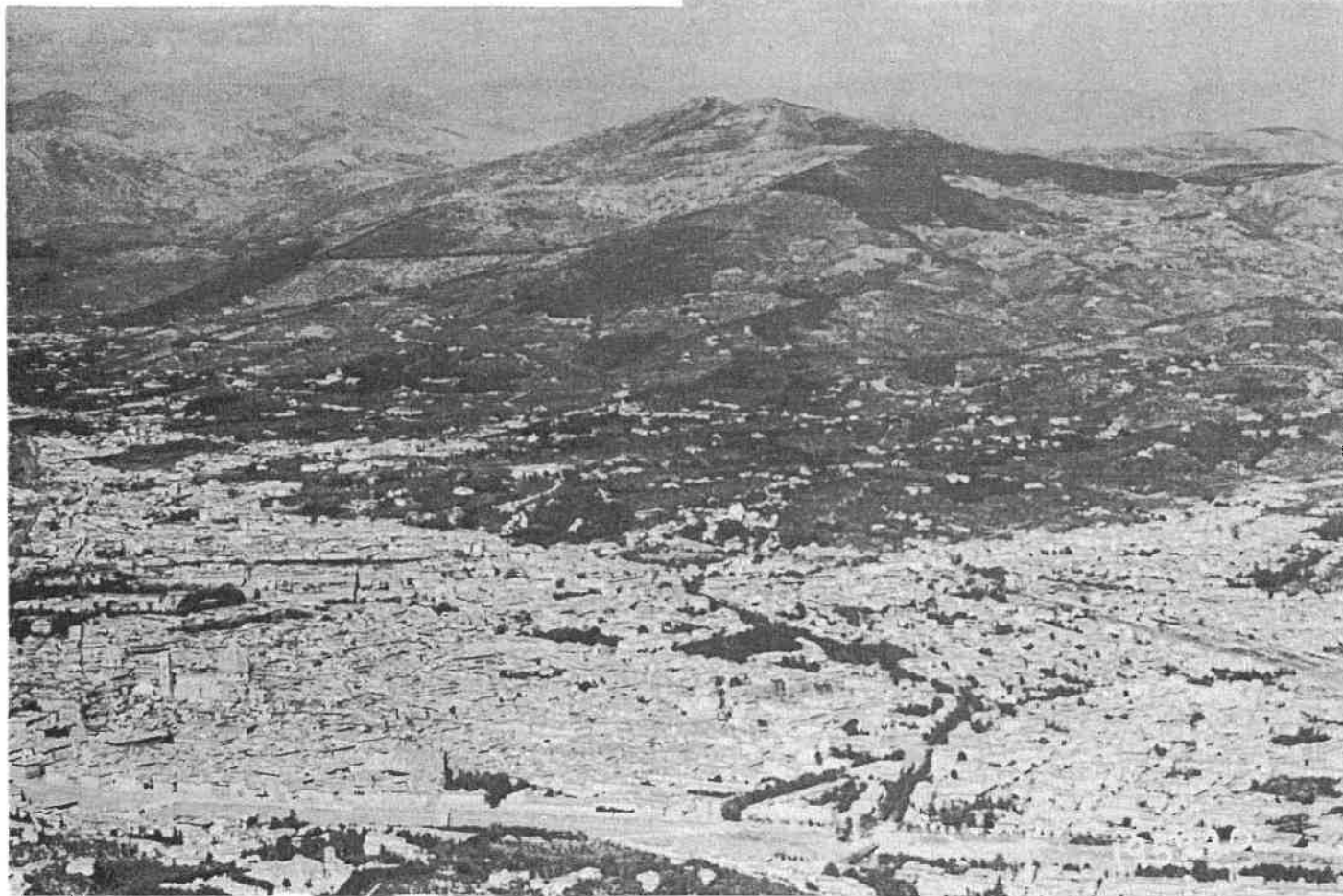
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## Chapter XXII

# THE PUSH TOWARDS THE GOTHIC LINE AND THE APENNINE LINE

The objective of Allied Armies in Italy to reach the Arno Line by early Spring of 1944 had been delayed until July 23rd, by a stubborn enemy and by natural barriers of massive mountains and abnormally bad Winter weather. So battered and exhausted was the Fifth Army, when finally reaching its goal, that rest and re-grouping were essential before renewing a co-ordinated attack against the Arno Line.



A view of Florence, Italy, from the air, looking towards the Gothic Line, the last German natural defense in Italy.

## THE GENERAL STRATEGICAL PICTURE

The Arno Line ran from Marina di Pisa on the western Ligurian sea coast, easterly through Pisa, thence, south some fifteen miles of Florence, thence, in a broad arc which swung south-easterly to a point some eight miles south of Pesaro on the Adriatic coast. While Fifth Army had driven forward to the Arno, the Eighth Army had been held in a somewhat static position for several days.

After four weeks of rest, recreation and training, during which the 34th enjoyed swimming in the

Ligurian waters, attending U.S.O. shows and a few dances at Rosignano, the Division received orders on August 20th to move to an assembly area in the vicinity of Castelfiorentino where a regular training schedule was instituted which continued throughout the balance of that month. Here, the 34th passed from IV Corps back to II Corps under General Keyes, whose command was now to consist of four divisions: the 34th, the 88th with 442nd Combat Team (less the 100th Battalion) attached, the 85th

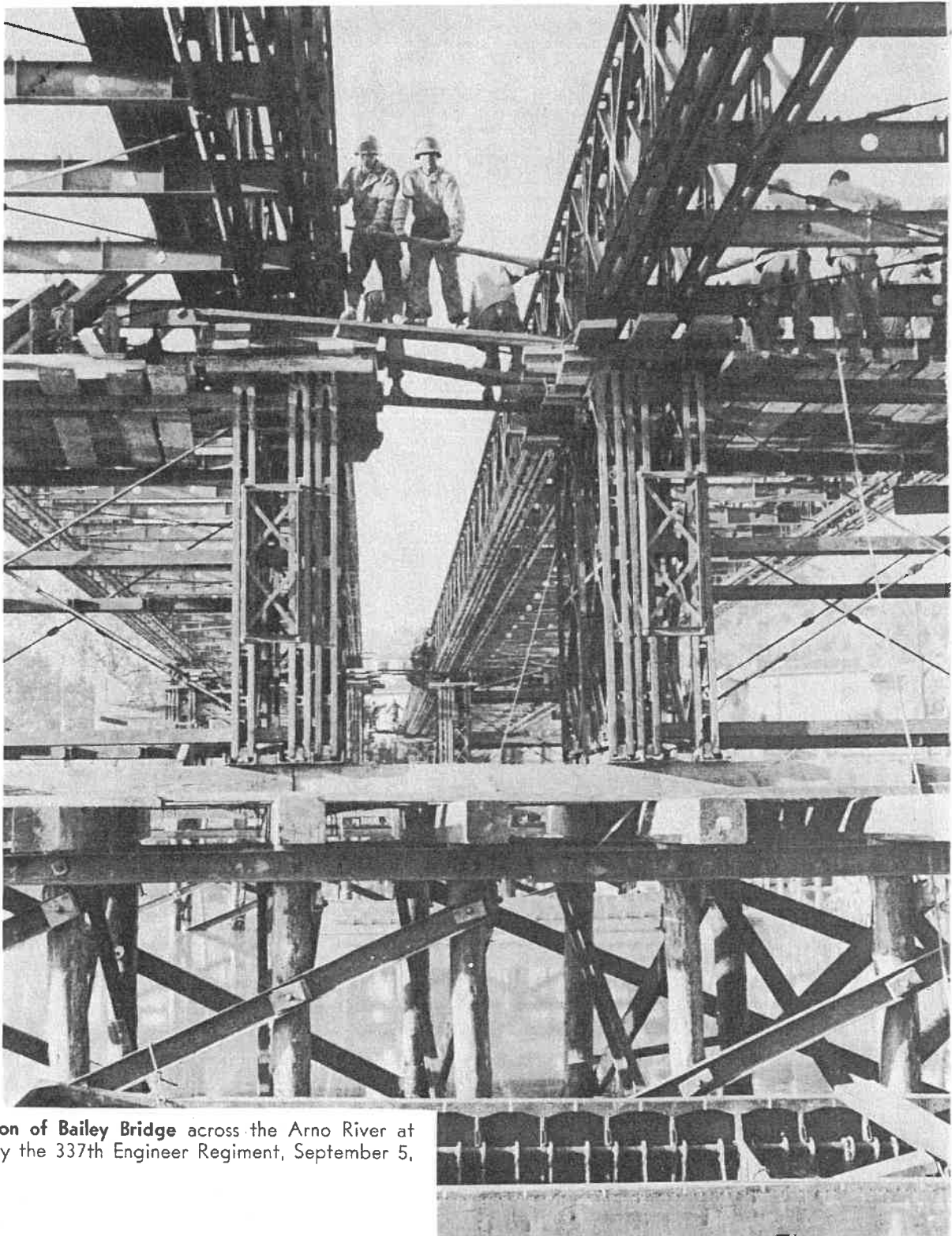
and the 91st. This force was augmented by attached units of tank, anti-tank, engineers, and ordnance units.

The American sector ran from a position near the Arno river a few miles west of Florence to Marina di Pisa on the Ligurian Sea; while the British Sector ran easterly from slightly west of Florence to a point five miles south of Pesaro on the Adriatic.

II Corps' Sector ran from Angelica east to the boundary line between Fifth and Eighth Armies, some five miles west of Florence. IV Corps' Sector

ran from Angelica west to the Ligurian Sea.

Before IV Corps stood Kesselring's 16th S.S. Panzer Division and the 65th Grenadier Infantry Division with the 20th G.A.F. Field Division (German Air Force) in reserve position farther up the coast-line. Before II Corps stood the 362nd Infantry Division, the 29th Panzer Division and the 4th Parachute Division. In further reserve, the enemy held the 26th Panzer (Armored) Division, and the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division.



Construction of Bailey Bridge across the Arno River at Florence by the 337th Engineer Regiment, September 5, 1944.

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# TERRAIN

Across the valley of the Arno river, rose the mighty barrier of the Northern Apennines. Older men of the Division bethought themselves of the rugged scenes that had lain before them at the unforgettable three crossings of the Volturno and the awful crossing of the Rapido. They knew that between them and the Valley of the Po, lay roads through narrow defiles of long canyon passes walled in by precipitous mountains rising sheer on either side.

The Northern Apennine range runs from near Genoa across the Peninsula to Rimini flanked by flat areas on the eastern coastal sector. Hills and mountains ranging from 300 feet to elevations from 3 to 4 thousand feet, with the dominating Monte Cimone of 7,095 feet and Monte Cusna of 6,857 feet, the whole in depth, some 60 road miles, stood as the final, formidable barrier between the Fifth and Eighth Armies and the Valley of the Po.

While virtually every foot of this terrain was defendable, the Germans had established two broad protective lines across the peninsula: the famous Gothic Line and the Apennine Line.

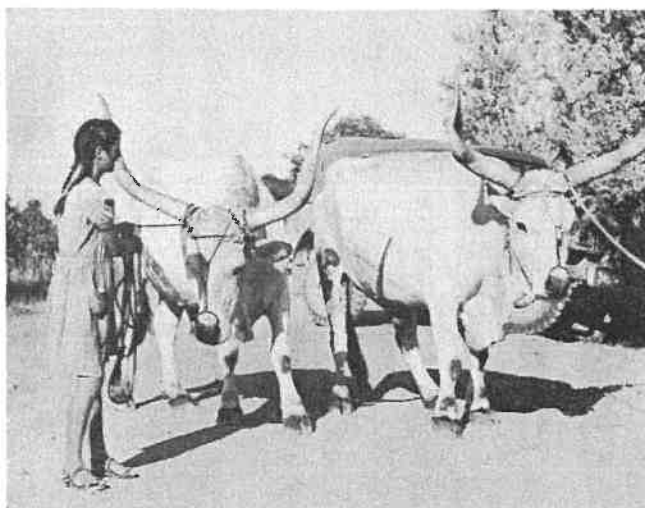
The Gothic Line was anchored near Carrara on the western Ligurian coast from where it followed

an eastward-course along high ridges slightly north of Lucca, Pescia, Pistoia, thence northward in an arc cutting across the openings to the Futa and Gicco passes; from thence, the line swept southeasterly in a concave arc that terminated at Pesaro on the Adriatic Sea. The ultimate barrier was the famous Apennine Line running parallel to the Po Valley along the last high ridges that looked down on the fertile plain below. Intermediate lines lay between our troops and this final wall.

Every foot of the way ahead was defended in the characteristically thorough German manner: hulled down tanks at the base of hills, mortar and artillery emplacements dug into sheer rock or recessed in heavily constructed cement block-houses; machineguns sweeping all approaches and all passes; and finally a new type of defensive construction, a huge anti-tank ditch which wound over the lower hills for many miles, defending the famous Futa Pass. The enemy was ready to make his last desperate stand in Italy. How prepared he was will be gleaned from the narrative which follows and from the long casualty lists which were to total up as the days and months went by.



The first vehicle in the town of Livorno, Italy, was this M-8 of a tank destroyer battalion in the 34th Division. Here, the first men into the city reload into their vehicle. July 19, 1944.



This Italian girl was working in the fields within range of German Artillery.

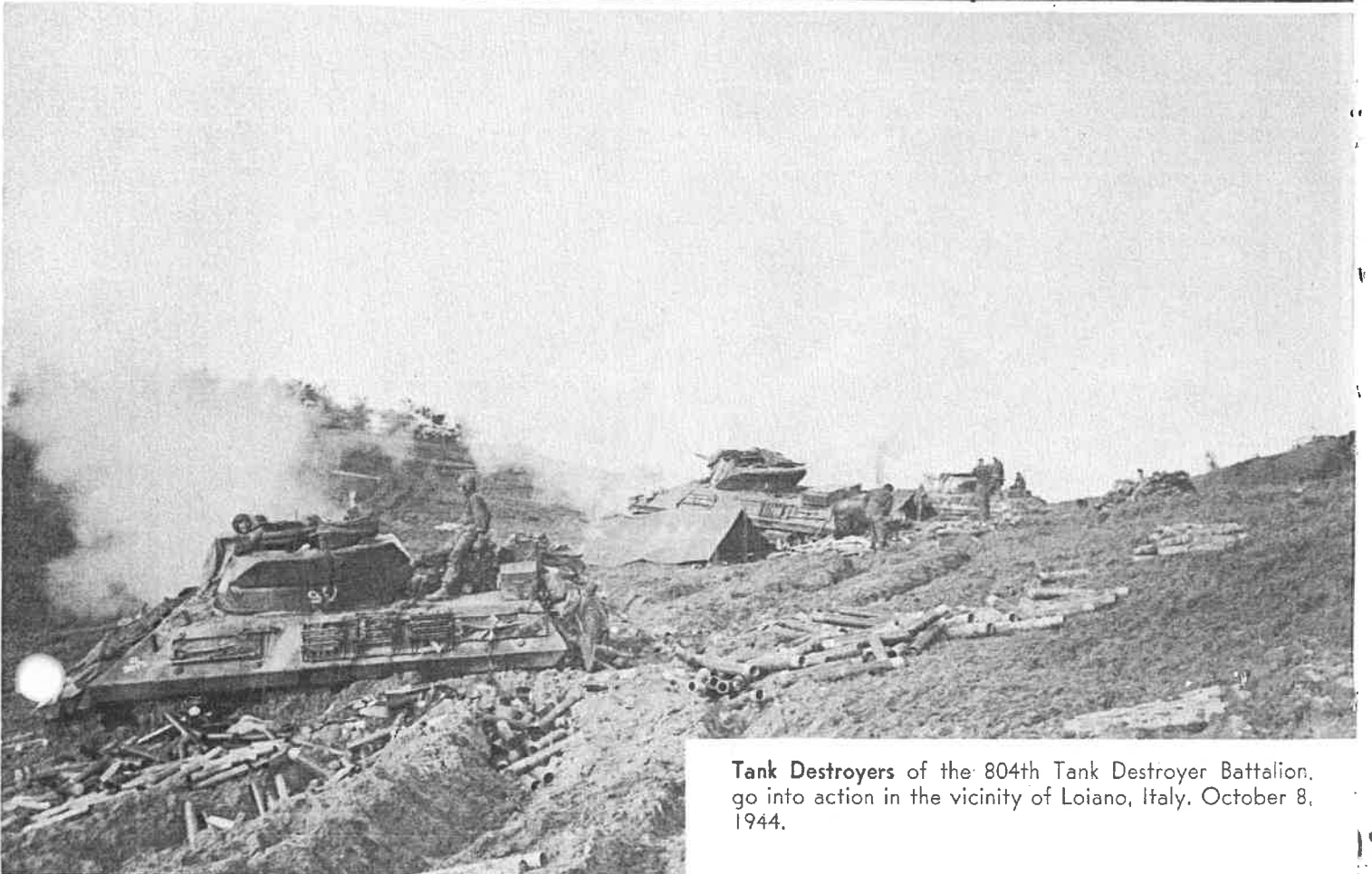
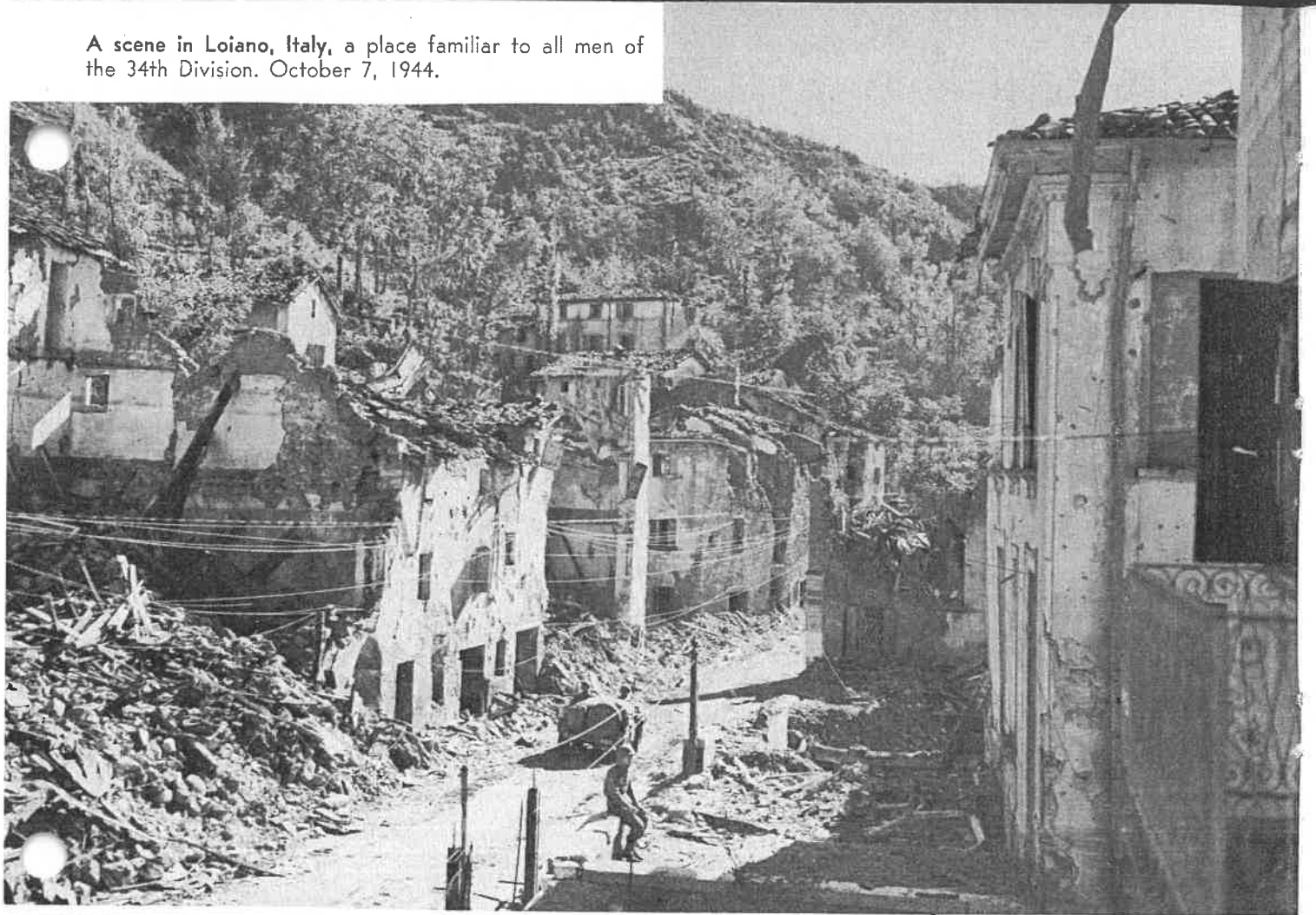
## THE EIGHTH ARMY STRIKES

The original plan was to break the Arno Line, then launch the main attack towards the Gothic Line by striking north of Florence. As there was evidence that the enemy anticipated such a thrust, the plans were suddenly changed in the latter days of August. These called for the main effort being made by the Eighth Army towards Rimini, forcing an entrance into the Valley of the Po and threatening the enemy lying forward of Fifth Army's position, with a flank movement. The plan called for re-group-

ing. To more effectively balance the Allied Forces, the British 13th Corps was grouped with Fifth Army so that the boundary line between the Americans and British now ran north and south through a line some 15 miles to the east of Florence.

The execution of the plan threw the Germans off balance and by September 6th the British had pierced the Gothic Line and swept north to within five miles of Rimini.

A scene in Loiano, Italy, a place familiar to all men of the 34th Division. October 7, 1944.



Tank Destroyers of the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion, go into action in the vicinity of Loiano, Italy, October 8, 1944.

# IV CORPS CROSSES THE ARNO

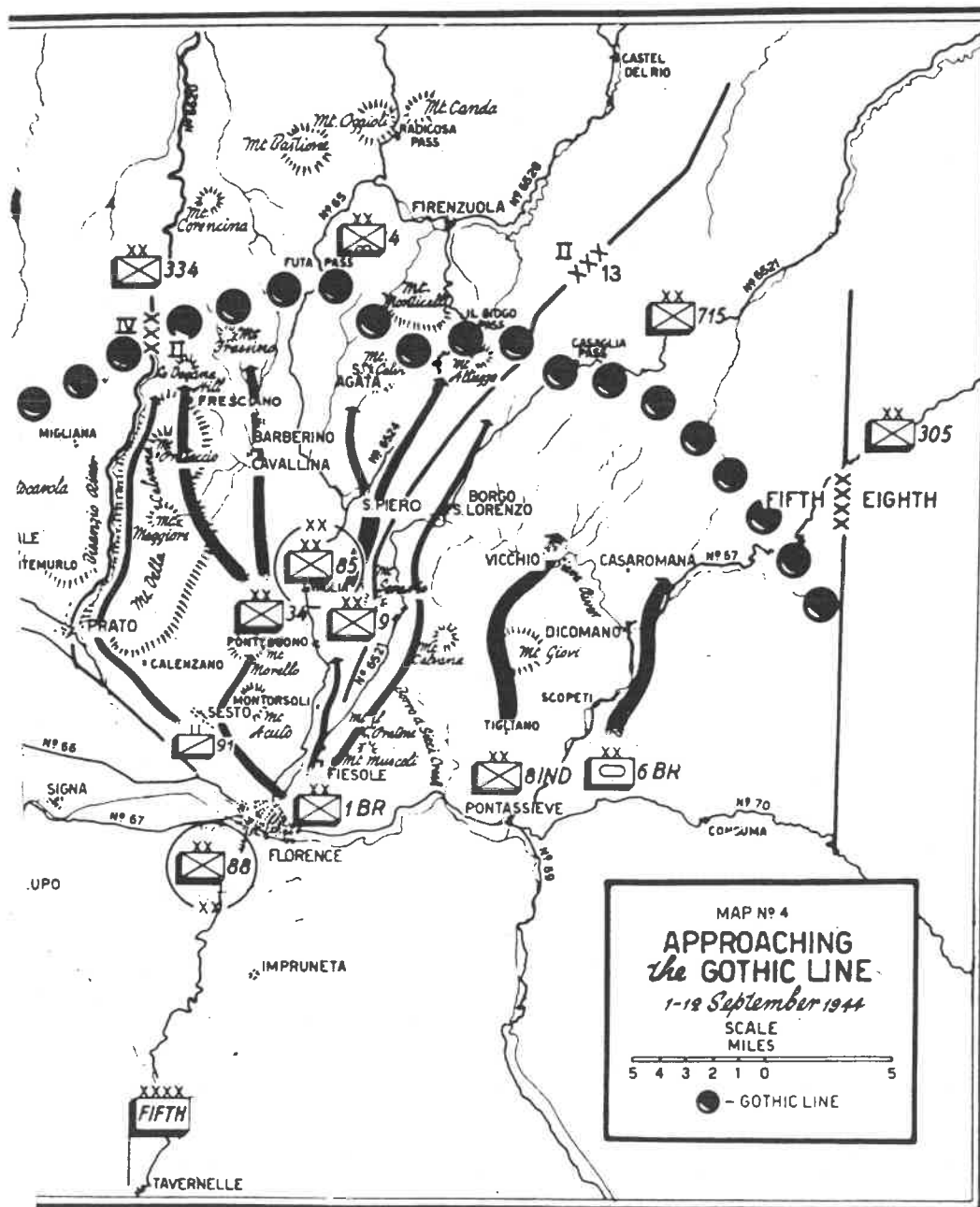
To the west of our position, General Crittenger's IV Corps struck across the Arno river on a broad front on September 1st, encountering little initial resistance. By the 12th of September, the 45th Task Force had struck along the west coastal sector to Viareggio; the 1st Armored Division had cleared

out Monte Pisano and had established a broad front from Lucca on the west of Montecatini on the east; while the 6th South African Armored Division had established a front farther to the east from Monsummano east to Montale.

## II CORPS ATTACKS

General Keyes' plan of attack called for the 91st and 34th Divisions to launch the main effort for II Corps, with the 85th and 88th Divisions held in reserve. Elements of II Corps, between the 1st and 12th of September, 1944, progressed northward, as follows: the main body of the 91st Division crossed

the Arno at Florence after the 1st British Infantry Division had captured that city, and struck north-easterly as far as the vicinity of Vaglia, at which point the 85th Division passed through, driving forward to reach the mountain barrier in the vicinity of Gioio Pass.



## THE 34TH DRIVES NORTH

As we have seen, three great enemy defensive lines had been thrown across the Peninsula: the Arno Line, the Gothic Line and the Apennine Line. These commanded all north running highways and all mountain passes.

The Arno Line had fallen when the 34th was ordered into the attack. The Germans, resisting every foot of the way, were slowly withdrawing to the Gothic Line.

While II Corps lay south of Florence, awaiting orders to cross the Arno, the Germans, engaged in a desperate defense of the city against the British 1st Division, blew all bridges spanning the river in Florence save Pontevecchio, all being blown at the same moment with a terrific explosion which shook the earth for miles around. Centuries of historical art and engineering were demolished in that one tremendous blast, but the famed Pontevecchio was spared though the enemy blew buildings at either end, blocking its immediate use by the pursuing Allies.

On the 9th of September, the Division held a ceremony commemorating Salerno Day, on which occasion General Bolte presented decorations and awards to 20 men of the 34th.

On the 10th of September, 1944, the 34th Division entered into the attack, crossing the Arno and advancing through Florence as far north as Ponte-buono, where it passed through the British 1st Division.

The 133rd Infantry, under Colonel William Schil-droth, jumped off across the line of attack on the early morning of September 11th with the dominating Monte Maggiore as its objective. The method

employed now, and throughout the advance, was to send strong patrols forward to establish positions, troops following in to occupy and consolidate them. The advance of the Regiment was to the left following along a massive ridge. The 1st Battalion drove to the summit of Monte Maggiore without opposition, and advancing by night-fall to the foot of Monte il Prataccio.

To the right, Col. Henry C. Hine struck out with the 168th Infantry abreast of the 133rd, with the objective of capturing Monte Frassino which stood before the Gothic Line. After bitter fighting, the Regiment advanced to a position some three miles south of the Sieve River.

On the morning of September 11th, the 1st Battalion of the 168th drove up the mountain side to the tiny village of le Croci which commanded a breath-taking view to the far north and looked down on the Sieve valley. A brisk engagement took place before the enemy retreated down the northern slopes. Other hills were captured, the 1st Battalion finally entering the village of Cavallino which, though unoccupied, was dangerously mined and booby-trapped, the Cannon Company sustaining several casualties. The Battalion then drove on through Barberino, meeting enemy resistance as it drove just short of its objective, Monte Frassino. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions launched an attack on the mountain that night, but when dawn came, they were stopped on its southern slopes.

Originally, it had been planned that the 168th would squeeze the 133rd out of line, but Col. Schil-droth's troops had advanced so rapidly that the

German prisoners rounded up by the Division rear echelon, Italy, 1944.



135th, under Col. Ashton H. Manhart, which had fought its way forward against rear guard action, arrived on the scene to relieve the 168th.

On September 12th the 133rd continued its drive towards its objective, La Dogana Hill, an out-post of the Gothic Line. The 2nd Battalion led the attack, followed by the 3rd Battalion. Extensive mine fields

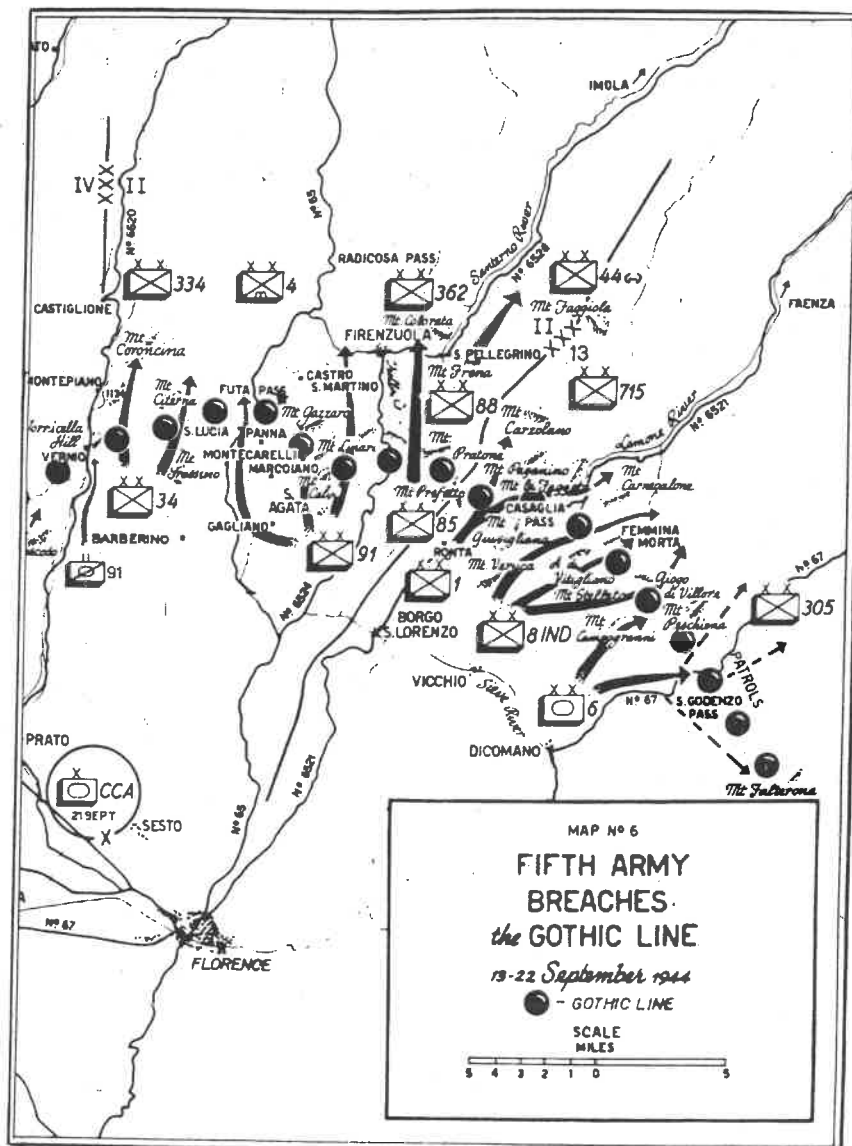
and heavy machinegun fire kept the troops just short of their goal though they had gained adjoining hills.

All elements of II Corps had reached the outer defenses of the Gothic Line by evening of September 12th. The second phase of the attack on the Gothic Line was completed.

## IL GIOGO PASS

The main effort to breach the rugged Gothic Line was to be attempted through Giogo Pass, the 85th Division having pushed through to its very gates. Indeed, the success of the over-all peninsular plans, depended on this effort. The attempt failed, but after four days of renewed pounding, during which the 85th Division sustained heavy losses, Giogo Pass was rested from the enemy on September 17th.

In the meanwhile, the 91st Division had taken Monte Monticelli while its 362nd Regiment had captured the Futa Pass.



## THE 34TH RENEWS ITS ATTACK

While the Futa and Giogo Passes were being attacked, the 34th maintained a pressure on the Gothic Line between Highway 65 and Road 6620, which kept the enemy from diverting troops to the defense of these two important gateways to the north.

From September 12 to 31, the 133rd Infantry moved literally foot by foot through the enemy's defenses, finally capturing Torricella Hill, on September 21st against heavy shelling and repeated counter-attacks, the advance having been made over an extremely rough terrain with no roads, except such as were improvised by our Engineers. By the 23rd, the 133rd had entered Montepiano, breaching the Gothic Line and advancing just short of Monte Coroncina.

The 135th, advancing on the right, met rugged resistance. Beyond Monte Frassino, taken after two days of hard, bitter fighting. Roads disappeared and pack mules were again required to feed and supply the troops.

By the 22nd of September, the enemy's lines showed unmistakable signs of yielding before both Regiments.

At this critical juncture, General Bolte committed the 168th Infantry. Fresh from reserve rest, Col. Hine's troops drove through the Gothic Line along high ridges to the east of Montepiano. Now, all three Regiments of the 34th had thrust through the Gothic Line where they paused, awaiting a new phase of the attack.

All across the front, with the aid of air and armored support, all units of Fifth Army had broken through the enemy's main defense. The Gothic Line was history. And the feat had been accomplished without committing the 88th Division. The rapid description of the movement of the 34th in this phase, fails to reveal the bitter hardships endured by the fighting men: casualties mounted day after day; the rough terrain brought the men to near exhaustion; and the problem of supplies and communications remained a matter of constant concern. Losses of officers were unusually high, the 133rd losing their popular fighting commander, Col. William Schildroth who was killed by an enemy mine. He was succeeded in command of the Regiment by Col. Gustav J. Braun, General Bolte's able Chief of Staff.

Bill Schildroth had come to the 133rd at Anzio. The first night, he met with officers in a cave where he freely expressed concern as to whether or not he possessed the calmness and fortitude necessary to lead troops in combat, an experience that was not yet his. Outside, shells were dropping in and going out, but Bill pulled away at his ever present cigar, maintaining a composure that assured his listeners that he would withstand the test. That Bill met the challenge is attested by his Purple Heart, his Bronze Medal, Silver Star and Distinguished Service Cross. But more than that, Bill Schildroth had won the lasting respect and admiration of his fighting comrades.

With all three Regiments of the Division well forward through the Gothic Line, orders came on

the early morning of the 24th of September for the 168th Infantry Regiment to strike north towards Monte Coroncina, to which natural fortification the weakening 334th Grenadier Division had fallen back. Concealed by fog, the 2nd Battalion of the 168th Infantry scaled the summit of the mountain and held on there all day, repelling counter-attack after counter-attack by infantrymen of the Germans who had been hurriedly reinforced by units from the 362nd Grenadier Division, and the 755th and 756th Grenadier Regiments. Our flank now being exposed, the 1st Battalion swung west to the left on Road 6620 securing our advance position, the old reliable 34th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troops patrolling the flank position, maintaining contact with the 91st Division. At this juncture, the 133rd Infantry passed into reserve. The success of the 166th in maintaining the heights of Monte Coroncina met with strong reaction from the enemy who poured down a ceaseless rain of artillery fire all day into the vicinity of Montepiano.

While the 168th Infantry was engaged as just described, the 135th Infantry struck towards Monte Bastione on September 5th. The going was rough. On the 26th of September, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions crossed a small creek some few miles southwest of Monte Bastione, meeting with attacks and counter-attacks which surged down from the heights above. The fight continued in the vicinity of Monte Bastione, and near the village of Bruscoli, for an additional day, the enemy continuing to put up stiff resistance which finally weakened under our persistent pressure causing his withdrawal to steeper mountain slopes beyond. The withdrawal permitted the 135th Infantry to assume control of Monte Bastione. By the 29th of September, the 2nd Battalion had reached the village of Fornelli, some three miles north of Monte Bastione.

In this engagement, the 135th and 168th Infantry Regiments were fighting as a team. On the 29th of September, the 168th Infantry fought off a counter-attack at Montefredente, a short distance southwest of Fornelli. While the 168th continued to feel forward, the 135th was drawn back into reserve and the 133rd Infantry re-committed. The two Regiments stood in a forward position awaiting further orders for resuming the attack. Here they were in an area with no roads over which convoys could pass to supply the troops, necessitating pressing pack-mules into service once again. Troops of all units of II Corps had inched their way forward against intensive enemy fire and over a terrain as rugged as any experienced thus far in Italy.

By the last day of September, the 34th stood in the vicinity of Fornelli; the 91st Division had advanced well up Highway 65 just short of Monghidoro; the 85th had advanced on a line parallel to the 91st to the vicinity of Monte La Fine; while the 88th Division had swept northwesterly to the vicinity and beyond Castel del Rio. Farther to the east, the British 1st Infantry Division and the 8th Indian Division had advanced about one-half of the distance achieved by II Corps.







placed on the left flank of the Regiment.

On the night of the 2nd-3rd of October, the enemy withdrew from Hill 789. In the morning, the fresh 2nd Battalion drove forward reaching the village of Campiano, from where it drove forward to the lower slopes of Hill 747, where the men dug in for the night. While this was taking place, the 3rd Battalion drove forward, capturing the village of San Benedetto. The 1st Battalion was now drawn back in reserve. By the end of this phase, October 4, 1944, the 168th line stood just beyond and north of Campiano.

General Bolte now ordered the 2nd Battalion of the 135th to take over Monte Venere, relieving the 133rd which had captured that important bastion. Hill 747 still stood as a barrier to the 168th Infantry. Colonel Hine threw the 1st and 3rd Battalions into flank positions of the hill, gaining heights which caused the enemy to withdraw from Hill 747 on the night of the 5-6th October. The area consolidated, the 168th spent the period from the 6th of October to the 10th wiping up and establishing coordination with adjacent troops. On the 10th of October, the Regiment was relieved.

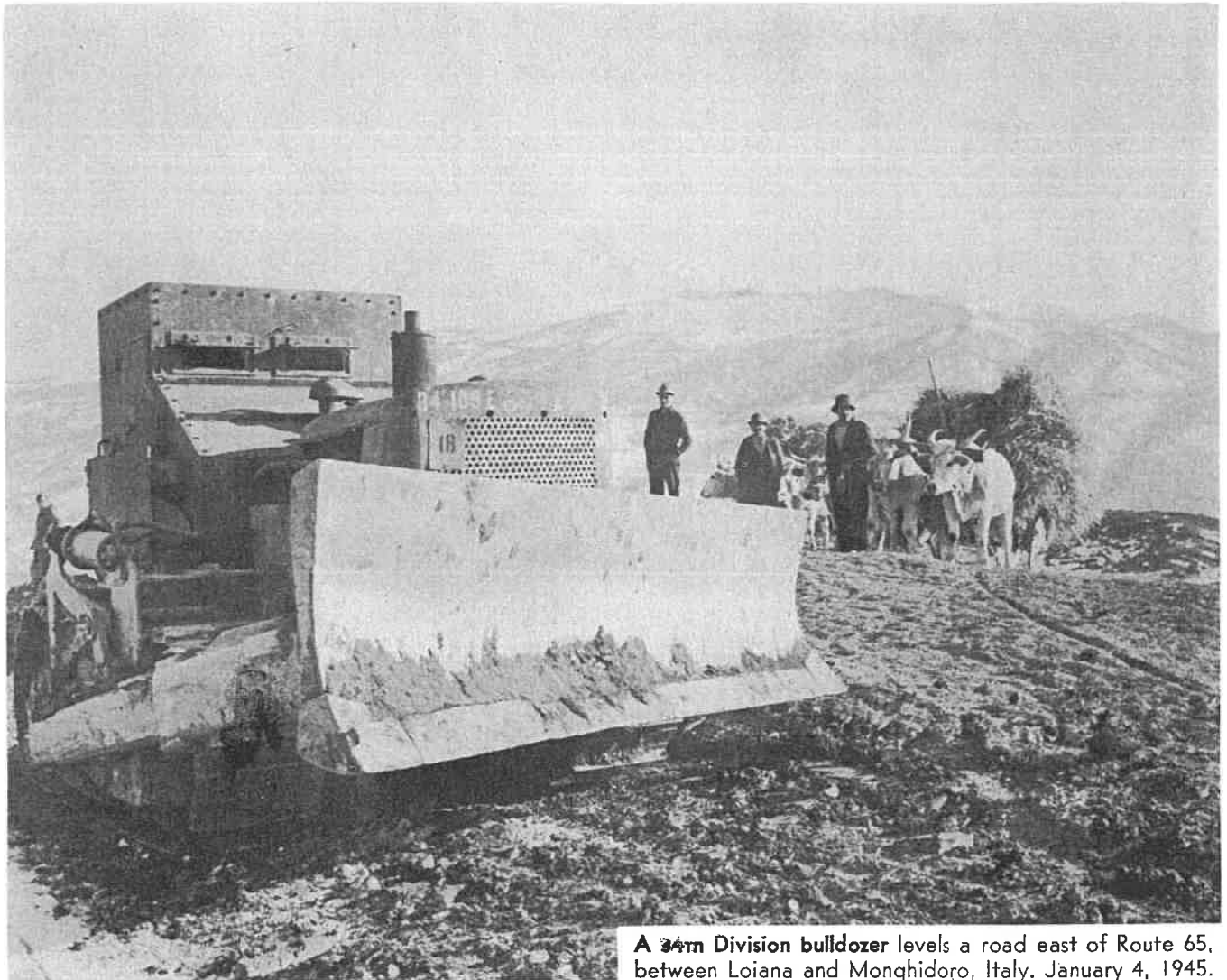
The 2nd Battalion of the 133rd Infantry Regiment captured Monzuno on the early morning of October 5th, cutting an important road which led from the

west into Loiano.

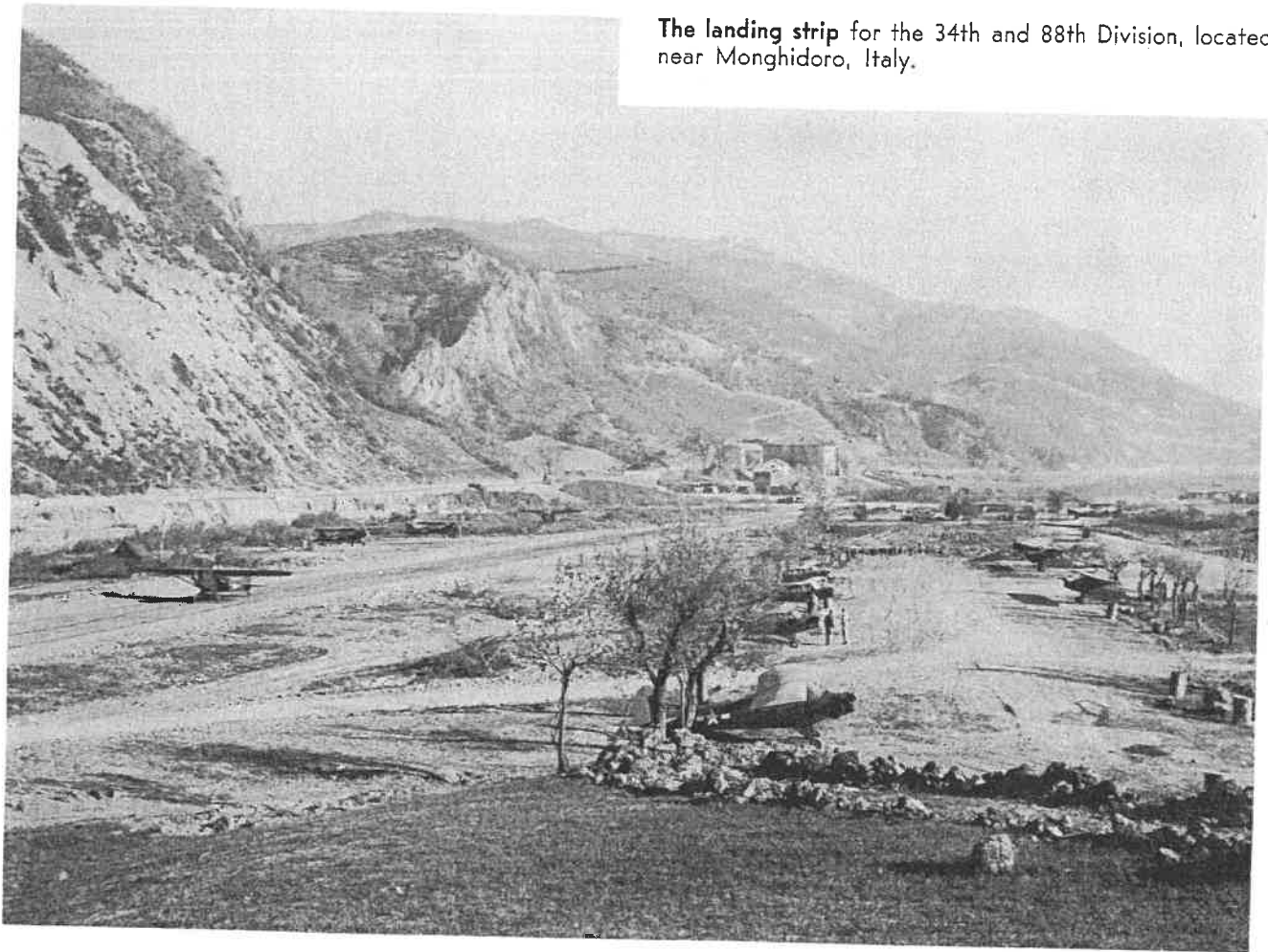
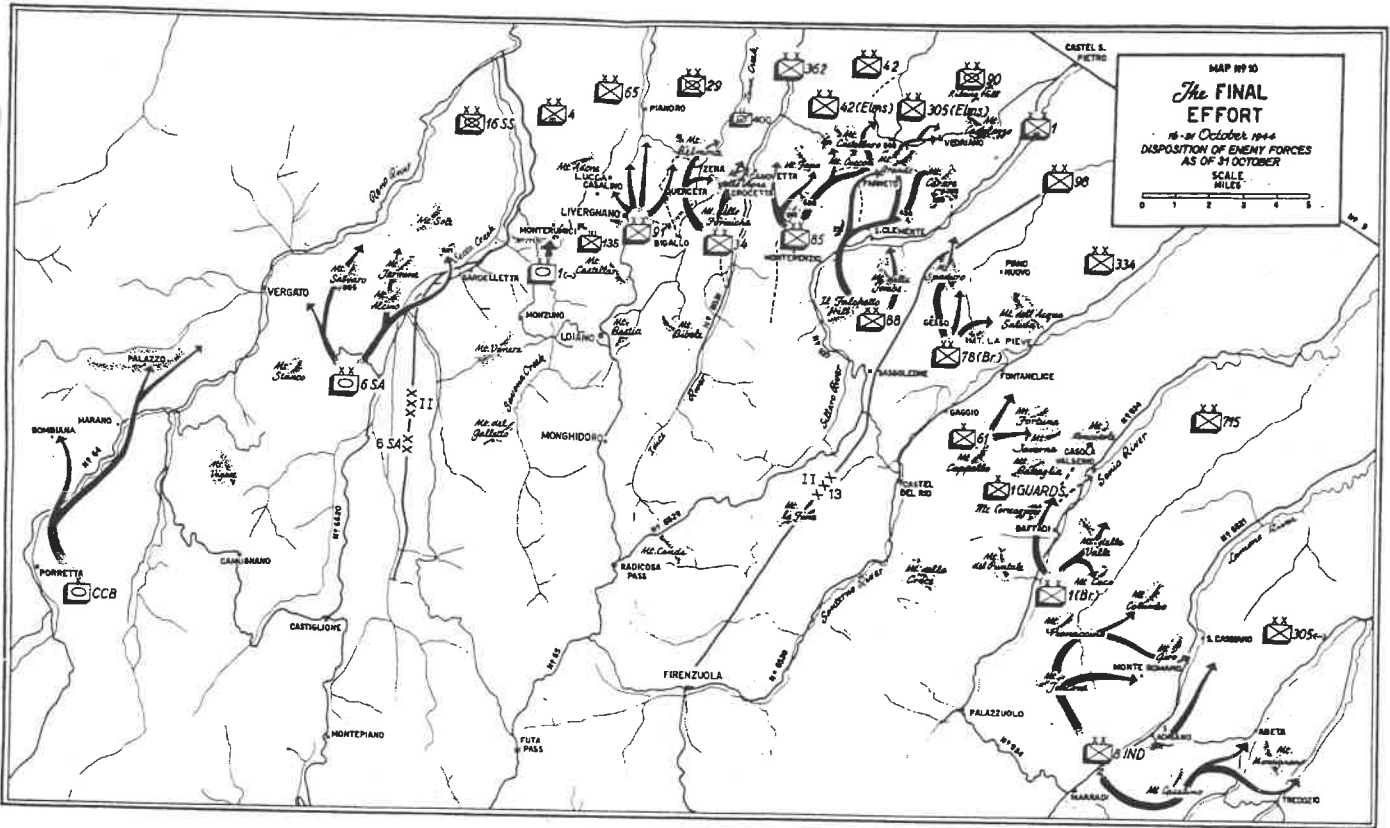
Now, as so often before during the entire Italian Campaign, the "men, mud and mules" phase was being reenacted by Fifth Army. Again, as at Cassino, clerks, cooks, service company personnel, and mine platoon personnel were pressed into litter bearer service. The fighting continued to be desperate, the casualties were heavy, but the determined troops slugged onward.

The immediate objective of the 133rd now became the mass of hills known as Monterumici. The 2nd Battalion of the 135th Infantry advanced in support of the 133rd on the early morning of the 8th of October. During all of the 8th and 9th of October, Monterumici was attacked from the west by the 135th Infantry and by an out-flanking movement on the part of the 135th Infantry and by an out-flanking movement on the part of the 133rd. Slowly the enemy pulled back, by evening of the 9th of October reaching stronger defense lines running east and west between the Savena and Setta Valleys.

During the advance northward in this phase, the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron advanced on the Division's left maintaining constant contact and liaison and sending out advance patrols which often returned with much valuable information.



A 34th Division bulldozer levels a road east of Route 65, between Loiana and Monghidoro, Italy. January 4, 1945.



The landing strip for the 34th and 88th Division, located near Monghidoro, Italy.

## A NEW PHASE

By the 15th of October, all troops of the Fifth Army had advanced well northward on a concave line which ran roughly from the vicinity of Grizzana, thence northeasterly to the vicinity of Vado, thence eastward to the vicinity of Livergnano, thence to Monterenzio, thence sharply southward. II Corps had made the farthest advance along the entire line extending across the peninsula. The new plans called for the 34th, the 85th and the 88th Divisions to undertake the main thrust in the center.

General Bolte ordered the 133rd and the 168th Infantry Regiments to renew the attack. The objective of the 133rd was Monte Belmonte; while the 168th, on the right, was to drive along a high, broad ridge which separated Zena Creek and the Idice river, with its first objective, Montedella Vigna.

Committing all three Battalions, the 168th Infantry launched into the attack at 0500 hours on October 16th, supported by tanks from the 757th Tank Battalion. Strong enemy opposition was met by the 1st Battalion in front of the village of Crocetta. Coming up to support the attack upon the village, the leading tank was struck by hostile fire and disabled, blocking the advance of other tanks to the rear. Repeated attempts to make a frontal attack

upon the village were repulsed but the 2nd Battalion swung to the left and succeeded in reaching the enemy's outpost, causing a slight withdrawal.

During the 17th and 18th of October, the 168th Infantry continued to push forward reaching the foot of Montedella Vigna. The slopes of the mountain were covered with rocky ridges and scattered clusters of stone houses, affording unusual defensive protection for the enemy. The entire Division Artillery was called upon to lay down a devastating, raking fire. In the tremendous cannonading which ensued, they were supported by Corps Artillery as well as fire from tanks and tank destroyers. The results were extremely effective, for when the 2nd Battalion drove forward it found the village of Tazzola unoccupied, as was Crocetta when the 3rd Battalion entered that village. In the meanwhile, the 1st Battalion drove forward to seize the summits of Montedella Vigna, before noon on the 18th of October. Driving forward to seize the next high position of the enemy on Hill 461, the 3rd Battalion launched four successive, desperate attacks, each of which were repulsed. The phase ended with the 168th unable to make further advance.



Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark presents an Oak Leaf Cluster to Col. Gustav J. Braun, C.O. 133rd Infantry Regiment, instead of another Distinguished Service Cross, at a ceremony in the Montecatini Area, Italy. November 16, 1944.



The popular Captain Donald McDonald, British Liaison Officer with the 34th Division.

Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark pins battle streamer to guidon of 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry Regiment. November 16, 1944.



Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark CG 15th Army Group awards the Medal of Honor to Lt. Charles Shea, New York City, New York, 34th Division, at a Fifth Army decoration ceremony. Lt. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, right, CG, Fifth Army, is in the foreground. Monte Catini, Italy, January 22, 1945.

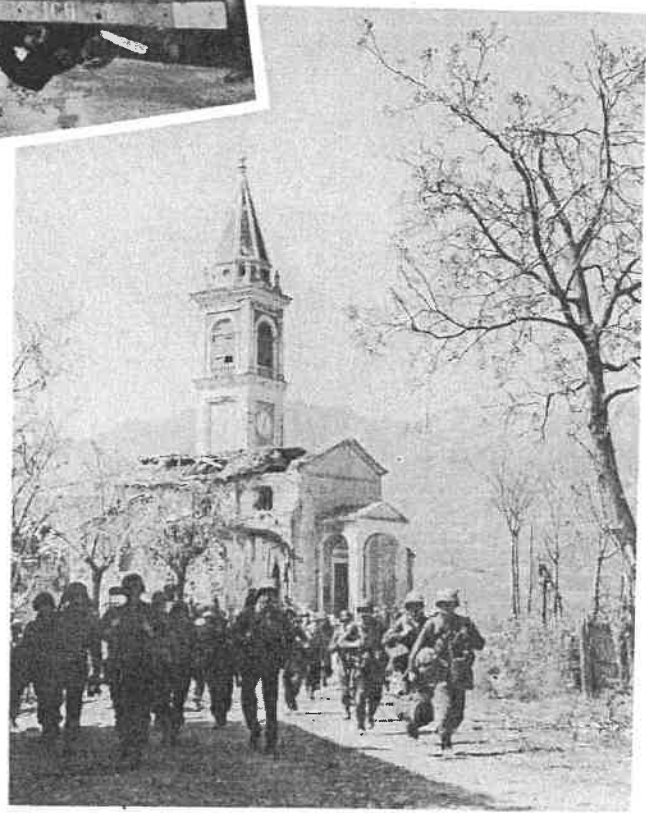
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With the sky for a dome and the snow-covered hills as the walls to their cathedral, men of Company C, 1st Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment, attend church services conducted for them by Chaplain (Captain) Guy C. Jones, Delaware, Ohio, with the 2nd Battalion in Italy, January 25, 1945.



Members of the 1st Platoon, Company C, 135th Infantry Regiment, move past the battered church in Salvarco, Italy, on their way forward.

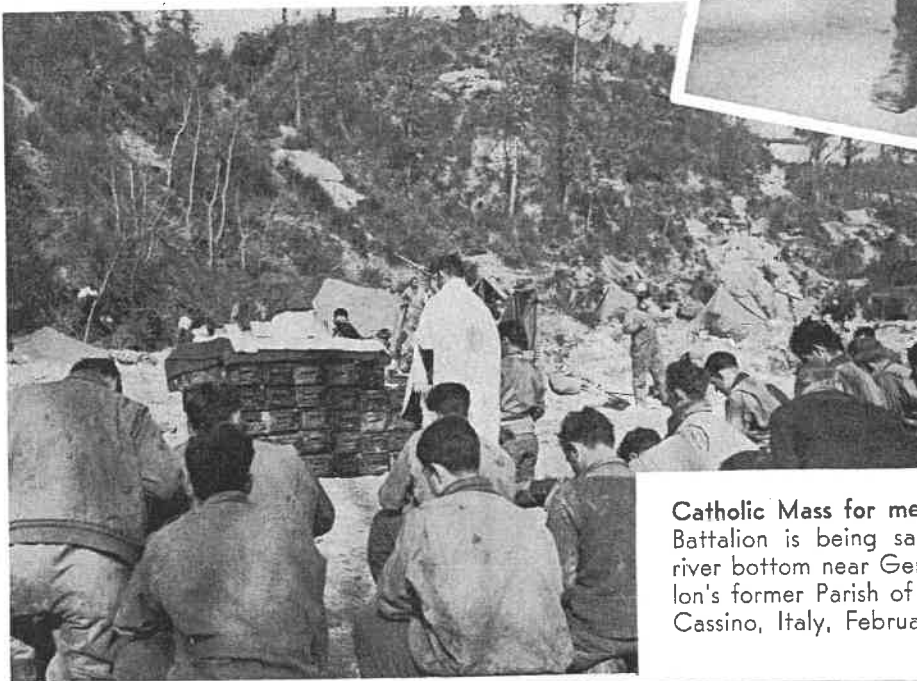
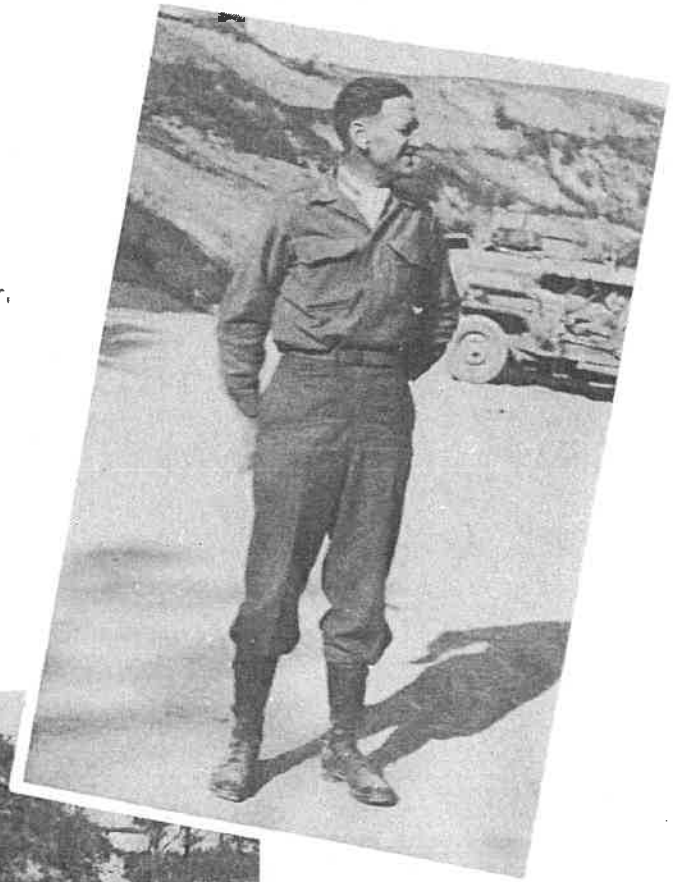


1st Lt. Sidney Goldstein, 133rd Infantry Regiment, 34th Infantry Division, (right) is presented with the Distinguished Cross by General of the Army George C. Marshall, for extraordinary heroism in action, near Santa Margherita, Italy, on Sept. 21, 1944.

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Colonel Henry C. Hine, Jr., Regimental Commander,  
168th Infantry.



Catholic Mass for men of Company "D" 2nd Chemical  
Battalion is being said by Chaplain Joseph Colon on  
river bottom near German occupied Cassino. Father Co-  
lon's former Parish of New York City's St. Francis Assisi,  
Cassino, Italy, February 27, 1944.



Infantrymen from company C, 1st Battalion 135th  
Infantry Regiment, 34th Division, are on patrol in  
the Northern Apennines. January 25, 1945.





American soldiers of Company I, 133rd Infantry Regiment, march through the snow in the Appennine Mountains as they return to camp after working on secondary defense positions, south of Bologna, Piancaldoli, Italy. January 2, 1945.



Lt. Col. Joseph E. Kelly, who commanded the 175th Field Artillery, Colonel Kelly's troops were in action longer than any other unit in the Division.



Lt. Col. Joel J. Padgett, Executive Officer, 168th Infantry Regiment.



A winter scene on the rugged highway No. 65, a road under constant German artillery fire. The scene tells the story of the life of men of the 34th Division who live in the snows of the Apennines of 1944-1945. January 8, 1945.

# BLOODY MONTE BELMONTE

At Monte Belmonte the 133rd Infantry was to re-inact scenes comparable to the terrible days at Monte Pantano. Several days of terrific battle intensity ensued.

Monte Belmonte consisted of a high mass of ridges which guarded the right gateway entrance to Highway 65 which led to Bologna. While this mass of mountains was the main objective of the 133rd, an unusually strong out-post stood on a high hill south of the mass of mountains near the village of Zena on the summit of which stood a huge castle where the enemy had strongly entrenched his troops.

In preparation for the attack, Monte Belmonte was strafed and bombed by Allied fighter bombers many times. In addition, such artillery as was in position to strike the mountain rained in a raking fire that covered the entire exposed area of the mountain mass. At 2000 hours, October 16th, the 2nd Battalion jumped off the line of departure and was soon met with an intensive mortar and artillery concentration which pinned the troops down in position.

At 2200 hours, the 1st Battalion was committed with the mission of cutting to the right and co-ordinating with the 2nd Battalion in the drive towards the mountain mass. The immediate objective of the 2nd Battalion now became Hill 401, a high southern portion of the Monte Belmonte Ridge. Almost gaining the crest of this hill, the troops were subjected to a murderous mortar, artillery, and tank fire. The fighting closed in. Grenade and hand-to-hand fighting ensued. The plight of the 2nd Battalion became desperate. A strong counter-attack was anticipated and, to add to the plight of the men, a heavy fog enveloped the whole area resulting in confusion and uncertainty. Several officers and men were captured. Late in the afternoon of that day Company "B" gained Hill 312 which was also part of the Monte Belmonte ridge mass. These troops were immediately subjected to intensive mortar and artillery fire.

Before our men stood the 29th Panzer Division and elements of the German 400th Tank Battalion, the two constituting perhaps the most effective enemy fighting unit then in the Italian area. The situation growing more desperate with each hour, Col. Braun committed the 3rd Battalion.

Supplies, ammunition, and food, and evacuation of the wounded again presented a most difficult problem. Once more mules were resorted to for supply services which trucks were unable to perform because of lack of roads and because of precipitous trails leading up the rocky approaches to the summits of the two hills.

Re-organization became necessary. General Bolte issued orders for a night attack upon Castel di Zena which was serving as the main out-post defense south of Monte Belmonte and from which heights the Germans had been pouring a devastating fire upon our advancing troops. Jumping off at 2020 hours, the 1st Battalion, followed by the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, moved towards the objective. The going was slow, a withering enemy fire constantly sweeping through the advancing columns. The fighting continued through all of the 20th of Octo-

ber. Every attempt to assault the hill was repelled by the powerful enemy. On the morning of October 21st, the attack was again renewed. This time, the troops advanced up the side of the hill, only to be thrown back by our own bombing attacks which, not only caused serious casualties, but disrupted the organization of the units. After reorganization, another assault was made that afternoon upon Castel di Zena, which likewise was repelled, though partial success was attained by troops which had advanced and clung to the hill-sides.

Directing the attention again towards the main objective, the 133rd, at day-break on the 23rd of October entered into a final, all-out effort assault on Monte Belmonte. Preceded by heavy artillery bombardment, the determined Regiment drove forward, advancing against tremendous resistance—Company "I" finally, in the late evening of that day, gaining the crest of Hill 401, the dominating feature of the Monte Belmonte ridge. The enemy withdrew from Castel di Zena, but the task of clearing the ridge remained unfinished.

The fighting continued through to the close of the 27th day of October, every effort on the part of the Battalion to dislodge the enemy having failed. Heavy rains again descended upon the area. All signs indicated that a stalemate had been reached.

During the battle for Monte Belmonte, the 133rd had sustained terrific casualties. Numerous platoon and company commanders were killed or wounded. Monte Belmonte still stood as the key bastion in the enemies' Apennine Line when Fifth Army halted the offensive.

On the 16th day of December, General Mark Wayne Clark was promoted to Commanding General of Fifteenth Army Group. General Clark had been with Fifth Army from its origin in Morocco in 1943. The performance of his command throughout the Italian Campaign was such as to merit the recognition he now received. He was succeeded in command of Fifth Army by Lt. General Lucian K. Truscott, Jr.



Pvt. Glen Anthony of Jefferson, Ohio, breaks the ground for a foxhole, as Pvt. John E. Willet of Hampton, Va., looks on. Both men are members of the 34th Division working on a defense line in the mountains, east of Route 65, between Loiano and Monghidoro, Italy. January 3, 1945.

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Members of the Anti-tank Company, 133rd Infantry Regiment, dig gun emplacements for secondary line of defense on Apennines, south of Bologna Piancaldoli, Italy, January 2, 1945.

## Chapter XXIII

# THE APENNINE LINE

The last defensive line of the Germans guarding the Valley of the Po, was the Apennine defense line (the Germans had named it the "Genghis Kahn Line") which extended from north of Viareggio on the Ligurian Sea, thence; northeasterly passing north of Lucca; thence, north across the Reno river south of Vergato; thence, easterly north of Loiano and Livergnano; thence, south and easterly in an irregular line through Faenza on Highway 9 to a point just north of Ravenna on the Adriatic Sea. The British Eighth Army had captured Rimini on the Adriatic Sea and had forced its way up Highway 9 beyond Forli. Fifth Army was "holing" in for the winter.

In mid-December, the boundary between IV and II Corps ran north and south through a line some ten miles west of Loiano. By now, the American forces held three-fourths of the line extending across the Italian Peninsula.

Life at the front became one of constant patrols and occasional attempts to straighten out our lines. November passed with little change in the static position. Through the long winter months, men dwelt in caves and abandoned villages and farm houses. Training schedules became the order of the day. Men were equipped with white parkas and some recreation in the form of skiing was afforded, though the ski slides were shifted from time to time as a result of annoying enemy artillery fire.

Higher Command had planned a renewal of the attack for Christmas night of 1944, but these plans were frustrated by several thrusts made by the Germans. In late November and again on the 3rd day of December, the Germans struck the sector held by the Brazilians, recapturing Monte Castello some three miles east of Monte Belvedere. On the 12th of December they attempted to further extend their positions in the same area.

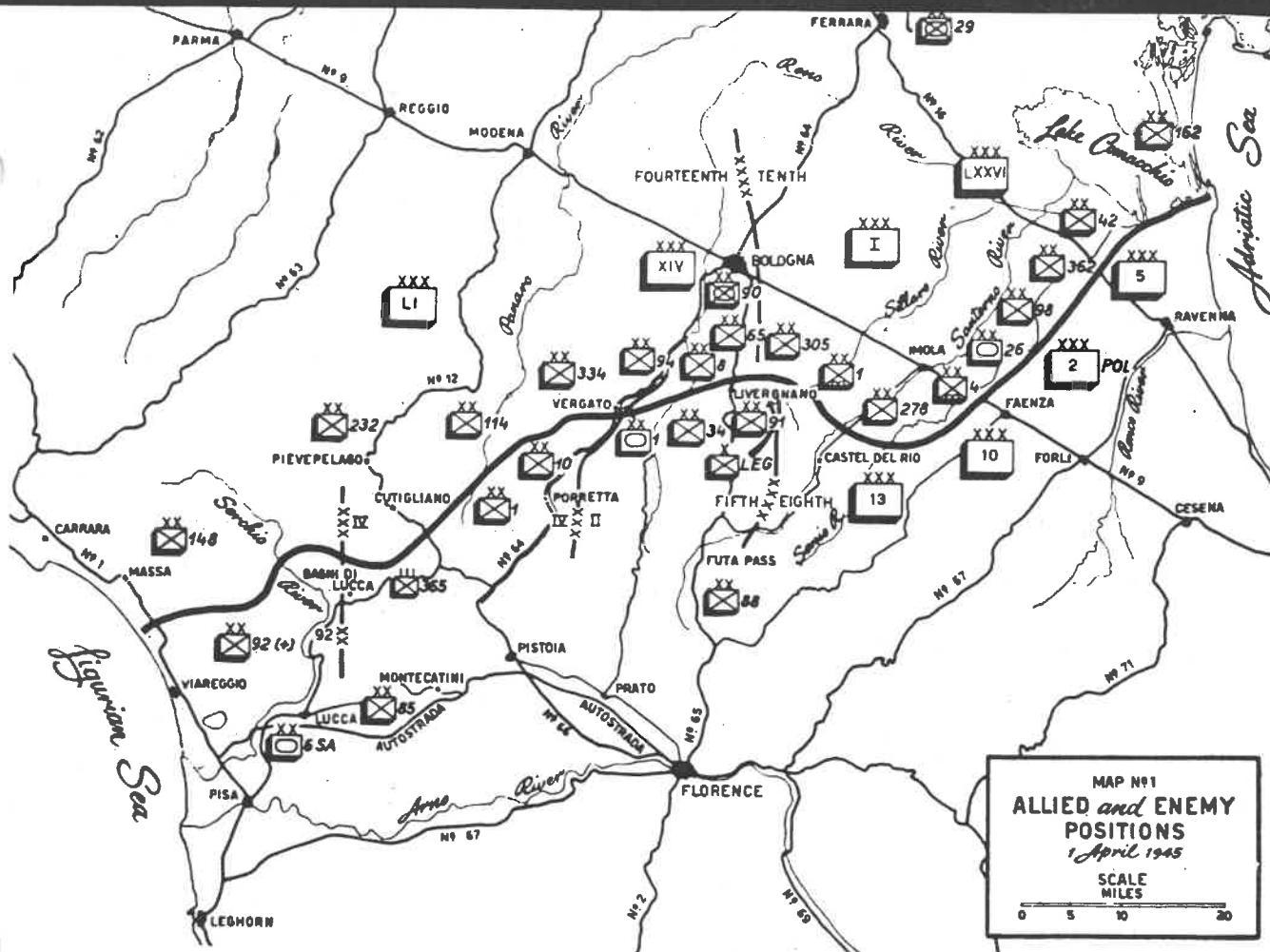
Our plans for a Christmas night attack were further thrown off balance on Christmas Day, when the enemy, on a six mile front struck the 92nd Division's sector north of Lucca.

These several thrusts, together with the coming of heavy snows compelled a postponement of our attack until April, 1945. To strengthen the west coastal sector, the 135th Combat Team and other units of Fifth Army were attached to Fourth Corps.

The end of the year found the 34th in Corps reserve with Division Headquarters located between Monghidoro and Loiano. On the 6th of January, 1945, the Division relieved the 88th in a sector that stood astride Highway No. 65, the main Highway in the II Corps sector leading to Bologna.

Highway 65 ran from Florence to Bologna along a narrow and precipitous course. The traffic carried by this road during these operations, was tremendous. Tanks, six-by-sixes, weapons carriers, and peeps at times virtually ran bumper to bumper both north and south. At all hours of the day and night, this road teemed with traffic. Units of the Corps were bivouaced adjacent to the road in such congested areas that had the Germans possessed any air strength whatsoever, they could have rained down a most devastating destruction on II Corps. Lateral trails ran out from Highway 65, trails entirely inadequate to bear the heavy traffic, a fact that placed great strain upon all engineer units of the Corps. Enormous search lights swept the areas aiding the night movements of men and vehicles and illuminating the front line. It was a questionable experiment which proved highly successful.

In the early Spring, Field Marshal Kesselring, was called to Germany to take charge of the crumbling defense lines in that theatre, General von Vietinghoff, succeeding to his Command in Italy.



## Chapter XXIV

# THE FINAL ATTACK INTO THE VALLEY OF THE PO

The stalemate on the Apennine Line continued for over five months. In the meantime, preparations were being thoroughly completed for the final Spring drive into the Po Valley. Lt. General Truscott Jr., now had under his command seven American Div-

isions; the 1st Armored, the 34th, 85th, 88th, 91st, 92nd and the 10th Mountain Divisions; together with the 1st Brazilian Division, the 6th South African Armored Division, and smaller units of Italian and American Infantry troops.

## THE TERRAIN AND ENEMY AHEAD

During the many months Fifth Army and Eighth Army troops stood poised for the final drive into the Valley of the Po, the city of Bologna and the winding Po River were visible on clear days from our forward observation posts. Below the Apennine Line, the last German defensive barrier, stretched the wide valley, running from west to east some 420 miles and extending across a broad area to the foot-hills of the mighty Alps. Here lies one of the richest agricultural areas in all the world, a valley rich, too, with historical traditions. The heart of industrial Italy lays in this valley. The wheels of industry in the great cities of Turin, Milan, Bergamo and smaller places, however, had been silenced by the strategic bombing of our Air Forces.

The Allies had now demolished two of the great defensive German Lines: the Arno and the Gothic Lines. Now, before Fifth Army stood the final barrier, the Genghis Khan Line. On this famous last line stood the German Fourteenth Army, consisting of two Corps: the 51st Mountain Corps on the west,

consisting of four German and Italian Divisions; the 148th Grenadier Infantry Division, reinforced by the Kesselring Machinegun Battalion and part of the Italian Bersagliere Division, occupied the front from the sea inland to the Serchio Valley; the 232nd Grenadier Division, which had attached to it elements of the San Marco Italian Marine Division and the 4th Mountain Battalion, extending from the Serchio Valley east to Monte Torroccia; the 114th Light Division and the 334th Grenadier Division held two short sections of the front west of Highway 64. The XIVth Panzer Corps which stood in the path of II Corps' right sector consisted of 4 Divisions committed in narrow sectors astride Highway 64 and east of Monte Grande: the 94th Grenadier Division, the 8th Mountain Division, the 65th Grenadier Division and the 305th Grenadier Division. The 8th Mountain Division was reinforced by the 3rd Independent Mountain Battalion, and the 7th GAF Battalion made up of German Air Force personnel serving as Infantry.



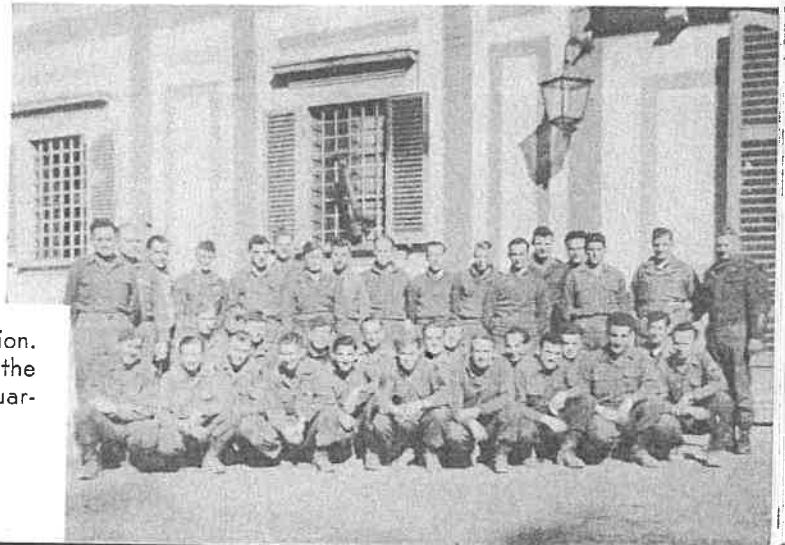
Women Partisans of the Italian underground movement who aids in the liberation in Italy from the Germans, on the Fascist Castelluccio, Italy, October 5, 1944.

Communications wire for the secondary defense line south of Bologna is spooled out from a jeep by a wire of the 133rd Infantry Regiment in the Apennine Mountains near Piancaldoli, Italy, February 1, 1945.



Captain Jack E. Korshak, Inspector General's Department, Division Headquarters.

The Adjutant General's Section, 34th Infantry Division. Colonel Dee M. White, Commanding Officer, at the extreme right. Picture taken at rear echelon headquarters, Cavilano, Italy, 1944.



# THE PLAN OF ATTACK

The last great offensive of the 15th Army Group contemplated five phases: 1st, The capture of Bologna; 2nd, Establishment of positions along the south bank of the Po; 3rd, Crossing of the River Po and sealing off the Brenner Pass; 4th, The seizing of defensive positions along the Adige River which flows down from the Alps, passing through Verona on its way to the Adriatic Sea; and 5th, To break through the Adige Line and cut off the Sillian and Tarvisio Passes, two escape avenues to Austria lying high in the Alps to the east of the Brenner Pass. How this grand plan developed and what part the Red Bull Division played in its execution will be briefly told in the narrative which follows.

The 34th was to seize Dei Mori Hill and Hill 356, two defensive bulwarks standing to the northeast of Monte Belmonte. A shift in the line had placed the 91st Division astride Highway 65. Once we had taken the two hills, the 34th was to relieve the 91st east of the Highway, the latter then to drive forward on our left. Farther to the west, the 88th was to drive up the Reno Valley. The 34th's next objectives were to be two hills over-looking Pianoro, situated on the descending slopes of the Apennines, just short of Bologna, on Highway 65.

The attack was preceded by a deceptive movement of troops towards the British sector in an effort

to conceal the intended thrust along Highways 64 and 65. The most intensive artillery and air preparation yet employed in the Italian Campaign now came into play. It commenced on the morning of April 14th, proceeding at intervals throughout the 15th. Wave after wave of heavy and light bombers attacked, sweeping the two Highways and the strategic targets along the entire Fifth Army Front. The weather was clear, the air still, accentuating the thunderous roar of cannons and the terrific bursting of bombs as each wave of bombers unloaded their rain of death and destruction on the hapless enemy.

This time, unusual precaution had been exercised to apprise our Air Force of the precise position of the line separating us from the Germans. Huge strips of white cloth were laid out from the air. Too often in both Italy and Africa, the boys from off in the "wild blue yonder" had dropped their loads on doughboys below, who, God knows, were having bloody experiences enough as it was. Should some one some day have the temerity to tell the story of the casualties resulting to our own troops from friendly air-craft, a rather startling picture would be the result.

## THE FINAL ASSAULT ON THE GENGHIS KHAN LINE BY THE 34TH

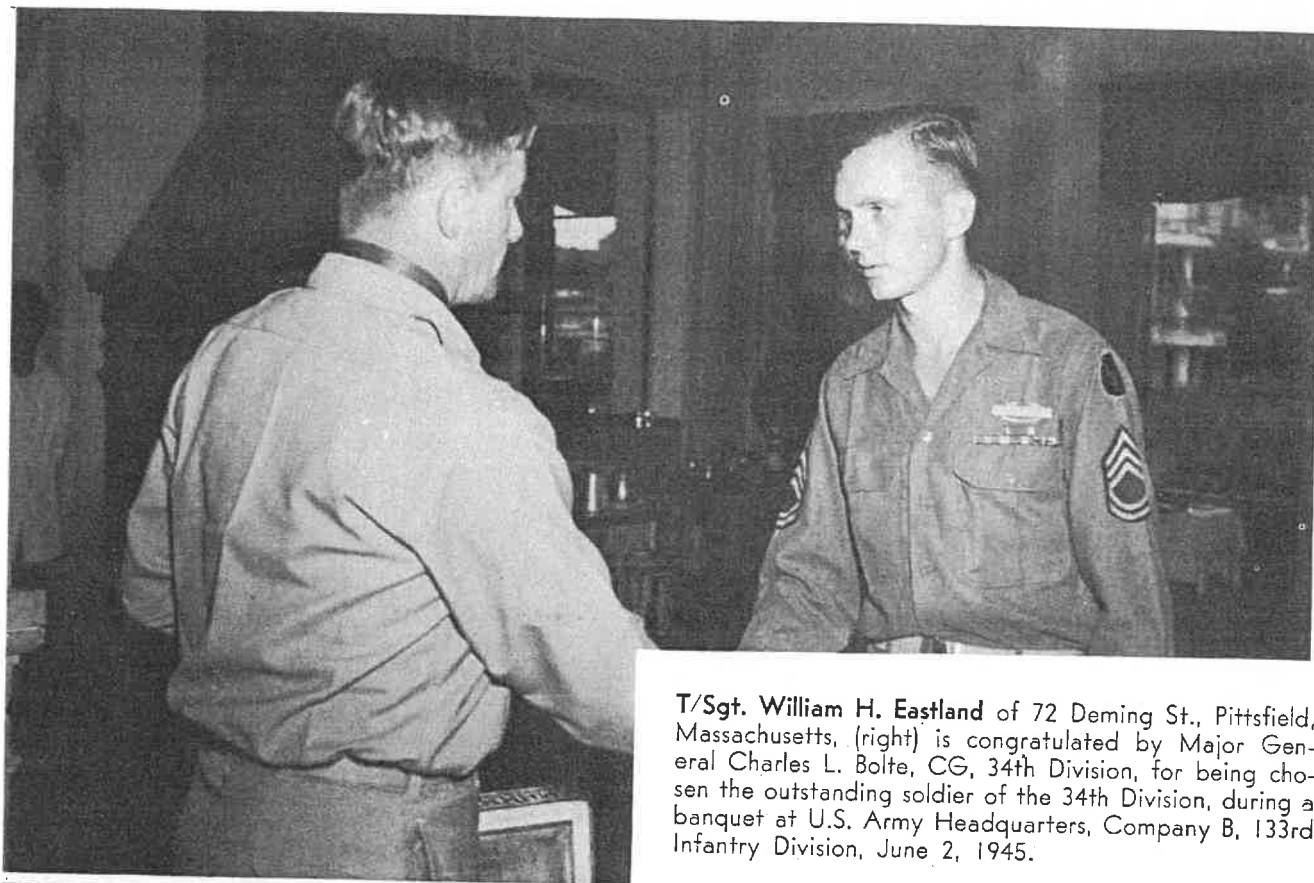
IV Corps under General Crittenger opened the offensive on the west on April 14th, and II Corps, under General Keyes, followed on April 15th. At 0300 hours, April 16, 1945, the 34th Division effort in the historic attack was launched. Despite the terrific bombing and artillery pounding, the enemy defended with an unbelievably stubborn and fanatical resistance. Captured German soldiers revealed the terrible ordeal that had been theirs during those two terrible days of air and artillery preparation. Many were still trembling when captured: many stared with vacant eyes, numbed and speechless. Others told with nervous static voices of the hell they had endured. Still the enemy hung on, though now his air force was gone, his fuel exhausted and his supply lines reduced to the barest dribble. Hate for Nazism, which burned deep in the breast of fighting Americans, could not repress an admiration for the courage of troops who had resisted, step by bloody step, our relentless push northward, moving his cannons and vehicles by mules, horses, and oxen. His defeat did not result from lack of fighting qualities but from an overpowering armament and by a fighting determination of freemen bent on destroying the last remnants of a force and a philosophy which had almost engulfed the world.

The 34th launched into the great final attack in coordination with the 91st Division. Attached to the two Divisions were the 752nd Tank Battalion, units of the 805th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company "C"

of the 100th Chemical Mortar Battalion and elements of the 105th Anti-air-craft Artillery. For the initial operation, the 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry, was attached to the 363rd Infantry; the 1st Battalion and Cannon Company of the 135th were attached to the South African Armored Division.



Vehicles of Company I, 135th Infantry Regiment, 34th Division, move down the main street of Parma, Italy, amid cheering crowds, April 26, 1945.



T/Sgt. William H. Eastland of 72 Deming St., Pittsfield, Massachusetts, (right) is congratulated by Major General Charles L. Bolte, CG, 34th Division, for being chosen the outstanding soldier of the 34th Division, during a banquet at U.S. Army Headquarters, Company B, 133rd Infantry Division, June 2, 1945.



Lt. Col. Ivan G. Walz, Division G-4.



Colonel Walden S. Lewis, who commanded the 133rd Infantry up the Apennines and the Po Valley.



Soldiers of the 133rd Infantry Regiment, the first troops to enter newly liberated Bologna, Italy, rest in the Piazza de la Republics.



Happy civilians of Modena, Italy, give flowers to members of Company L, 133rd Infantry Regiment, as they march into the town Modena, on Highway 9, west of Bologna, April 23, 1945.



A typical scene, as our troops broke through the Valley of the Po.



Typical Italian fighting Partisans.



Rosetta Solari of the Prime-Giulia, Italian Partigiani. Several thousand Italian girls fought with the Partisans. This girl had a tremendous combat record.



Rear Echelon Headquarters near Loiano, Italy near the Apennine Line, April, 1945.

Partisan leader plans patrol for four members of his Partisans. The woman second from the right will cross into German territory to secure information, Castelluccio area, Italy, October 5, 1944.





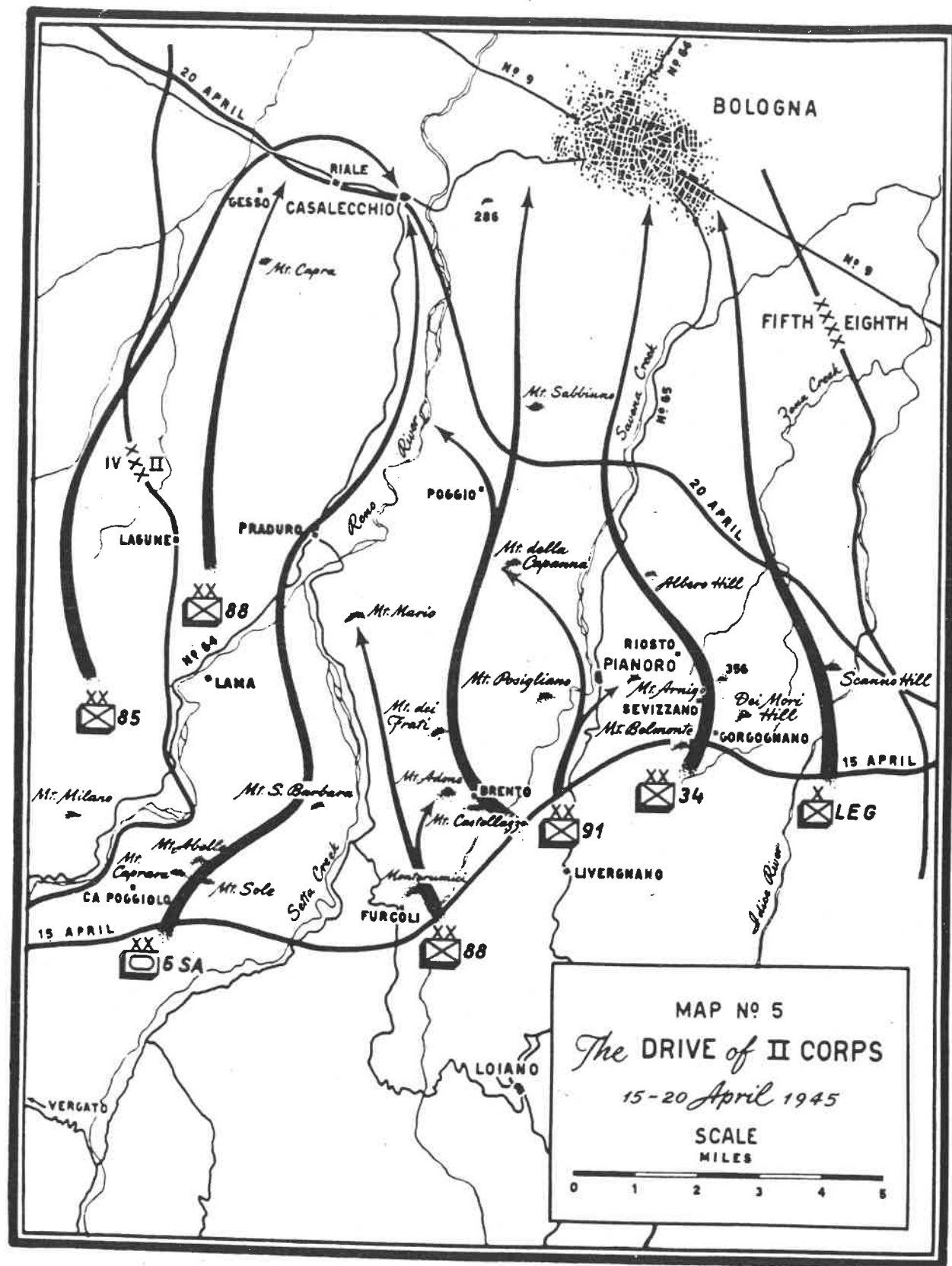
Major General Charles L. Bolte upon his return from a front lines mission for which he was awarded the Silver Star. Italy, 1945.



American Red Cross girls who served with the 34th Infantry Division, in front and rear actions. From left to right: Betty Cox of Philadelphia, Nancy Kimberly, of Neenaj-Menasha, Wisconsin and Harriet Benson of New Canaan, Connecticut. Picture taken at Camp Falcone, Algeria, September, 1943.



Major James A. Jones, Assistant G-4.



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# THE 168TH SPEARHEADS THE GREAT FINAL ASSAULT

The initial mission was assigned by General Bolte to the 168th Infantry which jumped off on the early morning of the 16th of April with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions abreast. The 2nd Battalion commanded by Major John P. W. Anderson struck for the Sevizzano Ridge and Hill 394 but was repeatedly repulsed, the advance lacking tank support occasioned by impossible narrow trails. A portion of the troops dug in close to the enemy line while others withdrew to Monte Belmonte.

The 3rd Battalion under Lt. Col. Samuel G. Kelley assisted by tanks, met with more favorable results as it stormed Hill 367 upon which stood the remains of the Gorgognano Church, which the enemy had transformed into a powerful fortification. Repeated attempts to dislodge him from the rubble were repulsed. With the aid of tremendous fire of 25,479 rounds from our 34th Division and supporting artillery the enemy was driven from the ruins of the church and the Hill was ours.

Morning of the 17th of April found the 2nd and 3rd Battalions battle-weary and dispersed. Re-organization was effected. The battered troops drove on. Troops of the 2nd Battalion still hung precariously to the outer fringe of Sevizzano Ridge. Support came to them by evening, the balance of the Battalion fighting forward during the day.

The enemy had chosen holy grounds upon which to base his defense, for, from the ruins of the church of Gorgognano, he had withdrawn to a fortified cemetery some 1000 yards away. The 3rd Battalion drove for the cemetery at 1000 hours on the morning of April 17th with tank support. Our troops reached the cemetery but the Germans knocked out two of our tanks, fought back with a furious counter-attack that drove us back to the rubble of the church. But that night at 1900 hours, both the 2nd and 3rd Battalions battered their way to the summit of Sevizzano ridge forcing the stubborn enemy to abandon the cemetery. The 3rd Battalion drove on to the lower slopes of Dei Mori Hill on the 19th of April.

The 1st Battalion was committed at 2000 hours, 18th April with the mission of seizing the C Vall-Riosto terrain feature to the left of our main drive and of disrupting any organized attempt by the enemy to withdraw and establish a secondary defensive position. Companies "A" and "B" moved down the Cavinzano River, at times waist-deep in the stream. Company "C" followed in with the assignment of passing through Company "A" and seizing the high Hill, C Poggio Corniala. The entire mission was accomplished by evening of April 19th with only slight losses to the 1st Battalion as against over one hundred enemy captured and many killed or wounded.

The famous 168th, as so often before, had again proven itself. It had breached one of the strongest defensive positions in the Genghis Khan Line, and its commander, Colonel Hiné, had again demonstrated his superior qualities as a combat leader.

During this initial phase both the 133rd and the 135th Regiments were held in reserve. It is noteworthy that the day the attack was launched, April

16, 1945, marked the 500th day of combat for the Division. It was also during this phase that the grave of Brigadier General Gustav J. Braun, Assistant Division Commander, was discovered. He had been missing since mid-March when he took off on a reconnaissance flight over the enemy line. Only on rare occasions did the enemy shoot down observation planes, but this mission proved to be one of the exceptions. The enemy had honored the General and his pilot by erecting two carved wooden crosses and placing some wild flowers on the graves.

General Braun (then Colonel) came to the Division as Chief of Staff shortly after General Bolte took command of the Division. Upon the death of Colonel William H. Schildroth, Braun assumed command of the 133rd until appointed Assistant Division Commander. He was a man of tremendous driving force, unsurpassed courage and astonishing enthusiasm—traits that made him an admirable combat officer. General Braun had distinguished himself in World War I as he repeatedly did in World War II. His personal acts of bravery became and remain legendary.

Shortly thereafter Brigadier General Harry B. Sherman rejoined the Division as Assistant Commander. He had previously served in that capacity, having succeeded Brigadier General Benjamin F. Caffey. He now returned to us from the 88th Division. General Sherman left a deep impression on the 34th. To men and officers alike he was regarded as a "hell-cat on wheels," appearing at the most unexpected times and places. Always one to drive himself to the utmost, he demanded the same of those under his command. His motto was to get things done—results were what counted; excuses were never tolerated. The fury and forceful language of this nonetheless respected and beloved General Sherman, caused him to be regarded as a counterpart of the famous General Patton. Goodnaturedly, men of the Division who came from Southern States, would say that when General Sherman tore loose, it was the re-enactment of a one-man march from Atlanta to the Sea.



Collegio Ciano, near Naples, the famous staging area.

## THE 133RD ENTERS BOLOGNA

Except for pockets of resistance, some of a very stubborn character, the Division moved toward Bologna, the ancient city of culture and learning, upon which we had looked down for so many months from the mountains above. The path down Highway 65 was strewn with pulverized villages, and shattered farm homes. Bull-dozers ploughed through the village streets piling up debris like snow. Dead Germans were strewn along the road or lay sprawled around blasted machinegun nests. But in the exhilaration of having at last driven the enemy from his mountain defenses, the troops swept forward giving little thought or heed to the awful scenes about them.

The 168th Infantry had been relieved on April 19th by the 133rd Infantry, under the command of Colonel Walden S. Lewis, a quiet, unassuming officer, possessing nevertheless, a capacity for leadership and an ability to execute strategic plans in combat, which was in complete keeping with the splendid command enjoyed by the Regiment throughout the war.

Colonel Lewis committed the 1st Battalion with the mission of striking towards Monte Arnigo; the 2nd Battalion was to cut across Highway 65, while the 3rd Battalion was to be held in temporary reserve. At 2200 hours, April 19th, the 1st and 2nd Battalions moved forward abreast in the general direction of Pianoro, accomplishing their difficult missions by midnight, April 20th.

With news that the Germans were withdrawing to the north of Bologna, orders came down to the Regiment to push into the city as quickly as possible. The task was assigned to the 3rd Battalion. At 0500 hours, April 21st, troops of Company "K," riding on tanks of the 752nd Tank Battalion, drove towards Bologna. Blown out bridges stopped the tanks, the troops, undaunted, dismounting and proceeding on foot into the outskirts of the city, arriving there at daybreak. The remainder of Company "K" and the balance of the 3rd Battalion arrived shortly thereafter. Thus, to the 3rd Battalion goes the credit of being the first American troops to enter this historic city. Almost simultaneously with the entrance of our troops, Polish units of the British Eighth Army moved into Bologna from the east on Highway 9. By 1100 hours, the entire Regiment had entered and garrisoned the city, road blocks and street patrols being quickly established. Later that day, the 135th Infantry relieved the 133rd, taking over control of Bologna. That night, we sustained our last air attack from the enemy, who rained down bombs of a personnel type, inflicting considerable casualties. The 168th moved into the area on April 24th.

The administration of Bologna was taken over by Major Harry C. Kait, American Military Government Officer, who quickly organized the city. Major Kait's services with the Division were outstanding during his long service with us.



## THE PARTIGIANI

At Bologna, our troops received the characteristic, enthusiastic Italian welcome which had marked our entrance into so many villages and cities as we liberated them from Nazi control. But here, for the first time, we came to a full realization of the important role played by the Partigiani (Partisans), the Italian underground that had been working for two years behind the German lines, striving valiantly and effectively to harass and to confuse the enemy and to pave the way for the coming of our troops from the south. We had encountered the Partigiani shortly north of Rome, but in the Valley of the Po, we found these patriots effectively organized into brigades, well armed and commanded, with comprehensive plans designed to co-operate with XV Army group in its descent into the Valley. The capture of Parma, Milano, and Genoa and other cities, was most materially assisted by the Partisans, who struck swiftly to thwart attempts of the retreating Germans to blast bridges and tunnels, while at the same time seizing and defending important road junctions.

For a while after the surrender of the Germans in Italy, a most terrifying campaign by the Parti-

giani to wipe out Fascists in Northern Italy, spread like a prairie fire: motivated by a burning zeal for revenge, the Partigiani, hunted and shot down Fascists in one of the weirdest and most fantastic episodes of the war. Men of the 34th saw fleeing alleged Fascists mowed down by pursuing Partisans and witnessed mass executions of men who had not been accorded any semblance of trial.

This anarchy reigned until the Allies and the recognized Italian Government took charge with stern hands. Unsuccessful efforts were made to induce the Partigiani to surrender their arms and return to peaceful pursuits. Despite promises of awards, the attempt failed. And now we were to learn that the extremists among the Partigiani were fanatical Communists whose outspoken aims and purposes were to seize control of Italy. With utmost frankness, they informed us that arms and ammunition cached in the mountains would presently be turned against the hated capitalists. Subsequent events have disclosed how genuine was their intention and how ominous that threat still remains.

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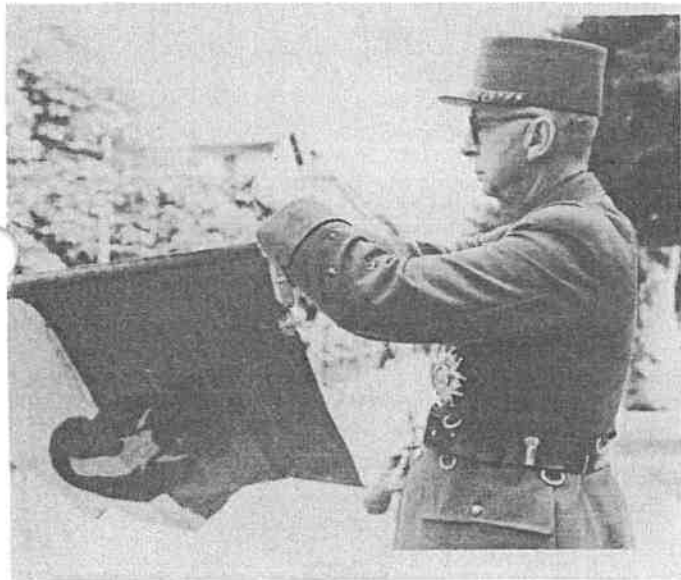
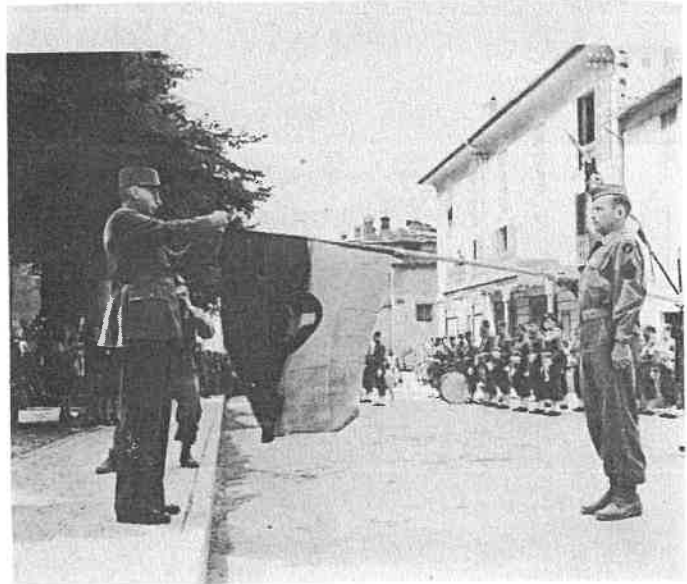
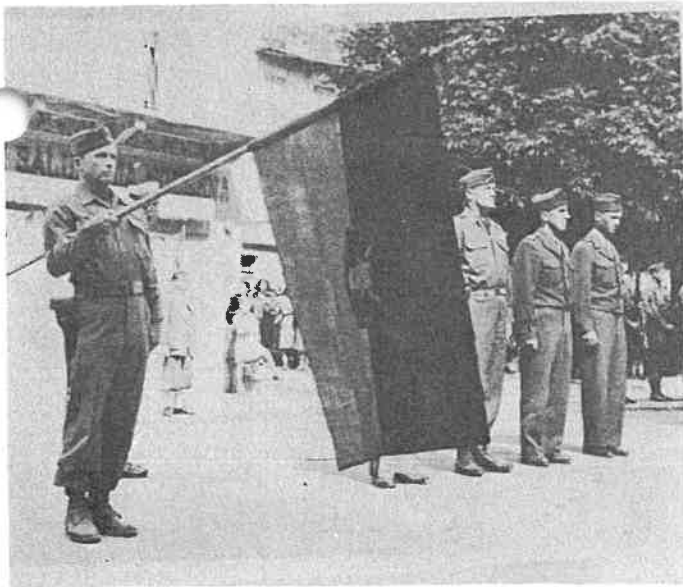
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Italian Partisans ride through the cheering throngs in liberated Milan, Italy.

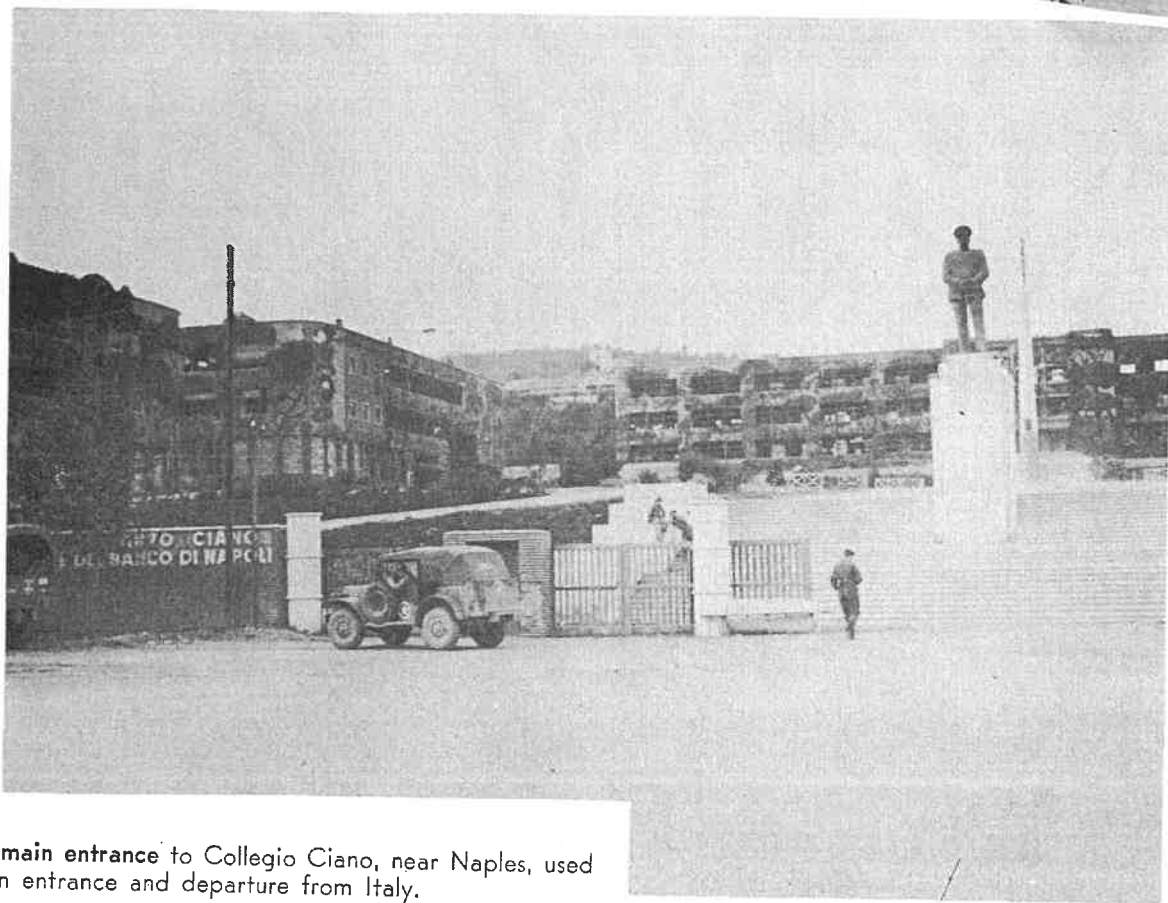
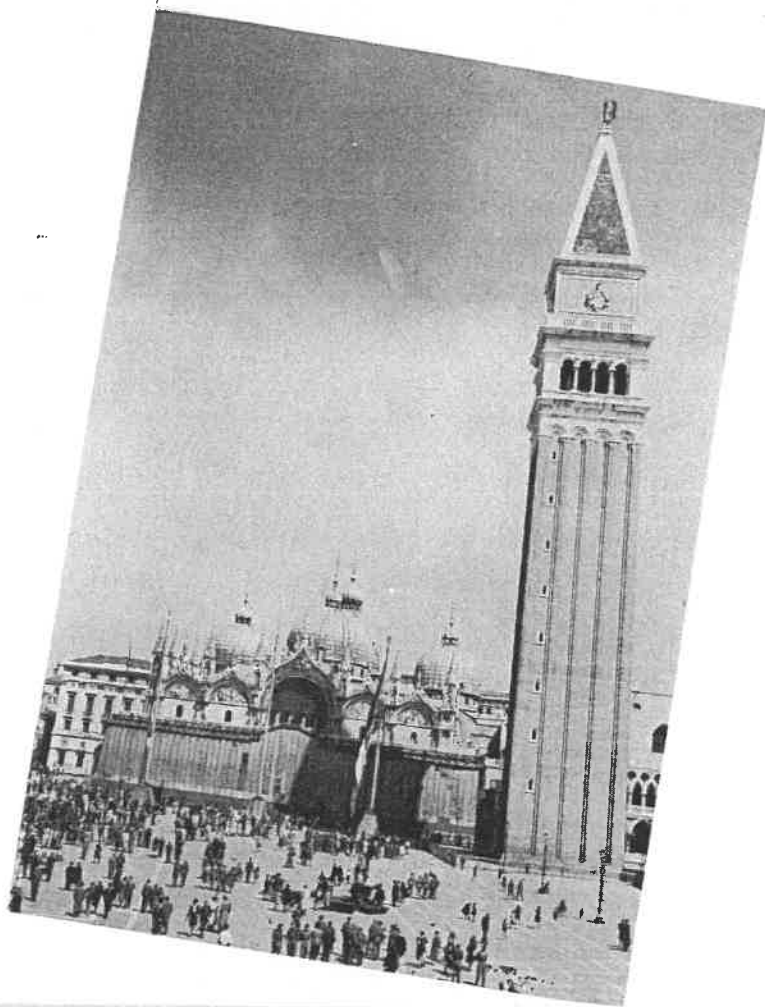


The scenes on this page, relate to the ceremony when Lt. General Doyen of the French Army decorated the 34th Division at Tenda in the Italian Riviera with the Croix de Guerre on July 10, 1945.





Piazza San Marco in beautiful Venice.



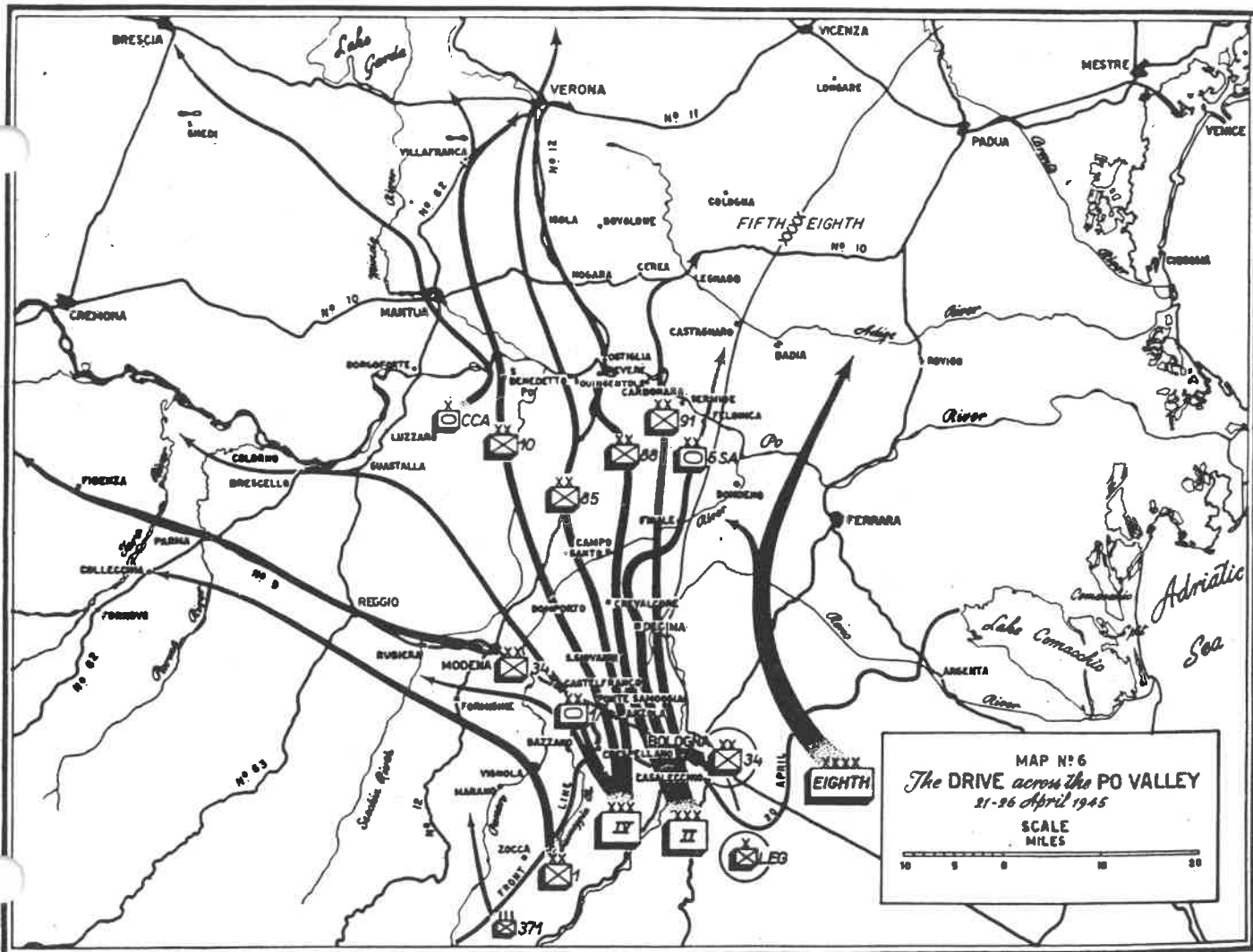
The main entrance to Collegio Ciano, near Naples, used as an entrance and departure from Italy.

# CHAOS AND VICTORY IN THE VALLEY OF THE PO

The final sweep of the victorious Fifth and Eighth Armies across the Valley of the Po to the Swiss, French, and Austrian borders, must remain one of the most amazing military accomplishments in all history. And this, not alone for its tactical merits, but also because of the astounding rapidity with which our troops fanned out over the vast area. The swiftness of our advance resulted in the most bewildering sort of warfare: enemy groups were bypassed, large numbers being cut off before they could descend from the Apennines. The enemy was everywhere: forward, to the rear and on the flanks, resulting in numerous small engagements often far to the rear of our advancing columns. Despite this confusion, the units comprising XV Army Group carried out their assigned missions with a dispatch that bespoke the superb type of command directing

this amazing final drive.

Before a recitation of the role played by the broad plan as executed should be presented: The Eighth Army struck across the Po and Adige Rivers in a northeasterly direction, advancing through Padua and driving toward the Yugoslav and Austrian borders; the American II Corps, consisting of the 88th and 91st Divisions and the 6th South African Armored Division, struck northward in a sector running roughly from Verona on the west to Vicenza to the east; while IV Corps, consisting of the 85th, the 10th Mountain, 34th, 1st Armored Divisions and Brazilian and Italian troops struck north and west in a broad sweep to cover all the Valley to the west of a line running from Bologna north through Verona to the Brenner Pass on the Austrian Border.





Lt. Col. Robert D. Offer, Commanding 185th Field Artillery.



Colonel Fritz A. Peterson, Division Artillery Executive Officer.



Major "Tex" Riccard of 125th Field Artillery.

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# THE AMAZING DRIVE OF THE 34TH

On the 23rd of April, General Bolte ordered the Division to move west on Highway 9 to the vicinity of Modena. Leaving Bologna in the hands of Italian

troops, the 133rd, 168th, and 135th Combat Teams moved forward, in the order mentioned, in relentless pursuit of the collapsing enemy.

## THE 133RD COMBAT TEAM

The First Battalion of the 133rd moved out by trucks at 0900 hours, detrucking within seven kilometers of Modena. From here, the Battalion swung south of Modena cutting Highway 12, establishing a road-block at Bugia. Additional road-blocks were established on secondary roads leading into Modena.

The 2nd Battalion, 133rd Infantry followed the 1st, passing on westward with the mission of blocking all highways south and southwest of Reggio.

The 3rd Battalion following the 1st and 2nd Battalions, cleared out an enemy block at Rubiera on Highway 9 and advanced on Reggio. An estimated company of enemy infantry, supported by artillery, self-propelled guns, mortars and machineguns defended the town. By dawn of April 24th, contact was made with the enemy by the 3rd Battalion assisted by Company "E" at the southern outskirts of Reggio. A spirited fire fight developed which continued until late afternoon, when the enemy slowly withdrew, permitting our troops to occupy and garrison the city.

Indicative of the spirit of our advance, the 2nd Battalion had moved forward, on foot, 27 miles on the first day. So rapidly had the entire Regiment advanced that many of the enemy were cut off to the rear and to the south, giving rise to numerous skirmishes. Indeed, one sergeant remarked that his group had flushed no less than four fair-sized "coveys," all putting up stiff resistance before surrendering. And now, prisoners and motley Italian Partisans streamed into Reggio; everywhere, white sheets hung from windows indicating surrender of the frightened citizens now, at long last, relieved from the panic and fear that had been their lot for so many days. Partisan and Fascist clashes continued intermittently throughout the area, adding an eerie touch to the confused scene.

The principal mission of the 133rd in this operation had been to protect the left flank of the Division, but the Brazilian troops advancing parallel with us to the south, relieved the Regiment of this primary duty.

By evening of April 25th, contact had been made with the 168th, road blocks had been established and forward elements of the Regiment had moved some 13 miles northwest of Reggio on Highway 9. On the morning of April 26th, the Regiment received orders to resume the chase. The 3rd Battalion, motorized, with one platoon of tanks attached, moved in to the attack at 1400 hours, by-passing Fidenza on Highway 9, moving northward to Busseto where a stiff encounter resulted in the taking of the village and the capturing of some 70 prisoners. The Battalion continued to drive northward towards the Po meeting pockets of sharp resistance which were all reduced.

In the meantime, the 1st Battalion, with Cannon Company attached, passed through Parma, still infested with snipers, and struck at an enemy strong point at Paroletta just east of Busseto. The strong point was encircled and reduced and the town occupied by 2200 hours. The Battalion moved further northward towards the Po river.

On the same morning, the 2nd Battalion drove through Fidenza, cleared out snipers and proceeded on to the Cortemaggiore northwest of Fidenza, with the mission of attacking Monticelli, an enemy strong point on the south bank of the Po. Establishing a rear post at Cortemaggiore, Lt. Col. Timothy F. Horan, the doughty Irish Battalion Commander, went forward with the main body of his troops northward towards San Pietro in Cerro which Italian farmers had informed was garrisoned by a considerable enemy force.

Here, now occurred one of those weird instances of the attacker being pursued by the attacked. At 0500 hours, April 27th, the rear command post at Cortemaggiore made contact with a column of German infantry with estimated strength of 1500. In the half light of the approaching dawn, the column marched past our rear command post in the direction of San Pietro i Cerro. Capt. Edward Meany Jr. immediately phoned Lt. Col. Horan warning of the oncoming enemy force. Then, waiting until the last elements of the column had passed his post, Captain Meany led a group of Battalion Headquarters Company men in an attack on the tail of the column which, though it did not halt the forward advance, nevertheless harassed and scattered the enemy rear troops in confusion.

In the meantime, forward at San Pietro i Cerro, Lt. Col. Horan forewarned, prepared to meet the oncoming German column. It was a tense situation, six hundred isolated American infantrymen pocketed in the village, with enemy artillery from the northwest already raining in shells on the dauntless men, and 1500 German infantry men pouring in from the south. This again was a time to test men's souls! Colonel Horan's situation was growing desperate. He radioed for re-inforcements and called for artillery support. Reinforcements arrived in the form of 150 clerks, drivers, and kitchen personnel; while Division Artillery support zeroed in on the enemy's heavy gun positions silencing the battery that had been threatening from the northwest. Men of the 2nd Battalion now went to work on the enemy, inflicting heavy casualties, capturing 459 prisoners, and neutralizing the equivalent of a German re-inforced regiment. It was a job well done.

## THE 168TH COMBAT TEAM

As the 168th moved out from Bologna behind the 133rd on the early morning of April 23rd, news was received that no less than three German Divisions had been cut off to the south as they descended from the Apennines in their desperate effort to avoid entrapment and to cross the Po River. The Regiment arriving in the vicinity of Modena, Colonel Hines sent out strong patrols to the northwest with the mission of taking and securing Compogalliano and Bagnolo. This mission was successfully performed by elements of the 2nd Battalion, though not without some sharp fire fighting. The 3rd Battalion now moved forward to the vicinity of Bagnolo, while the 1st Battalion cleaned out pockets in the vicinity of Massenzatico and Prato, capturing some 200 prisoners and advancing to Bagnolo.

On April 24th, the Regiment was assigned the mission of cutting Highway 9 just above Reggio. Colonel Hine ordered the 1st Battalion to send a task force including tanks of the 1st Armored Division forward on Highway 9, and a second similar task force from the same Battalion to advance simultaneously northwesterly from its position at Bagnolo. The first group moved rapidly up the arterial highway with infantry troops riding the tanks. German groups, as everywhere, surrendered after short, sharp resistance. The task force drove to San Lazzaro, to the very gates of Parma, famous as an agricultural center and the home of the world-famed Parmigian cheese. Road blocks were rapidly established on roads leading into the city from the east and the south. Movement into Parma was temporarily halted by a large tank ditch which ran southward and around the city.

By now, the entire Regiment had moved to the vicinity of Parma. Parma was strongly occupied. Colonel Hine ordered a frontal holding attack against the city by the 1st Battalion Task Force.

The Regimental plan of operation called for the 1st Battalion to establish a bridgehead on the west-

ern banks of the Taro River on Highway 9 west of Parma; the 3rd Battalion was to sever all road connections leading into Parma from the south; while the 2nd Battalion was to cut all road-nets running into Parma from the north.

Just prior to dusk on the evening of April 24th, the Task Force moved into Parma along Highway 9, penetrated the outskirts and proceeded cautiously through the city with only slight opposition, the main body of the enemy having withdrawn to avoid entrapment. Even as our "C" Task Force proceeded through Parma, it was followed by an unsuspecting German convoy, so confused was the situation. The hapless convoy was neutralized and prisoners taken. Snipers and strong cells of Germans and Fascists had been by-passed in the city. The next two days called for fierce street and building fighting to clear out the remnants of the enemy. Here, at Parma, the fratricidal war between the Partisans and the Fascists took on the color of a Western movie at its best. Bullets literally flew everywhere.

The mission of each Battalion was firmly accomplished by the morning of April 27th: the bridgehead had been established at the River Taro and all roads leading into Parma from all directions had been blocked. Prisoners were being marched in from all roads. Despite this unorthodox fighting, the 168th had made contact with the 133rd and 135th, the latter passing through enroute towards Fidenza, still farther northwest on Highway 9.

By morning of April 27th, the Regiment was spread out from the River Taro to north of Fidenza. Throughout the day, small scattered fire-fights took place and many groups of prisoners were captured. At Medesano, south of Highway 9 on the River Taro, a large group of Germans surrendered to the 1st Battalion and Brazilian elements. All along the line, men were on the alert preventing infiltration of small enemy groups desperately striving to work their way northward. The situation had developed into a weird and wild man-hunt in all directions.

## THE 135TH COMBAT TEAM

The garrison duty of the 135th at Bologna was of short duration. Following the 133rd and 168th, troops of the 135th entrucked and moved to an assembly area near Castelfranco on April 23rd, reaching the vicinity of Modena on the 24th. As Division reserve, the Regiment was engaged in patrolling the roads and mopping up enemy groups which had been by-passed or which were infiltrating through from the south. By April 25th, the Regiment had arrived in the vicinity of Parma.

On April 26th, the Regiment was ordered to move out on Highway 9 with the mission of capturing Piacenza. Supported by elements of the 757th Tank Battalion, the 2nd Battalion moved forward passing through leading elements of the 168th Infantry, and continuing on through Parma and Fidenza. Sporadic fire fights occurred along the route. The Po Valley was aflame and the sun of that bright day was darkened by rolls of powder smoke belching forth from thousands of active weapons. By night fall, Piacenza had fallen to the 2nd Battalion, which had

been supported by our artillery and by the tanks of the 757th. The resistance had been sharp but not as determined as had been anticipated.

### DRAMA AT CAORSO

In the meanwhile, in the late afternoon of April 26th, the 1st Battalion of the 135th sent out a reconnaissance party in the direction of Caorso, an important enemy position some six miles northeast of Piacenza near the Po River. The patrol, having been advised by Italian civilians that the Germans had moved out, proceeded cautiously into the town square where they were greeted by the Mayor and the populace. Suddenly, in the midst of the ceremony, enemy burp guns sent a hail of lead over the heads of the crowd, causing the people to run to cover while the patrol leaped from its vehicles and set up B.A.R.'s and light machineguns.

Here, occurred perhaps the most confused, isolated incident of the fantastic thrust up the Po

Valley. The Germans had not left the town; they were scattered in unorganized groups in the outskirts. Fragmentary enemy convoys were quickly captured as they entered the town. One motorized kitchen with food all prepared was captured, the meal being immediately turned over to the hungry townsmen.

Rounding up of Germans continued within the town, but additional retreating contingents of the enemy, in the meantime, were pouring into the area. As night came on, it became difficult to distinguish friend from foe. Enemy tank units came into the square challenging "Amerikaner Hunde" in the name of "der Fuhrer," firing their guns into buildings at random. German infantrymen marched in with their hob-nailed boots ringing on the stone pavement, throwing hand grenades into buildings as they attempted to ferret out our small defending force.

Support for our now somewhat beleaguered troops was on the way. But by now, some 6000 Germans

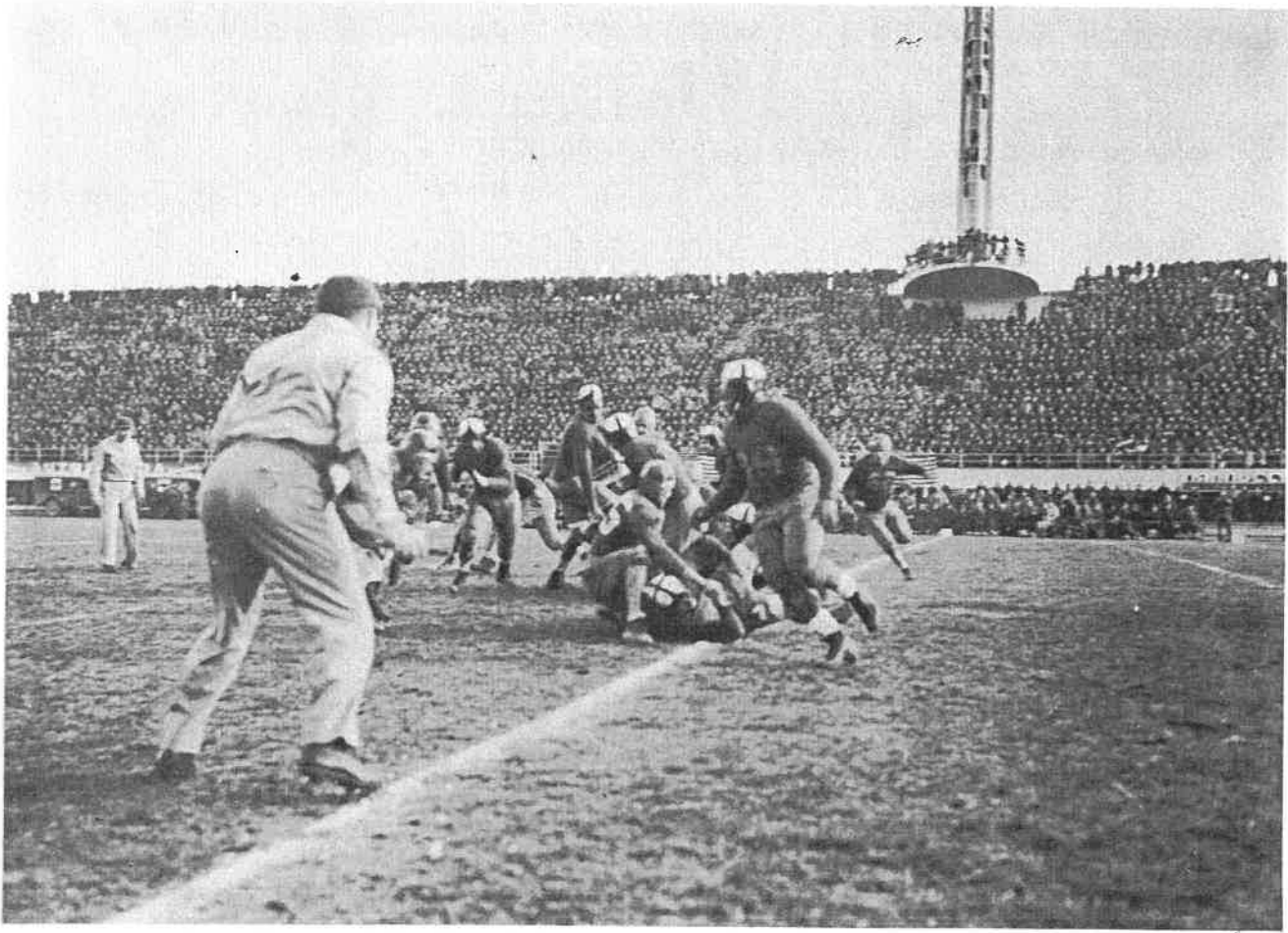
were estimated as being in or about Caorso. They far outnumbered our Battalion, to say nothing of the Task Force that had entered the town on reconnaissance. Exciting incidents occurred, many of them, such as the Americans who took refuge in the attic and basement of a saloon which German Infantrymen entered. Those in the attic were captured and carried off while those in the basement returned to relate the close shave that had been theirs.

Despite all this confusion, we did capture many prisoners before the Germans escaped across the Po. Our casualties were light. Straggling Germans who entered the town on April 27th were quickly made prisoners, the total bag at Caorso being 659.

The fight for the control of Highway 9 and the area south of the River Po had been won. The three German Divisions, and more had been captured or neutralized. The time had come to leave the policing of the conquered area to the Brazilians. The Division was needed elsewhere.



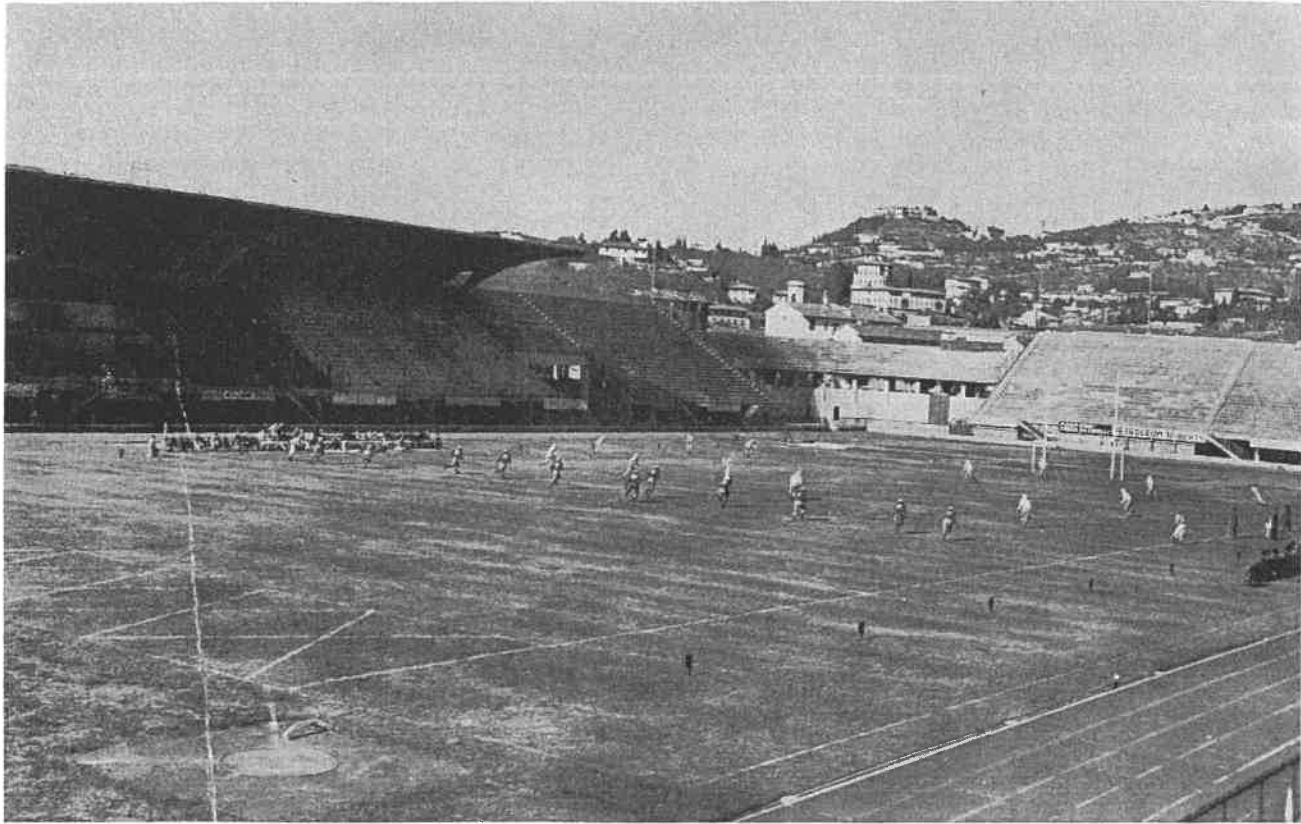
Campus of the Army Training Command, the G.I. University in Florence, 1945. Over 13,000 G.I.'s attended this school.



Fifth Army's Frank Duel (24) goes through the line in the first quarter of the Spaghetti Bowl game between the Fifth Army and the 12th Air Force teams in Florence, Italy, January 1, 1945.



Col. John L. Forsythe, Division Chief of Staff. Picture taken in Italy just before break through to the Po Valley.



University Training Center versus the 228th Ordnance at the opening football game at the Spaghetti Bowl in Florence, Italy, September 30, 1945.

## THE FINAL WHIRLWIND DRIVE OF THE OLD RED BULL

Fifth Army has called our thrust up the Po Valley one of the boldest of the entire Campaign. Units of the Division were now stretched out for over 75 miles along and adjacent to Highway 9, from Modena to Piacenza.

On the evening of April 28th, General Bolte received orders to move the entire Division quickly northward across the Po to aid in sealing the Alpine passes. The movement started that night. Every conceivable vehicle available was pressed into service, and motorized convoys moved into assembly areas on the evening of the 28th with men perched on fenders, hoods and hanging to the sides. Rain began to fall but not so as to dampen the spirits of men who sensed the end was near.

The 135th Combat Team under the command of Colonel John M. Breit moved back to Modena where it swung north on Highway 12 turning west at Poggio Rusco to San Benedetto where it crossed the Po on a pontoon bridge. Orders switched the direction of march on several occasions, the objective being changed from Mantova to Bergamo and finally to Brescia, an important manufacturing center located near beautiful Lake Garda. The Regiment rolled into Brescia on the evening of April 29th, having moved approximately 250 miles. That same night, orders

were received directing the Division to move westward towards Milano in preparation for an attack against this most highly industrialized city in all of Italy.

Leaving all supplies and impedimenta in the vicinity of Fidenza, the 168th and 133rd Combat Teams started their movement on the evening of April 28th, back-tracking to Modena and following much the same course as that taken by the 135th, and arriving at Brescia on the evening of the 29th day of April.

This colossal, rapid movement had taxed the highways and facilities to the utmost. Only the experience of veteran officers and men avoided serious tie-ups. This was blitzkrieg which amazed and confounded an enemy who considered himself the originator of lightning warfare.

Patrols and road blocks were now set up on the Autostrada leading to Milano. News came back that the Partisans had liberated the city. News, too, came back of the assassination of Mussolini and the awful display of his and other Fascist bodies on the streets of Milano. And now, by strange coincidence the city which gave birth to Fascism had come to serve as a tomb for the interment of that strange totalitarian venture.

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Prisoners continued to pour in from all directions, some surrendering to our units, some brought in by Partisans and some coming in under their own power and command. It was an amazing spectacle, colorful and exciting. The Whermacht in Italy had reached the end of the trail, and again, as in North Africa, men of the 34th herded prisoners into compounds, but now, these were prisoners whose demeanor reflected defeat, despair and utter hopeless consternation.

## THE 34TH U. S. INFANTRY DIVISION CAPTURES THE 34TH GERMAN INFANTRY DIVISION

To Colonel Breit's 135th was assigned the task of processing all prisoners. Escape channels through France and Austria having been severed, the German 75th Corps commenced a mass surrender. The grand finale was at hand: enemy troops poured in from all directions, laying down their arms and proceeding by orderly march on foot or convoy into our hastily devised prisoner of war compounds.

Among those enemy troops, and surrendering as a unit to the Red Bull, was the German 34th Infantry Division. This remarkable coincidence was commemorated by a memorandum distributed to the troops by General Bolte, which bore the symbols of each Division and which read as follows:

"On the evening of the 28th of April 1945, I received the following order from General Crittenger, Commanding IV Corps:

1.. 'Move one regimental combat team to the north side of the Po River without delay.

2. 'Upon relief by the 1st Infantry Division, B.E.F., reinforce regimental combat team with remainder of Division.

3. 'Advance to the west in new zone, cut off and destroy any enemy therein.'

"With this brief and concise order, reinforced by some verbal information as to the possible location of enemy elements, the orders for the movement were issued.

"The Division was stretched from Modena to Piacenza, a distance of 75 miles. Quickly and smoothly it moved across the Po, and advanced again toward the northwest. In three days it was in position to attack on the right of and in conjunction with the 1st A. D. (US) and destroy the LXXV German Corps in the vicinity of Biella. In this short period of time, the Division back tracked 75 miles, crossed the Po River and advanced 175 miles to northwest Italy.

"The LXXV German Corps Commander surrendered to our force on 1 May, 1945. It was an odd coincidence that our last victory in Italy included the complete surrender of the German 34th Division as part of the LXXV Corps to the American 34th Division. It marked a high point in the outstanding history of our Division.

The attached reproduction of the insignia of the 34th German Division, is your souvenir of the final campaign. My congratulations."

With Milano fallen, the Division was assigned the task of capturing the German 75th Corps to the west. So, on the 29th and 30th, the troops moved westward on the Autostrada: the 135th Combat Team moving to the vicinity of Gallarate, some of its units reaching the Swiss border; the 133rd Combat Team moved generally into an area centering around Busto Garolfo; and the 168th moved in and beyond Novara.

On the 2nd day of May, news of the formal surrender of the Germans in Italy reached the Division, but the prisoners continued to pour in. In this magnificent final sweep through the Valley of the Po, the 34th Infantry Division had captured or neutralized three divisions to the south of the Po Valley and had taken 40,000 prisoners in the drive toward Milano and beyond.

News of the capitulation of the Germans in Italy and their final surrender on V.E. Day, was received by our troops with a strange calm almost amounting to complacency. There was no shouting nor cheering, no demonstrations whatsoever. Perhaps this was because these battle-weary men had for many months foreseen that the enemy's collapse was inevitable. Perhaps too, they were sobered by a feeling that this awful war was not to end all wars. Certainly, one heard much talk of probable future wars. So, while there was a great sense of relief that the fighting was over, nevertheless, a peculiar atmosphere of depression seemed to pervade our troops.

### UNITY OF COMMAND

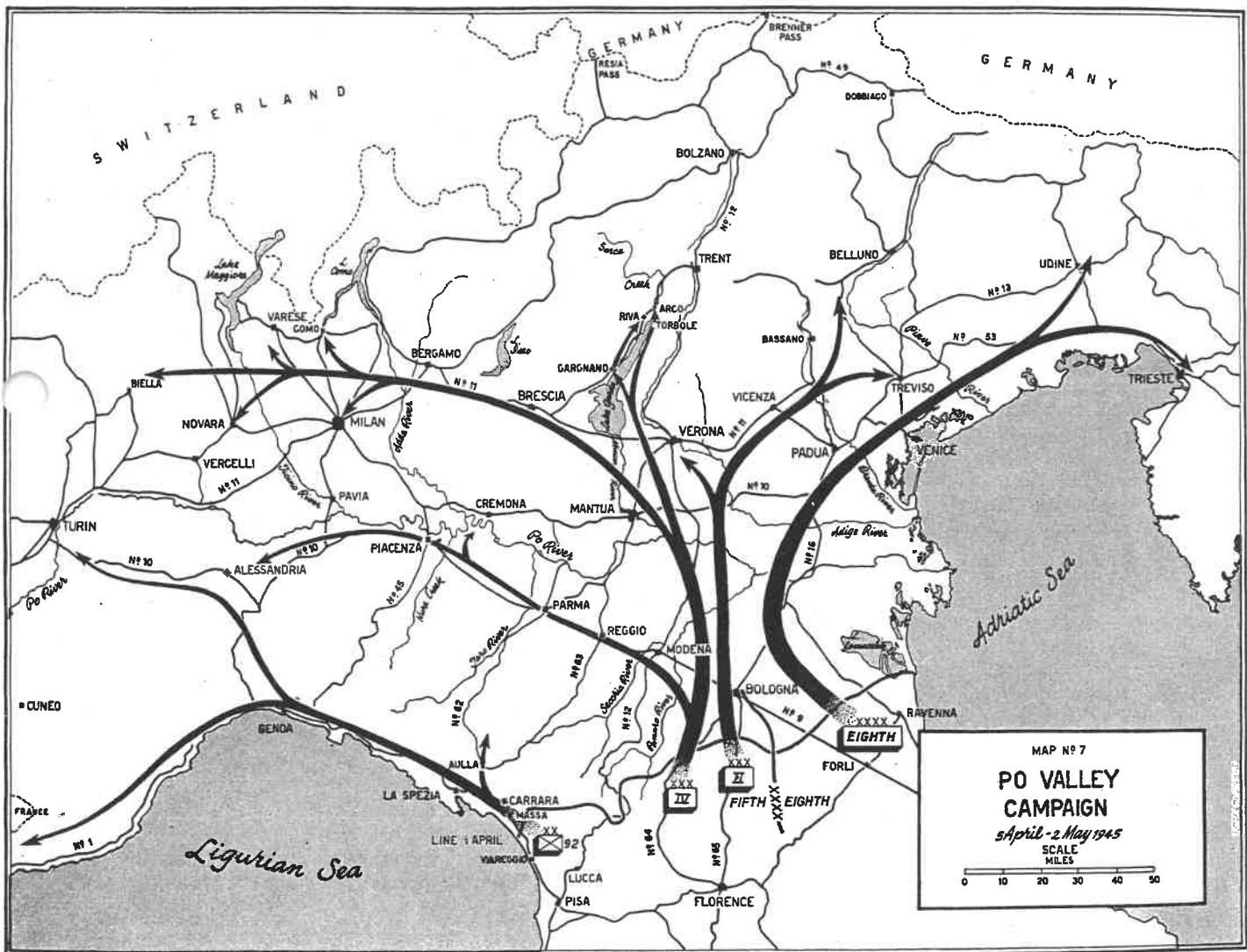
The unity in the Division Command which had been maintained throughout this highly diffused and furious battle-advance, stands among the greatest achievements of the amazing Campaign in the Valley of the Po. That General Bolte was able to hold tight to the reins of his numerous, scattered units under such a wild, fantastic foray, bespeaks the mastery of the planning by the General and his staff and the even greater mystery of its execution. In the Italian Campaign, General Bolte established himself firmly in the ranks of those great military tacticians that emerged from World War II. Perhaps more than that, he established himself with the rank and file of the Red Bull Division, not only as a dynamic leader of troops in combat, but as a compassionate, sincere and devoted friend to every worthy man and officer who ever fought under his command.

Major General Charles L. Bolte, stems from an austere New England heritage. The famous Endicott family on his maternal side claims him as its own. As a direct descendent of John Endicott, the Pilgrim Governor of early Colonial Massachusetts, General

Bolte surely inherited all the rigid Puritan precepts of discipline. Discipline in the 34th was General Bolte's forte and, it paid dividends; but, in the maelstrom of battle which tested the strength and the weakness of men, General Bolte, always demanding the utmost from everyone, characterized his command with fairness and understanding. His name will ever be tradition with the 34th Division.

Colonel John D. Forsythe, who came to the Division from the 36th, had succeeded General Braun

as Chief of Staff. As Chief of Staff, he not only maintained an amazing contact with all that was going on in an administrative way in all units of the Division, but his Staff work proved of inestimable value to General Bolte on tactical phases. Colonel Forsythe had a knowledge and understanding of reserve components gained through service with the Reserve Officers Corps at Louisiana State University. This stood him in good stead with the 34th.



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# THE DIVISION ARTILLERY

Throughout this Story, limited space has not permitted a detailed account of the outstanding work of the Division's Artillery. Almost every attack, and certainly every major engagement, was supported by as effective artillery fire as any infantry troops received during a war in which artillery reached its highest perfection and use. During the Po Valley phase, all artillery battalions moved with a swiftness that insured support wherever needed.

Division Artillery had been commanded by Bri-

adier General Albert C. Stantford from Ireland to Anzio, and by Brigadier General Foster J. Tate, the balance of the way. Colonel Fritz A. Peterson, served as Executive Officer under both. At the close of the Campaign, the 125th was under the command of Lt. Colonel Edwin Bodey, the 151st under Lt. Col. Robert D. Offer. Able men, all of these, as attested by their remarkable records of achievements.

## ENGINEERS, SIGNAL, ORDNANCE AND QUARTERMASTERS

The Po Valley Campaign tested the Division and Unit Engineers, Signal, Ordnance and Quartermaster troops to the very utmost: pontoons were laid with unbelievable speed; communication wires were strung out with record rapidity; enormous demands for vehicles and their maintenance, were met; and

the troops were fed and supplied as they spread with lightning speed over the Valley. At the close, the Division Signal Company maintained a daily message-run of over one thousand miles. No Division was served better, and few under such trying conditions.

## MEDICAL CORPS

Throughout this Story, occasional mention has been made of the service of our Medical Corps. Deeds of heroism and efficiency mark their work, over and over again. It is doubtful whether any units of the Division were ever placed to greater test and strain than were the Medics during the many crucial engagements of our Campaigns. None performed more creditably.

The 109th Medical Regiment was commanded during the Claiborne, Louisiana training days by

the very able and forceful Colonel Earl Bush. His removal, because of physical disability, was a real blow to the Division. Colonel Arthur Forte succeeded Colonel Bush and took the 109th Medical (then) Battalion to Ireland and through the Tunisian Campaign. Lt. Colonel Roger M. Minkel commanded the Battalion during most of the rugged Italian Campaign, going home with the Division in October 1945. A separate story should be written covering the contributions made by this famous Battalion.

## THE FRENCH BORDER

The Red Bull Division had reached the end of its long, brutal, bloody road—a road that stretched from Algiers, across the deserts and mountains of Tunisia, and from Salerno to the mighty Alps. But there were still other duties to be performed before the Division, which had been overseas longer than any other in the Army, could be returned home.

French troops, mostly Senegalese, had been moved into northwestern Italian territory. France coveted the Provinces of Tanda and Brida, areas

which contain minerals and highly developed water-power facilities. Colonel Breit established 135th Headquarters at San Remo and General Bolte distributed troops in strategic positions throughout the area. The situation was not comfortable but was soon resolved by diplomacy, the French withdrawing to await the results of negotiation.

During this period, men of the 34th enjoyed trips to Switzerland, San Carlo, and the French Riviera.

## THE YUGO-SLAV BORDER

In July, the Division was again moved. This time to Venezia Giulia on the Border of Jugoslavia. Division Headquarters was established at Cividale, Artillery Headquarters at Gorizia and other units were scattered from the great sea-port at Trieste, at Udine and up the main highways leading to the Austrian border. Again, and for the third time, the Division was assigned to duties which posed diplomatic implications, the other two being in Ireland and on the French border. The Yugoslavs resented our appearance on the scene, for they not only desired the disputed Istrian Peninsula but also that

part of Venezia-Giulia which contained a considerable number of her Nationals.

Life in Venezia-Giulia became a succession of rigid patrol duties. At Gorizia demonstrations were made against the Americans, while at Trieste, repeated clashes took place between Italians and Yugoslavi. Men of our patrols were shot and many disagreeable clashes and incidents with Tito's people took place.

To off-set this, men were accorded limited trips to Venice, Switzerland and the Italian Alps. A rest area had been provided for the troops at Lido di

Venezia, a long island lying athwart the entrance to the harbor of Venice. Here they basked in the sun on the broad sand beaches and found recreation in the "Grand Casino," a gorgeous gambling edifice from which now, of course, all roulette wheels, dice tables and other paraphernalia relating to games of chance, had been removed.

Venice, to be sure was an attraction: that strange and fascinating city with streets of water forever crowded with gondolas propelled by sweating, laughing, singing, cursing, quarreling gondoliers; Venice with its famous Piazza San Marco, the city square, on which stands the majestic Campanile, the palaces of the Kings and the Doges, the jewel-like Byzantine Cathedral, and the host of fluttering pigeons forever coaxing food from lazy, lounging idlers.

In Switzerland and Northern Italy, the soldiers beheld the wondrous beauties of mountains, valleys,

and lakes. Everywhere, enchanted valleys, rich in beauty of breath-taking panoramic sweeps, every scene backed by receding mountains, the more remote reaching their snow-capped ridges and peaks high into the bluest of blue skies. On the rich floors and rolling hills of these valleys, men now saw peaceful life thriving in apparent abundance; they saw life struggling up the sides of those mountains, saw it clinging desperately to the last fringes of vegetation, finally disappearing into sheer rock as if rebuffed by a resentful Nature. And set in the bosom of these mighty Alps, like crystal-blue bits of Heaven, lakes of incomparable beauty, bordered by colorful villas and vegetation. In Italy, the men visited Lago di Garda, Lago di Como and Lago Maggiore, so reminiscent of Lakes Banff, Louise, and Glacier in our own continent. These glorious views will linger long in the memory of the G.I.



# THE OLD RED BULL GOES HOME

We were going home. On 27, September, 1945, the Division commenced the long but happy trek away back to Naples and Bagnoli, a road distance of 800 miles. The 88th Division was now to take over the border assignment, many of our latest recruits remaining with the "Blue Devils." The assembly area near Naples was familiar: Collegio Ciano, the same college grounds where so many of our troops had quartered in early October, 1943. Then, the unknown and uncertain lay ahead; now, eager men knew their destiny was home. For them, no more long marches; no more mud, mules and mountains; no more night patrols; no more worries of Stukas and 88's, mines and booby-traps; no more weary nights on damp, cold ground, in snow, in caves, or pup tents; and no more hunting men with M-1's, tommy and machineguns—nor being hunted in return.

It was a proud Division that embarked for home, proud in the knowledge that its men had performed in the best American traditions; proud too, that more days of combat are accredited to the 34th than to any other Division of the Army. But there was an air of sad reflection in the minds and faces of the veterans as, in retrospect, they contemplated the many scenes that had unfolded during the past four years and nine months of their lives: comrades had fallen in the snows, on the deserts and in the poppy fields of Tunisia; wearers of the Red Bull Patch lay under rows of gleaming, white crosses along the many purple paths of Italy; and in hospitals and homes, were unnumbered comrades whose dreams, hopes and aspirations remained shattered forever.

The price of victory had come high to the 34th.

3,737 killed in action, 14,165 wounded and 3,460 missing in action, a total of 21,362 battle casualties. These figures were furnished by the Department of the Army, which advises that the compilation of the 34th Division casualty list is not yet final.

Embarking from Naples on October 22, 1945, the diminished Division, still under command of Major General Bolte, landed at Newport News, Virginia, proceeding immediately to Camp Patrick Henry, where the troops were mustered out on November 3, 1945.

And so, the 34th Infantry Division, covered with glory, had returned to the United States, as it had left: totally and completely without pomp or ceremony; no bands, no popular greeting, no public review nor speech-making. Public acclaim had been expended on troops which had returned earlier. We had left the shores of America in January 1942 under the greatest of secrecy; we became at times, a forgotten Division on a "forgotten front;" and now, we had returned home in almost total obscurity. But in the heart of every man who wore the Red Bull patch will forever glow a pride founded on the firm knowledge that the services of his Division in World War II, ranked second to none and that the name of the 34th Infantry Division will stand high on the scroll of honor among the greatest fighting units that ever carried the Stars and Stripes into battle. Yes, a pride too in the knowledge that the gallant Old Red Bull fought its battles and made its sacrifices to insure that Democracy shall ever remain a beacon for all freedom loving peoples of the World.

THE END

## Appendix I

Owing to the failure of some of the units of the Division to maintain a complete list of citations and awards, the names of men who received decorations cannot be appended to this book. However, in World War II, the Medal of Honor was awarded by the Congress of the United States to 292 persons, eleven of which went to men of the 34th Infantry Division:

Pvt. Robert D. Booker  
2nd Lt. Ernest H. Dervishian  
Capt. William W. Galt  
S. Sgt. George J. Hall  
Pfc. Sadao S. Munemori  
1st Lt. Beryl R. Newman  
Pfc. Leo J. Powers  
2nd Lt. Paul F. Riordan  
2nd Lt. Charles W. Shea  
Pvt. Furman L. Smith  
2nd Lt. Thomas W. Wigle

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- History of the Division Headquarters.
- History records of II Corps, IV Corps and VI Corps.
- Letters and information received from some 300 individuals.
- The complete records of the War Department and the Bureau of Records.
- Various monographs on North African and Italian Campaigns.
- Voluminous amount of newspaper clippings and magazine articles.

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