

CHAPTER III * * * * *

Opening the Campaign

A. *HOLDING THE LINE*

15-30 NOVEMBER

THE last two weeks of November were relatively quiet along the Fifth Army front while preparations were made to attack the Winter Line. So far as the infantry was concerned, the last half of November brought only position warfare. Our own and the enemy's lines remained static and were held as lightly as possible. Battalions were rotated to provide short periods of rest. Patrols, both large and small, constantly probed the enemy's defenses to gain information about the disposition of troops and the location of field fortifications, to intercept enemy patrols, and to cut communications wherever possible. Miserable weather reduced air activity to the minimum, and also complicated the problem of moving supplies forward to support the forthcoming attack.

1. *10 Corps on the Left Flank.* (See Map No. 1.) On 15 November the general line of the forward elements in 10 Corps followed the east bank of the Garigliano River from its mouth to Mount Camino, then curved east along the south slopes of this hill mass, and followed its eastern slopes to Caspoli, which lay on the boundary between VI and 10 Corps. The British had gained this line early in November, and desultory action thereafter had produced no further advance. On the night of 14 November the 56 Division had liquidated its attempt to drive up Mount Camino by pulling back the 201 Guards Brigade through the 169 Brigade, which took up covering positions to the southeast of the mountain. South of the 169 Brigade lay first the 168 Brigade and then the 23 Armoured Brigade. In the sector from Rongolisi to the sea no effort was made to hold the east bank of the Garigliano. The enemy maintained standing patrols at such points as the mouth of the river, the bridge on Highway 7 below Minturno, and other strategic points. His commanding observation from the hills west of the river made it unwise to garrison any part of the river plain in force, but patrols from both sides roamed through the area; and our scouts

occasionally made their way across the Garigliano to try out the enemy defenses on the north bank. Throughout the second half of November the bulk of 10 Corps rested and regrouped behind a screen of active patrolling.

2. *II Corps in the Center.* During this period of waiting the troop build-up of II Corps continued. As of 27 November the principal units were the 3d Division (reinforced), the 36th Division (reinforced), large forces of field artillery and tank destroyers, the 2626th Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade, and various Corps and service troops. The 1st Italian Motorized Group, attached to II Corps, moved from Maddaloni to Limatola, east of Capua, on 22 November. On the same day the 1st Special Service Force was attached to the 36th Division effective 23 November. The 36th Division began the relief of the 3d Division on 16 November, and took over the sector between Mount Cesima and Caspoli at 1200, 17 November. II Corps assumed command of this sector on 18 November while the 3d Division assembled in rest areas. The 142d Infantry held the Corps left flank in the vicinity of Caspoli; the 141st Infantry moved into the center at Mount Lungo; and the 143d Infantry took over Cannavinelle Hill.

In addition to the usual patrolling artillery duels continued day and night. Both our own and enemy artillery fired numerous harassing missions and each side engaged in counterbattery fires. Having the advantage of observation posts overlooking our positions, German forward observers were able to direct effective concentrations upon our front lines, command posts, bivouac areas, and roads. The 36th Division Artillery, reinforced by seven battalions of Corps artillery, fired nearly 95,000 rounds during the last two weeks of November. Our 8-inch howitzers made their first combat appearance in November, with 58 rounds being fired by the 194th and the 995th Field Artillery Battalions. Enemy artillery fire was also heavier than usual. An estimated eight battalions, ranging in type from the Nebelwerfer to 170-mm guns, poured concentrations of counterbattery and harassing fires into positions occupied by II Corps. This fire held our men close to their water-filled foxholes and restricted movement during daylight. At night litter bearers carried on the exhausting task of evacuating casualties, the walking wounded made their way to aid stations, and communications personnel continued their endless repairing of field lines broken by enemy shell fire and our own vehicles.

3. *VI Corps on the Right Flank.* By the middle of November elements of VI Corps had driven into the mountains at the head of the Volturno River. On the left we held the vital heights above Venafro which commanded all the upper Volturno Valley together with Highway 85, the main supply route to the area. The Corps front ran from the hard-won positions on the crests of Mount Corno and Mount Santa Croce along the hills just west of Pozzilli and Filignano,

then crossed the road north of the latter hamlet, and followed the heights east of the Filignano road to Hill 1017. The line reached by VI Corps marked an important dent in the forward defenses of the German Winter Line, for the enemy had planned to hold the hills above Venafro and east of Filignano. On 15 November VI Corps went on the defensive in accordance with Army orders, and the weary troops dug in to secure their gains and to obtain a brief rest.

For the next two weeks activity on the front of VI Corps was very limited. Each day artillery shells and the rain came down regularly; patrols went out; and most of the time was spent in keeping dry, warm, and fed. The enemy likewise was content to remain quiet, except on Mount Corno. Here companies of the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment launched attacks for three straight days, 23-25 November, to regain their observation over the Volturno Valley; but the 1st Ranger Battalion together with the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion held tenaciously to their positions. Additional support from the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry, turned the tide and enemy activity subsided.

While the infantry crouched in foxholes on the rocky slopes, the artillery in the muddy flats behind them engaged in counterbattery fire with the enemy artillery, which became much more active and accurate. Our own artillery operated under the most unfavorable of conditions. Sunk in the mud, its guns could be shifted only by being winched out; to clear the masks presented by the mountains looming dead ahead, barrels had to be elevated and new range tables improvised on the spot.

4. *Air Activity.* Unfavorable weather severely restricted air activity during the period 15-28 November. Zero visibility, sodden runways, and frequent rains caused all flights to be cancelled on eight of these days except for a few reconnaissance and defensive fighter missions. Bad weather on the east coast occasionally grounded the medium and light bombers, based on Foggia for the most part, while the sun was shining over targets on the west coast.

The mountainous character of the terrain, combined with bad weather, made low flying dangerous and increased the difficulties of orientation for a pilot suddenly breaking out of the clouds. Targets suitable for aerial attack were comparatively few in the mountains. Enemy installations were scattered; lines of communication followed narrow, twisting roads and trails; artillery and supply areas were easily camouflaged. The targets which did exist could be damaged only by extremely accurate bombing; near misses could cause little damage where a ridge or hilltop lay between the target and the bomb burst. Close support missions were particularly difficult in view of the ground haze and the lack of clear landmarks in the mountains. Several regrettable errors

occurred in which our own troops suffered casualties from planes attempting to bomb the enemy.

Targets on the days when our planes could take the air consisted of bridges in the Liri Valley, enemy artillery concentrations in the San Vittore (48 sorties) and Sant'Ambrogio (36 sorties) areas, and the mountain towns in front of VI Corps. It proved difficult for our planes to hit the right town in this district. Twelve A-36's bound for Acquafondata hit San Vittore on 22 November and on the same day 12 P-40's hit Viticuso instead of Atina. On 24 November 12 P-40's set out for Concacasale only to report the weather too poor to locate either the enemy positions or our own krypton lights. Experiments with these lights, which were carried out during the period, did not prove very successful. During the month of December further attempts were made to aid the pilots in locating themselves by having the artillery fire colored smoke on the air targets. The smoke proved very successful at times but unavoidably warned the enemy that a raid was impending.

Enemy planes, likewise hampered by the weather, raided our front lines, artillery positions, command posts, and bridges. Formations of from 2 to 25 fighter-bombers took part in strafing and bombing attacks. There were a few raids on our rear areas. On 20 November an estimated total of 8 enemy planes raided a gasoline dump at the Aversa railhead and destroyed 6000 gallons of gasoline. On 26 November the Luftwaffe made its fourth raid of the month on Naples, but caused no military damage.

B. *PLANS FOR OPERATION RAINCOAT*

See Map No. 3

Rising to heights of more than 960 meters above sea level, the Camino hill mass is a formidable group of peaks and ridges which dominates a large portion of the Mignano Gap. Peccia Creek, flowing generally north past Mignano, swings northwest at the base of Mount Lungo, then turns sharply southwest to join the Garigliano. This river-made horseshoe, some six miles long and four miles wide, is almost entirely taken up by the Camino hills. The hill mass is composed essentially of three ridges running in various directions, which rise steeply on the east and northeast sides, then fall away gradually to the west toward the Garigliano. Mount Camino (Hill 963), crowned by a monastery, is the summit of the southernmost ridge, a rocky, north-south line with jagged cliffs and precipitous slopes. One mile to the north is the peak of Mount La Difensa (Hill 960)

on an equally high ridge which bends to the west and ends on Mount La Remetanea (Hill 907) less than a mile from Hill 960. North of the Remetanea-Difensa feature is the Vallevona Plateau with Hill 596 at its eastern end. Then to the northwest is the third ridge of Mount Maggiore, composed of Hills 619, 630, and 510. Third-class roads skirt the east and west sides of the entire mass, but the only access to the mountains themselves is by rough trails.

1. *Ground Plan.* In Operation Raincoat Fifth Army planned simultaneous attacks by two corps against the Camino hills. 10 Corps on the left was assigned the mission of capturing Mount Camino, after which it was to be prepared to move north to relieve II Corps on Mount La Difensa and Mount Maggiore. Both of these points were meanwhile to be captured by the left flank elements of II Corps. On the right flank of the Corps, from Mount Lungo to Cannavinelle Hill, our troops were to hold fast. Farther to the right, on the north flank of Fifth Army, VI Corps was to harass the enemy along the entire Corps front. Together these operations made up Phase I of our attack against the Winter Line and were planned to smash the southern part of the line, to pave the way for opening the Liri Valley, and to bring the enemy lateral supply road, running from Atina through Cassino and down to Minturno, under observation and artillery fire. To oppose these plans the enemy held the sector from Mount Camino to Mount Maggiore with the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division. Reinforcements could be brought from the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, which held from Mount Lungo to San Pietro, or from the Hermann Goering Panzer Division in the vicinity of Cassino on short notice.

In order to cover the movement of troops to assembly areas and to draw enemy forces from Mount Camino the 46 Division was ordered to capture Hill 360 west of the Calabritto feature during the night of 1-2 December. Then the 56 Division would attack the highest points of Mount Camino during the night of 2-3 December. If 10 Corps could succeed in this assault in the early hours of 3 December, the enemy would be deprived of the high ground overlooking our troops attacking Mounts La Difensa, La Remetanea, and Maggiore. II Corps was to attack at 0620, 3 December. The 142d Infantry prepared to drive along Ridge 368 west of Mignano, move over to the right to capture the adjoining ridge (Hill 370), and then advance northwest to capture Mount Maggiore. The 1st Special Service Force, composed of six battalions of highly trained Canadian and American troops, was also to march up Ridge 368 and capture Mount La Difensa (Hill 960).

2. *Air Support Plan.* XII Air Support Command planned extensive close support for 1-2 December in conjunction with the advance by Fifth Army. In addition to continuous fighter cover over the battle area throughout both days,

DECLASSIFIED

numerous bombing and strafing sorties were to be flown. Air support missions were divided into three classes: deception targets, ^{unclassified} line of communications targets, and concentration targets. The deception targets consisted of known gun and troop areas in the vicinity of San Pietro, Highway 6, San Vittore, Mount Trocchio, and Mount Lungo. The line of communications targets, which were to be attacked upon request of ground units, were the crossings of the Garigliano River west of Mount Maggiore and Mount Camino, Highway 6, railway bridges over the Rapido River south of Cassino, and the Liri River crossings as far as Pontecorvo. Concentration targets were enemy artillery, reserves, motor transport, and installations in the vicinity of Mount Trocchio and Mount Porchia. On 1 December 720 sorties were scheduled to drop nearly 400 tons of bombs on gun areas around Mount Trocchio, Sant'Ambrogio, San Vittore, Mount Porchia, the Atina-Colli road, and elsewhere. Activity was to increase on 2 December, with 816 sorties and a total weight of 502 tons being dropped in the area of Mount Camino, Mount Trocchio, Sant'Ambrogio, Mount Maggiore, Mount Porchia, and San Vittore. Most of the air activity was directed well to the northwest of the area where the main blow of Operation Raincoat would fall, and was part of the deceptive measures undertaken by Fifth Army. At the same time the air missions were planned to cause the maximum dislocation in the enemy's rear, to neutralize his long-range artillery, and to disrupt his lines of communication to the front.

3. *Artillery Support Plan.* The artillery plan was designed to give maximum support to the attacks of 10 and II Corps by the massing of fires of all available weapons on critical terrain features as well as in an extensive counterbattery program. In 10 Corps one light and one medium regiment of Corps artillery supported each division, with approximately the same force attached to the 23 Armoured Brigade for its feint on the lower Garigliano (1). The 2 Army Group Royal Artillery, with three British regiments and two American battalions, provided general support for the 46 and 56 Division (2).

A formidable concentration of artillery units supported II Corps, which was to make the main effort in the Winter Line campaign. The four battalions of artillery in the 36th Division were supplemented by the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion (3-inch guns). Three groupments of Corps artillery, totalling

(1) 46 Division: 142 Army Field Regiment RA; 5 Medium Regiment RA (-). 56 Division: 146 Army Field Regiment RA; 51 Medium Regiment RA. 23 Armoured Brigade: 24 Army Field Regiment RA; one troop, 5 Medium Regiment RA; 59th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (U.S.).

(2) 23 Army Field Regiment RA; 74 Medium Regiment RA; 56 Heavy Regiment RA; 935th Field Artillery Battalion (U.S.); 2d Battalion, 36th Field Artillery Regiment (U.S.). For weapons of these units, see Annex Number Five.

DECLASSIFIED

RESTRICTED - See attached to R-8723-H
 CONFIDENTIAL - MODIFIED HANDLING AUTHORIZED

DECLASSIFIED

14 battalions and 2 tank destroyer battalions, were available for direct and general support, as follows:

Groupment B *albi*

- 71st Field Artillery Brigade, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery
- 15th Field Artillery Observation Battalion
- 2d Field Artillery Observation Battalion
- 985th Field Artillery Battalion [155-mm Gun]
- 976th Field Artillery Battalion [155-mm Gun]
- 932d Field Artillery Battalion [155-mm Howitzer]
- 194th Field Artillery Group:
- 194th Field Artillery Battalion [8-inch Howitzer]
- 995th Field Artillery Battalion [8-inch Howitzer]

Groupment M *nyse*

- 18th Field Artillery Brigade, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery
- 936th Field Artillery Battalion [155-mm Howitzer]
- 937th Field Artillery Battalion [155-mm Howitzer]
- 77th Field Artillery Regiment [155-mm Howitzer]
- 805th Tank Destroyer Battalion [3-inch Gun]

Groupment D *Shago*

- 1st Armored Division Artillery:
- 27th Armored Field Artillery Battalion [105-mm Howitzer SP]
- 68th Armored Field Artillery Battalion [105-mm Howitzer SP]
- 91st Armored Field Artillery Battalion [105-mm Howitzer SP]
- 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion [3-inch Gun]
- 6th Armored Field Artillery Group (*attached*):
- 69th Armored Field Artillery Battalion [105-mm Howitzer SP]
- 93d Armored Field Artillery Battalion [105-mm Howitzer SP]

Missions were assigned to each groupment according to its positions and capabilities. Groupment B, with its 8-inch howitzers, was assigned the missions of long-range counterbattery, interdiction, and harassing and destruction fires on enemy fortifications. During the preparation for Operation Raincoat and the attack one battalion was to concentrate its fires exclusively on the San Pietro area. Groupment M was to reinforce the fires of the 36th Division Artillery, furnish close-in supporting and counterbattery fires, and interdiction. This

DECLASSIFIED

groupment was also to harass enemy reserve areas, observation and command posts, and to concentrate one battalion exclusively on the San Pietro flank during the preparation and attack. Groupment D was in direct support of the 36th Division Artillery. One-half of all pieces in each groupment were to be prepared to fire as far north as Mount Sammucro, and one-half in each groupment would be prepared to fire southwest as far as Mount Camino. All medium and heavy artillery would be able to fire from San Pietro to the junction of the Liri and Gari rivers. The mass of the artillery was emplaced along the general line Pre-senzano-Mount Friello and on to the southeast. Protecting the right flank of II Corps, the 133d Field Artillery Battalion was emplaced in the VI Corps area.

C. THE PREPARATIONS BEGIN

1. *Deceptive Measures.* The feint against the enemy's extreme right flank on the lower Garigliano had highly satisfactory results. On 24 and 27 November and again on 1 December H.M.S. *Orion* and four destroyers bombarded the coast-line between Minturno and Gaeta. Air bombing and the movement of LCI's and LCT's close inshore near the mouth of the river on 30 November further indicated a landing attempt in force. During the night of 30 November-1 December the 23 Armoured Brigade delivered heavy fire on enemy locations west of the river. The enemy reaction indicated that the ruse succeeded, for on 1 December the Germans brought heavy artillery fire on the brigade and a steady flow of vehicles crossed the Garigliano bridge above Sant'Ambrogio going south toward the threatened zone. To aid in the deception a battle patrol from the 2/4 King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry tried to cross the river during the night of 1-2 December. The strength of the opposition encountered was further proof that the enemy's attention had been drawn to the lower Garigliano. Other measures, such as the construction of dummy gun positions and the use of roving artillery to fire from these positions, aided in the deception.

In front of VI Corps and on the right flank of II Corps there was a daily increase in patrolling and in aggressive activity beginning on 26 November. Division and corps artillery fired numerous concentrations from San Pietro to San Vittore. Smoke was used daily on Mount Lungo; and when the weather permitted, XII Air Support Command bombed targets in the San Pietro-San Vittore area. A reconnaissance in force against San Pietro was carried out by the 3d Ranger Battalion during the night of 29-30 November, heavily supported by the 133d Field Artillery Battalion. The enemy reacted to this reconnaissance

DECLASSIFIED

Restricted - Sec
LTR H/Ch To R-8723-A

DECLASSIFIED

by increasing his artillery and mortar fire against our positions on Mount Lungo and Mount Rotondo, and a strong combat patrol attacked the 141st Infantry on the southeastern tip of the former hill during the night of 1-2 December.

2. *Air Preparation.* The prevalence of unfavorable weather interfered with plans for the air preparation to precede Operation Raincoat. Nevertheless, most of the sorties were flown. On 26 November 36 planes bombed the enemy on the Cocuruzzo spur west of Mount Camino, and on the next 2 days 24 P-40's worked over the Vallevona Plateau on Mount Maggiore. On 26 November 24 B-26's dropped 38 tons of bombs on Cassino. Because of bad weather there was no air support on 29-30 November to aid the preliminary attacks by VI Corps on the north flank, but on 1-2 December XII Air Support Command reached its high point of the month in preparation for attacks by II and 10 Corps. Rain cancelled the flights scheduled for the morning of 1 December, but during the afternoon sorties were executed for a total of 72 B-25's, 24 A-20's, 130 A-36's, and 48 P-40's. Included among the targets were enemy infantry and supply dumps on the crest and reverse slopes of the Cocuruzzo spur. On 2 December our planes droned over the target areas 0715-1600 and flew a total of 612 sorties. In addition to hitting targets in the Mount Camino, Mount Maggiore, Mount Porchia, and Mount Trocchio areas the air force attacked Sant'Ambrogio, San Vittore, Viticuso, and the Atina-Colli road.

The success of this air attack is difficult to estimate. Enemy prisoners of war agreed that there were even fewer casualties from the air attacks on infantry positions than by the artillery concentrations. Ground observers indicate that the fighter-bombers were more accurate on 2 December than on the 1st, though the aircraft did not plaster Monastery Hill (the highest point on Mount Camino) and the south part of the Camino hill mass as sufficiently as desired. On 2 December, also, the medium bombers hit too far to the east in their attack on the Sant'Ambrogio gun positions. In the mountains location of targets again proved difficult, and one flight of P-40's hit Concacasale instead of Viticuso. On the credit side may be placed a report that an attack by eight A-36's silenced the enemy guns on Mount Maggiore at 1430, 2 December, and the general weakness of enemy artillery fire during our infantry attack is undoubtedly the result of the combined concentration of air and artillery on enemy gun positions. One attack on rear lines of communication on Highway 7 west of Minturno by 12 A-36's on 1 December was reported by the air force to have produced 2 direct hits on the road.

3. *Artillery Preparation.* The tempo of normal firing increased during the first two days of December, partly in answer to the enemy's extensive counter-battery fires. Then, preceding the infantry attack, came the heaviest concen-

trations of artillery fired thus far in the Italian campaign. Starting at 1630, 2 December, 925 pieces of all calibers poured ton after ton of high explosive, white phosphorus, and smoke shells into the enemy's positions. The rumble and roar of the guns echoed from mountain to mountain, and the noise of exploding shells reverberated until the ground trembled.

Against Mount Camino alone 820 pieces, ranging from 3-inch guns to 8-inch howitzers, fired "some of the most powerful and intense concentrations ever produced in battle on a small area." In the one-hour "Serenade" 1630-1730, 2 December, the 346 pieces in II Corps expended 22,508 rounds, an average of 65 rounds per piece. (*See Annex No. 3D.*) The same number of pieces fired 64,068 rounds in the 24-hour period ending at 1630, 3 December, an average of 185 rounds per piece and a total of 1,481 tons. At the end of 48 hours the II Corps artillery had fired 73,746 rounds, an average of 214 rounds per piece. During this firing the 24 8-inch howitzers, used for the first time on an extensive scale, fired 2,208 rounds and performed in a highly satisfactory manner.

Artillery in 10 Corps was even more active, though firing a smaller tonnage than that of II Corps. In the 24-hour period starting at 1730, 2 December, 303 pieces fired 89,883 rounds, an average of 296 rounds per piece. Of this total 75,817 rounds were fired by 25-pounders. At the end of 48 hours the 10 Corps artillery had fired 111,568 rounds, an average of 368 rounds per piece and a total of 1,710 tons. On the VI Corps front there was considerably less activity. In the "Serenade" on 2 December, 44 pieces participated and fired 911 rounds. During the next 48 hours 288 pieces fired 18,586 rounds.

The effect of this massed artillery fire on the enemy is uncertain. Prisoners of war stated that the shelling prevented reinforcements from coming up and that "all communication to the rear was interrupted for two days." Some prisoners reported heavy casualties, while others, well protected in caves and deep dugouts, escaped with little inconvenience other than the loss of sleep. Infantry commanders who led the attack on Mount Maggiore agreed that artillery support in repelling counterattacks was far more valuable than the preparation; but Brigadier P. G. Calvert Jones, commanding the 56 Division Royal Artillery, stated the shooting on Mount Camino "was successful and accurate."

D. CAPTURE OF THE CAMINO HILL MASS

1-9 DECEMBER

1. *10 Corps on the Left Flank.* (*See Map No. 3.*) The 46 Division led off the attack for 10 Corps at dusk on 1 December. The line of departure lay ap-

proximately one mile southeast of Hill 360 and the hamlet of Calabritto. In working toward these objectives the two assault battalions ran into considerable resistance in the form of minefields, wire, and machine-gun fire. Before dawn the leading elements were through the engineer obstacles and had eliminated the forward machine guns. Joined by two troops of the 40 Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment, the 46 Division resumed the attack at 0600, 2 December. While tanks shelled the stone houses used by the enemy, the infantry pushed forward to within 200 yards of Hill 360 and Calabritto. No further progress was made until after dark, when reserves were brought forward and advanced on the left in a slight gain.

Although the 46 Division had not completed its mission, the attack of the 56 Division against Mount Camino jumped off as scheduled during the night of 2-3 December. On the left flank of the division the 167 Brigade attacked up the ridge leading to Hills 727 and 819, while the 169 Brigade on the right undertook the extremely difficult assault against Hill 963. Leading elements of both brigades made excellent progress during the night. The 8 and 9 Royal Fusiliers of the 167 Brigade took Hill 727, attacked Hill 819 at 0530, 3 December, and captured their objective about four hours later. During this operation 80 prisoners were taken from the 104th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and the Reconnaissance Battalion of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division.

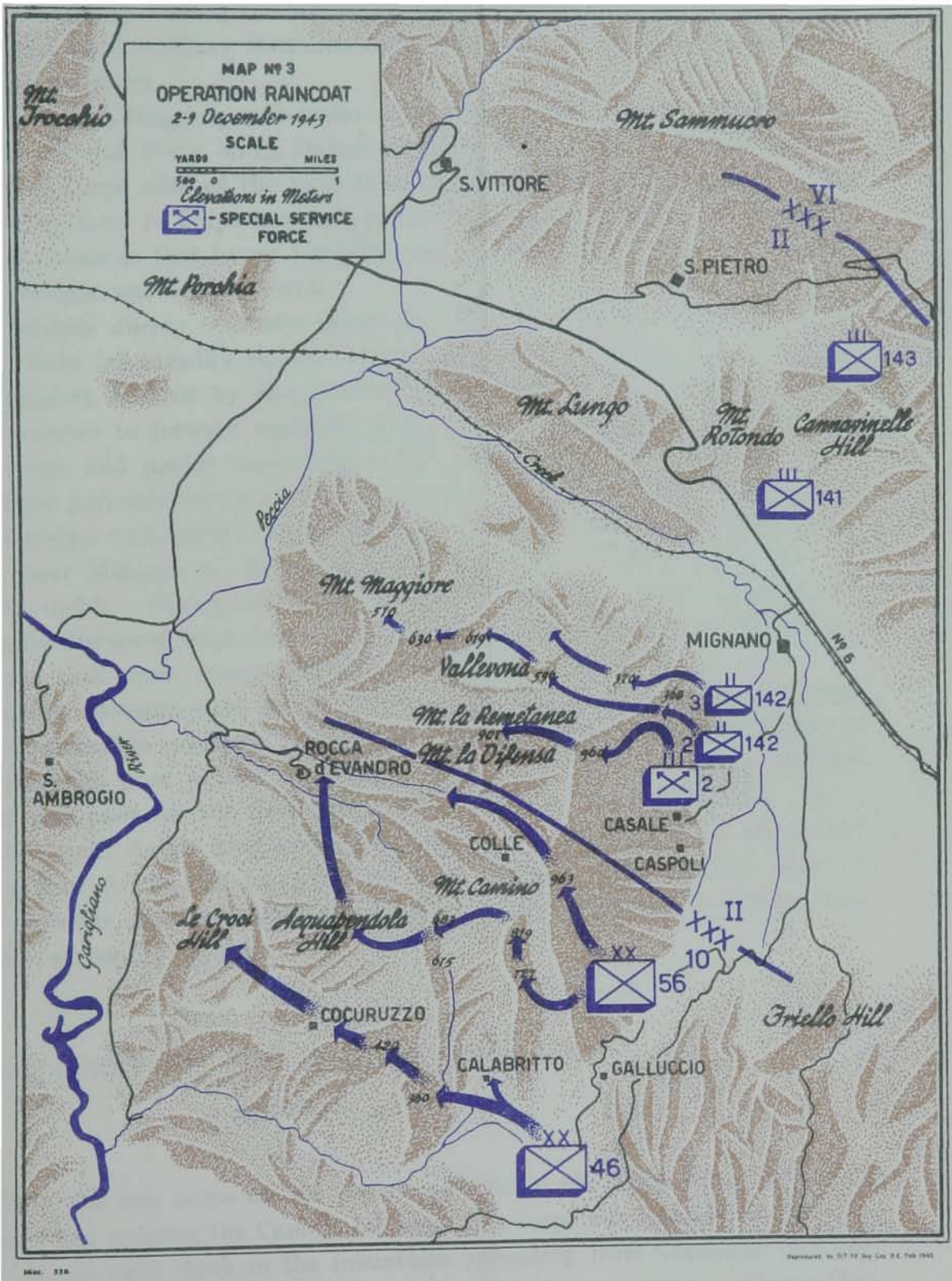
On the right the 2/5 Queens of the 169 Brigade reached the monastery on Hill 963 by the morning of 3 December. Heavy fire from nearby rocky slopes forced the battalion to fall back. At 1000, 4 December, the battalion attacked again and was repulsed. One company occupied the monastery during the next day but was forced out by a counterattack. Meanwhile other units of the 56 Division had made considerable progress on the left. The 3 Coldstream Guards (201 Guards Brigade) had followed the 167 Brigade up the ridge toward Hill 819 and on 4 December swept westward to take two more hills (683 and 615). On 5 December the 1 London Irish Rifles (168 Brigade) moved up to threaten Colle, west of Hill 963. These maneuvers caused the enemy to give up Hill 963, and by 1830, 6 December, the 2/5 Queens occupied the crest of Mount Camino.

The 201 Guards Brigade continued its westward progress on 6 December and captured Acquapendola Hill. On its left units of the 46 Division paralleled this advance by capturing Hills 360 and 420, thus gaining control of the Calabritto feature. After these victories on 6 December 10 Corps proceeded to mop up the western slopes of the Camino hills to the Garigliano. The village of Cocuruzzo, a mile south of Acquapendola Hill, fell to the 139 Brigade on 7 December, and Le Croci Hill was taken by the 138 Brigade. The Guards pushed on from Acquapendola to attack the town of Rocca d'Evandro. Here the enemy

fought a strong delaying action until 9 December when the Guards, aided by a diversion from the 1 London Scots, captured the town after a bitter fight. In its operations during the first nine days of December 10 Corps had captured two-thirds of the Camino hill mass.

2. *II Corps in the Center.* While 10 Corps was making the main effort against Mount Camino, units of II Corps moved out to attack the northern part of the Camino hill mass. The 1st Special Service Force, commanded by Col. Robert T. Frederick, advanced against Mount La Difensa (Hill 960) after dark on 2 December. This attack was spearheaded by the 2d Regiment, which marched north from the vicinity of Casale across the lower slopes of La Difensa to Ridge 368 and then turned southwest to climb up to Hill 960. Striking swiftly over extremely rough terrain, the 2d Regiment drove the enemy from La Difensa before dawn on 3 December and carried on to Mount La Remetanea (Hill 907). On the next day the inevitable German counterattack compelled the Force to pull back to a defensive position on Hill 960. The 1st Battalion, 3d Regiment, held back as Force reserve, was so badly hurt by enemy artillery that it could not move out according to plan. A cold rain fell constantly during the day, limiting visibility and increasing the difficulty of supply and evacuation. An enemy counterattack in battalion strength struck at Hill 960 before dawn on 5 December but was repulsed with heavy losses. The 1st Regiment was moved up to reinforce the 2d Regiment, and during the next three days the Force cleared enemy troops from the Remetanea–Difensa area. Organized resistance ceased by 1510, 8 December, when Hill 907 was recaptured.

The task of clearing Mount Maggiore, a series of peaks paralleling the valley of Peccia Creek, fell to the 142d Regimental Combat Team, commanded by Col. George E. Lynch. The Difensa–Remetanea ridge dominates the Maggiore ridge and its capture by the 1st Special Service Force was essential for the security of troops on hills to the north. After the 1st Special Service Force had passed by on Ridge 368, the 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, left its assembly area south of Mignano and crossed the ridge at 0300, 3 December, moving northwest. The artillery smoked Mount Lungo to mask the movements of the 142d Infantry on Maggiore. The leading elements overcame initial resistance on Hill 370 and a knoll to the northwest. The 2d Battalion followed the 3d Battalion up Ridge 368 by an hour and swung northwest to attack Hill 596 overlooking the Vallevona Plateau. This position fell at 1030, and the attack continued around the northeastern rim of the plateau against Hills 619 and 630, which form the main mass of Mount Maggiore. These last two dominating heights were taken by 1700, and the victorious troops organized for defense while the 1st Battalion mopped up pockets of resistance. The enemy made several at-



tempts to recover the lost ground during the night of 5-6 December and through the next two days. During the last counterattack against Hill 630 on 7 December the 132d Field Artillery Battalion fired 338 rounds in 10 minutes and killed nearly 100 Germans.

After Mount Maggiore was under control, the 142d Infantry relieved the 1st Special Service Force on La Difensa on 8 December. Then on 10 December a unit of 10 Corps relieved the 142d Infantry on La Difensa and on Hill 630 on the following day. 10 Corps now held the entire Camino complex and proceeded to shift divisions so that by 17 December the 46 Division was on the north and the 56 Division was on the south.

3. *Supply during Operation Raincoat.* This operation was very properly named. Rain fell steadily on 2-4 December and greatly increased the danger and discomfort suffered by troops of 10 and 11 Corps. There was no way of getting supplies to forward positions except by packing them laboriously over rough, steep, and muddy trails constantly under enemy fire. Two companies of the 141st Infantry and half of the 142d Infantry were required to carry supplies for troops on La Difensa and Maggiore. The round trip of three miles from a point near Mignano to Mount Maggiore consumed 12 hours over trails too steep for mules. During all of the period 1-9 December enemy artillery fire continually disrupted field lines in both corps and imposed a most difficult and hazardous task upon communication personnel.

Several attempts were made to drop rations by plane to troops in these almost inaccessible positions. Six A-36's dropped supplies on 5 December at Vallevona with poor results. Ten A-36's tried again on 6 December, but the weather was poor for the first flight and the others were unsuccessful. On 7 December eight A-36's dropped two bundles on Vallevona Plateau, but a later flight of four A-36's was hampered by bad weather. Poor visibility, poor recovery grounds, and proximity to enemy positions combined to defeat these attempts at supply by air.

E. VI CORPS ON THE RIGHT FLANK

29 NOVEMBER - 9 DECEMBER

While the two corps on the center and left of the Fifth Army front were attacking and winning the Camino hill mass, VI Corps was engaged in harassing action on the right flank in the mountains extending from Ceppagna to Castel San Vincenzo. (*See Map No. 4.*) The peaks and ridges centering in Mount Marc

(Hill 2021) and Mount Marrone (Hill 1770) discouraged any large-scale push on our extreme right flank, just as the steep slopes of Mount Corno and Mount Santa Croce hampered activity on the left flank of VI Corps. Our attacks, accordingly, were focussed on the center of the zone, for if VI Corps could drive through and so outflank the German positions near Cassino it would materially assist the advance of Fifth Army.

The two roads already mentioned, which lead from Filignano to Sant'Elia and from Colli to Atina, were the only natural avenues of approach in the center of the VI Corps zone. Both roads are narrow and tortuous, and both are dominated everywhere by the hills. South of the Colli-Atina road the highest ground lies along the line Mount Monna Casale-Mount Majo, both of which are more than 1200 meters in elevation. Ridges in tangled disorder run down from these mountains to the east into such hills as Mount Pantano and Hill 769. These scrub-covered swells appear from a distance to have an even slope, but closer acquaintance reveals rocky ravines and difficult ascents, where cover is scant and communication difficult.

Before the 34th Division on the Corps right flank lay elements of the 305th Grenadier Division, extending south along the Marrone ridge across Chiaro Creek and down to Pantano. On the left flank, in the 45th Division zone, lay a complex hill pattern which gave the defenders every advantage. Just west of the Filignano road the enemy had organized for defense on a series of hills extending more than three miles south of Mount Pantano. The weakest position seemed to be on Hill 769, less than a mile and a half southwest of Filignano. However, enemy defenses were so interlocked that the capture of Hill 769 involved operations against several other hills and ridges, all of which were commanded in turn by Mount della Battuta and Mount Monna Casale. This area, which had previously been defended by the 26th Panzer Division, was in the hands of the 44th Grenadier Division from the end of November.

1. *Plan of Attack.* The mission of VI Corps remained the same throughout the attack on the Winter Line: to advance on the two roads to Atina and Sant'Elia. The first moves to carry out this mission, which were secondary attacks preceding and accompanying the main push on the south against the Camino hill mass, were intended to draw enemy reserves into the area and thus prevent reinforcements from moving into the Camino sector. These attacks were expected to capture limited objectives in preparation for later assaults. VI Corps was to launch its drive four days before Operation Raincoat got under way.

The 34th Division was to make the main thrust astride the Colli-Atina road with the 133d Regimental Combat Team driving west. The 168th Regimental Combat Team was to capture Mount Pantano, while the 135th Regi-



Infantrymen above Venafro..... painted by Technical Sergeant Savo Radulovic

mental Combat Team supported its attack by directing mortar and machine-gun fire on Hill 760 just north of Pantano. Division artillery, except for the 175th Field Artillery Battalion, displaced forward to positions in the vicinity of Scapoli to support the operation. On the left flank the 45th Division was to open a portion of the Filignano-Sant'Elia road and to assist the 168th Infantry attack on Mount Pantano. To carry out the latter mission one battalion of the 179th Infantry was to make its effort against the hamlet of Lagone and northwest to Hill 855. One company of the 2d Battalion was to attack Hill 640 southwest of Hill 769, while one company of the 157th Infantry was to capture Hills 470 and 460 south of the Sant'Elia road.

2. *Attack of the 34th Division.* During the night of 24-25 November the 133d Infantry relieved the 504th Parachute Infantry on the right flank of the division. By 29 November the 100th Battalion (serving as the 2d Battalion, 133d Infantry) had pushed forward to a line about one mile east of Cerasuolo. At 0600, 29 November, the regiment advanced astride the Colli-Atina road toward Cerasuolo but could make little progress. Enemy artillery fire forced the 125th Field Artillery Battalion to abandon its positions near Scapoli. North of the road the 3d Battalion captured Hill 1180 on the south slopes of Mount Marrone on 3 December.

The most desperate fighting occurred on Mount Pantano, the dominating feature of the area, which could not be outflanked. Moving out during the night of 28-29 November, the 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry, captured one knob of Pantano before dawn; but the enemy, aided by minefields and concealed mortar positions, held the other three knobs. Several vicious counterattacks struck hard at our troops but failed to drive them back. On 30 November the 1st Battalion suffered heavy casualties in an effort to continue the advance, and was again subjected to repeated counterattacks. The 3d Battalion moved up on 1 December, but poor visibility postponed its attack until 2 December when it captured a second knob. An enemy counterattack recovered the position; then the 3d Battalion took it again. On 3 December the battalion attempted to capture more of the summit but was repulsed with heavy casualties. Reinforced with fresh troops, the enemy won back all of Pantano except one knob. Efforts of the 179th Infantry to capture Hill 855 on the left were also beaten back with heavy losses to our infantry.

During the afternoon of 4 December the 135th Infantry relieved the 168th Infantry on Pantano and the 34th Division attack came to a halt. Its efforts had been costly; an advance of little more than a mile produced 777 casualties. On 8 December the 2d Moroccan Division—the first French unit to enter the Italian campaign—began to relieve the 34th Division. General Dody assumed

command of the north half of the VI Corps zone on 10 December, and a fresh division trained in mountain fighting was ready to renew the push along the road toward Atina.

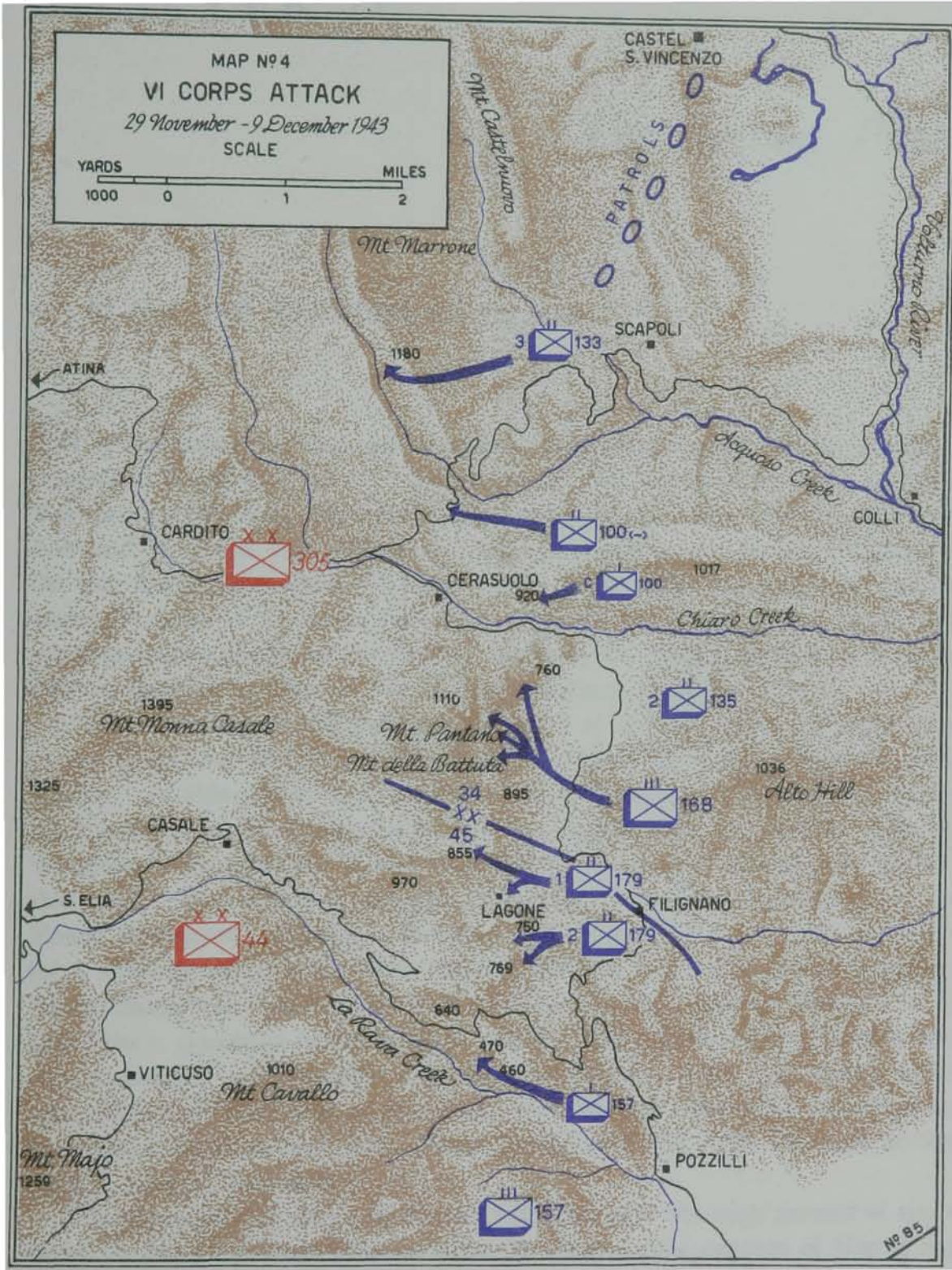
3. *The Battle of Hill 769.* The attack of the 45th Division on the left resolved itself into a struggle for Hill 769. This forward buttress of the Monna Casale system is somewhat isolated from the hills behind it and consists of a barren plateau with a knoll at either end. Minor knobs dot its eastern edges; Hill 750 lies just to the north. When the attack began on 29 November, our troops held the forward slopes of Hill 769; to capture the rest of the position it was necessary to clear the enemy from the hills and draws on either side. Every attempt to do so failed during the first two days since fire from well prepared positions on Hill 769 and the hills on either side stopped the advance on each flank.

The Germans relied on their usual tactics of holding the reverse slopes with automatic weapons forward and riflemen to the rear to protect the machine guns. Well protected in rock dugouts which merged with the rock walls of the hillsides, the enemy waited in comparative safety through our preparatory fires and then rushed out to meet our infantry attack. To confuse us he shifted positions frequently; and any local gain on our part could expect a quick enemy counterattack along the sunken trails of the district, which offered the Germans access with complete surprise. The advantages of observation lay entirely with the enemy artillery and mortars, which plastered our positions and supply routes night and day. Backed by this support, the 1st and 2d Companies, 577th Grenadier Regiment, held Hill 855 and the 2d Battalion, 131st Grenadier Regiment, defended from Lagone to Hill 640. The latter regiment was a fresh unit, composed mostly of Austrians, which had relieved the 9th Panzer Grenadier Regiment at the end of November.

On the right the 179th Infantry made small attacks to assist the 168th Infantry on Pantano; on the left the 157th Infantry carried out diversionary stabs at night against Hill 470. On 1 December the 179th Infantry directed its efforts to wearing down the opposition around Hill 769. For the next eight days the fight went on, with our troops inching forward through dogged persistence by companies and platoons. After a series of these small-unit actions the 2d Battalion, 179th Infantry, captured the crests of Hills 769 and 750 on 6 December. Three days later the enemy withdrew from the hotly contested ground, and our men consolidated their gains.

4. *Air Activity on the VI Corps Front.* The air force directed its attention primarily to villages and lines of communication in the enemy rear areas. On 2 December VI Corps received the first air support since the beginning of its attack when 12 P-40's strafed the Atina road. Poor visibility grounded the

planes until 7 December when 12 A-36's, briefed for Viticuso, bombed Conca-casale 2½ miles to the southeast of their objective. On 8 December 8 P-40's again hit Conccasale, and 12 A-36's hit Casale while aiming for Viticuso. Twelve A-36's flew over the area without dropping their bombs. However, eight P-40's bound for Sant'Elia did bomb Viticuso. This experience was a clear indication of limitations imposed on the air force by bad weather, poor visibility, low ceilings, and indistinct mountain targets.



CHAPTER IV * * * * *

The Second Phase

A. *PLANS FOR THE SECOND PHASE*

BY 9 December the first phase of the Winter Line campaign, as defined in Operations Instruction No. 11, was completed. All objectives had been captured. The Camino hill mass, southern anchor of the Winter Line, was in our possession and 10 Corps had shifted its boundary north as far as Mount Maggiore. On the Army right flank VI Corps made slight gains at great cost; but the enemy in front of VI Corps had been weakened to an extent that made more rapid progress possible in the future. Arrival of a French division was exceedingly important in view of the limited resources of Fifth Army.

With the Camino hill mass under control as a result of the victories scored by 10 Corps and II Corps, General Clark ordered Phase II to begin on 7 December. In this phase 10 Corps had a minor role—the mission of consolidating positions on the Camino hills and continuing offensive activity along the Garigliano. In addition, it was to assist II Corps and maintain contact with that unit. The principal objective of Phase II, assigned to II Corps, was Mount Sammucro. Operation Raincoat had cleared the way to the Garigliano for a distance of 20 miles from the sea; but the heights of Mount Lungo and Mount Sammucro, which controlled the Mignano Gap and the entrance to the Liri Valley, remained in the enemy's hands. The narrow valley between these two mountains was strongly organized for defense, with San Pietro on the lower slopes of Sammucro as the center of resistance. Before an attack against San Pietro could succeed, both Mount Lungo and Hill 1205, the crest of Sammucro, must be captured.

On the north VI Corps in Phase II was to seize the high ground in the vicinity of Atina and Sant'Elia, to assist II Corps in the capture of Mount Sammucro, to maintain contact with Eighth Army on the right, and to protect the right flank of Fifth Army. The mission of VI Corps was to be achieved

by parallel drives on the Sant'Elia and Atina roads, with the main emphasis on operations by the 2d Moroccan Division on the Atina road. By attacking on this very wide front Fifth Army would compel the enemy to extend his forces and thereby prevent him from massing for the defense of Cassino. A costly frontal attack against Cassino might be avoided if this plan could be executed successfully and swiftly.

B. *THE BATTLES OF SAN PIETRO*

8-17 DECEMBER

The main effort in Phase II was to be made by II Corps in the center of the Fifth Army line to capture Mount Lungo, San Pietro, and Mount Sammucro. Towering high above San Pietro, the cliffs and massive ridges of Mount Sammucro were extremely important in the enemy's Winter Line. From Hill 1205, the highest peak of Sammucro, a ridge runs north about a mile, then climbs abruptly to form Hill 950. San Pietro was completely commanded by Sammucro on the north and Lungo on the south and would fall once the dominating terrain around it was captured. The II Corps plan therefore was an enveloping movement. The 1st Italian Motorized Group, attached to the 36th Division, was to outflank San Pietro on the south by capturing Mount Lungo. On the north two battalions of the 143d Infantry were to work west along the south slopes of Sammucro, and one battalion was to attack Hill 1205. At the same time the 3d Ranger Battalion was to capture Hill 950. No movement was planned through "Death Valley," the trough between San Pietro and Mount Lungo.

The 36th Division, which bore the burden of the II Corps attack, found itself involved in a bitter battle for the village of San Pietro. Hills 1205 and 950, high points on the crest of Sammucro, were taken from the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment with comparatively little difficulty; but the enemy clung to San Pietro with skill and determination and retained control of the slopes of Sammucro above the village. German defenses, planned to prevent a breakthrough along Highway 6, extended from the rocky orchard-covered terraces east of San Pietro and across the valley to Mount Lungo. Two battalions of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment held the main line of resistance behind an outpost line which consisted of a series of mutually supporting pillboxes in depth. These emplacements, which resisted our constant artillery fire and frequent attacks by A-36 fighter-bombers, were deep pits covered by three

layers of logs and further protected by earth and rocks. To approach these pillboxes our troops had first to go through fields of S-mines, then through barbed wire and more S-mines. If these outer defenses were penetrated, the enemy could bring down artillery, mortar, and heavy machine-gun fire without danger to his own troops. Defense of the valley was assisted greatly by machine guns sited on the bald, rocky slopes of Mount Lungo on one side and on the olive-dotted slopes of Sammucro on the other.

1. *The First Battle of San Pietro.* (See Map No. 5.) Moving out from Ceppagna at 1700, 7 December, the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, attacked Hill 1205. In a skillful approach the assault company took the enemy by surprise. Our troops swarmed over the hilltop just before dawn and blasted the Germans out of their emplacements with grenades. The enemy counterattacked strongly and nearly succeeded in regaining the hill by 0930, 8 December. Reinforcements brought up by the battalion commander threw back the counterattack at 1040, and the issue was no longer in doubt. Hill 1205 had fallen, and the enemy's positions all the way to San Vittore were threatened.

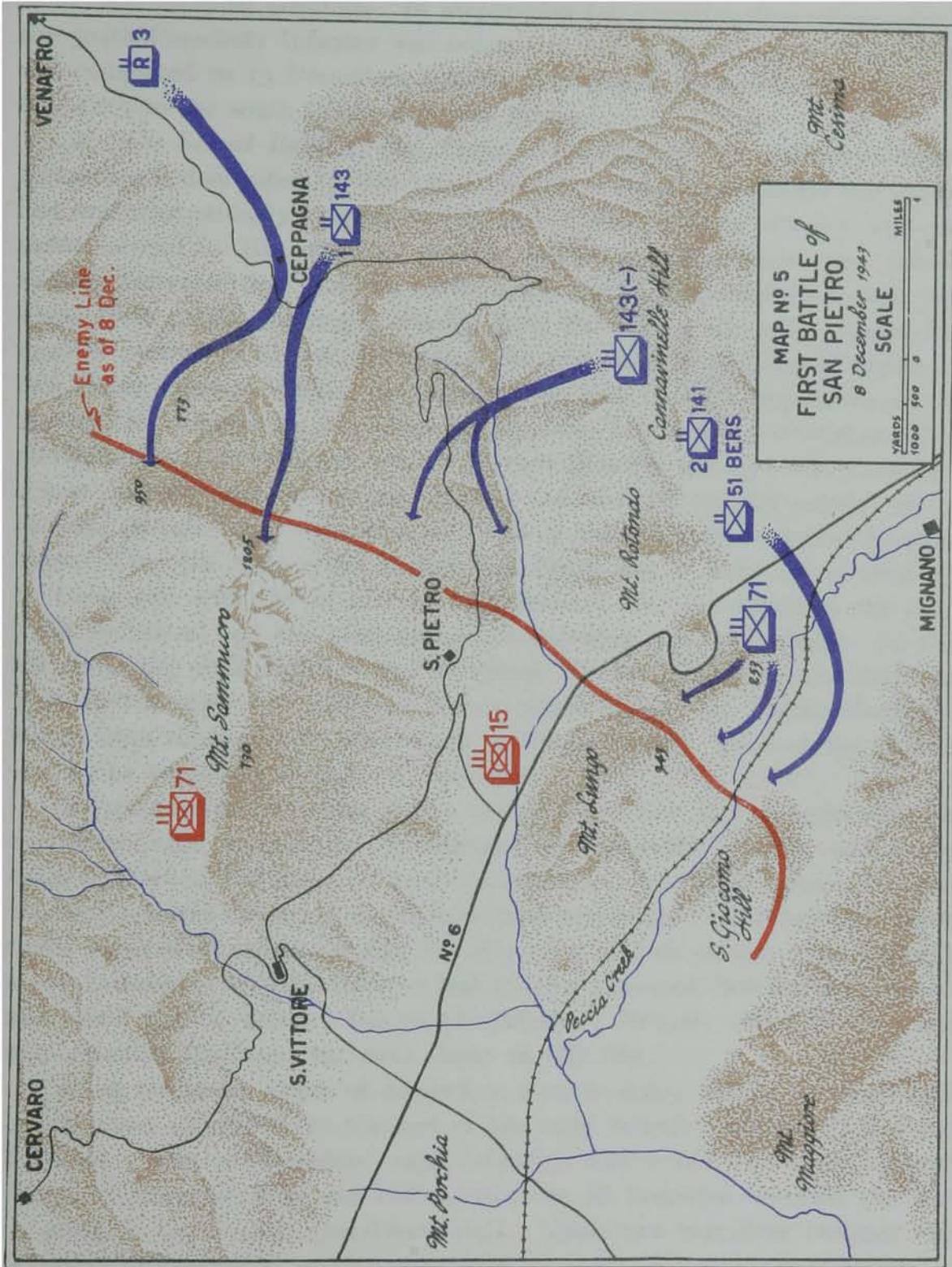
The 3d Ranger Battalion met equally strong resistance in its attack against Hill 950. At dusk on 7 December the Rangers left their assembly area southwest of Venafro, went down the road to Ceppagna, then turned north out of the village along the lower slopes of the ridge running northwest to Hill 950. Overcoming outposts and machine-gun nests, the leading elements seized their objective at 0600, 8 December. A counterattack from the northwest at 0830 forced them to withdraw to Hill 773 where they reorganized. After a preparation fired by the 131st Field Artillery Battalion at 0530, 9 December, the Rangers again attacked Hill 950 and occupied it at 0600. During the next four days, 10-13 December, the enemy launched numerous counterattacks against Hills 1205 and 950, concentrating his attention on the former under orders to recover the lost ground at all costs. The 3d Battalion, 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment, which had been committed in the sector, lost heavily. Accurate mortar and artillery fire broke up these attacks before they could make serious progress, and demonstrated again the utmost importance of dominating terrain. Our forward observers had some of the best shooting of the campaign, and German bodies were strewn on the mountainside.

During this phase of the Winter Line campaign liberated Italy entered the fight against the German invaders. On 7 December the 1st Italian Motorized Group completed the relief of the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, on the southeastern nose of Mount Lungo (Hill 253). This group included the 67th Infantry Regiment, the 51st Bersagliere Battalion, and the 11th Field Artillery Regiment. Artillery preparation for the Italian attack began at 0550, 8 De-

cember, 30 minutes before H Hour. A very heavy fog came in after the "Serenade" ceased and settled over the barren rocky knobs of Lungo like a huge smoke screen. At 0630 the Italians jumped off in their attack against the 3d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, holding Mount Lungo. The 1st Battalion, 67th Infantry Regiment, drove through the fog toward Hill 343 but could make little progress in the face of heavy machine-gun and mortar fire even after an artillery concentration was placed on the hill. The 2d Battalion advanced up to Hill 253 while the 51st Bersagliere Battalion attacked along the railroad toward San Giacomo Hill in the Peccia Creek valley. By 1130 the forward elements had suffered heavy casualties, but they courageously reformed for another attack. All of the II Corps artillery was made available to support the effort, but by 1215 it was apparent that the Italians could not succeed. Early in the afternoon, while the Italians reorganized for defense on Hill 253, the 141st Infantry committed a company on Mount Rotondo to protect against a possible breakthrough. Eight-inch howitzers of the 194th Field Artillery Battalion swept the crest of Lungo and the draw on the southwest side at 1530, and an hour later the 155th Field Artillery Battalion fired the first of five concentrations on Hill 343. Against this terrific fire the enemy was unable to press his advantage.

No greater success attended the efforts of the 143d Infantry in its attack against San Pietro. The 2d Battalion moved out at midnight 7-8 December from Cannavinelle Hill to the line of departure, which was a draw on the slopes of Sammucro north of the Venafro-San Pietro road and one mile east of San Pietro. Crossing the line of departure at 0620, 8 December, the assault companies could advance only 400 yards against the heavy mortar, artillery, and machine-gun fire. The 3d Battalion was then committed, with one company on the left and two on the right of the 2d Battalion, but still no headway could be made. By nightfall the enemy lines remained essentially unchanged. Throughout the night and early morning of 9 December the 131st and the 133d Field Artillery Battalions shelled the enemy's positions. The infantry renewed the attack at 0700 and continued the effort until 1918. Again the gains were insignificant, and the troops were ordered to fall back behind the line of departure while our artillery poured shells into the almost impregnable emplacements of the enemy.

For the next few days there was little action against San Pietro itself, and our main effort was directed to clearing the enemy from the western slopes of Mount Sammucro. Every approach to San Pietro was covered by flanking fire from positions still held by the enemy on Mount Sammucro and Mount Lungo. The village could not be captured until the enemy had been driven



Reproduced by 517 Fd Sq Coy R E Feb 1945

Misc. 541

from these flanking positions. In preparation for a continuation of the attack the 504th Parachute Infantry was ordered to relieve the Rangers. This relief was completed on 13 December, and the paratroopers took over the area from Hill 1205 to the south slopes of Mount Corno.

2. *The Second Battle of San Pietro.* (See Map No. 6.) Although Mount Sammucro is dominated by Hill 1205, there were lesser peaks which the enemy had organized strongly. About a mile west of Hill 1205 lies Hill 816, and 700 yards beyond is Hill 730 (1). A deep saddle separates these two points. Midway between them and 700 yards to the north is another peak, Hill 687. These three points, forming a triangle with Hill 687 at the apex, control the western portion of Mount Sammucro. In the plan for the second battle of San Pietro, General Walker, commanding the 36th Division, ordered an attack against this triangle to take place in the early hours of 15 December. The 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, was to capture Hills 816 and 730; the 504th Parachute Infantry was to capture Hill 687 and was also to send patrols out to Hill 954 (Mount Corno Vettere, a mile west of Mount Corno) to protect its right flank. Then the main effort against San Pietro was to jump off at noon on 15 December, with the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 143d Infantry, the 753d Tank Battalion, and the 141st Infantry converging upon the village. On the left flank the 142d Infantry was to attack Mount Lungo from the south at 1750 on the same day, followed by an attack by the 1st Italian Motorized Group from the southeast after dawn on 16 December. Each of the attacks was to be supported strongly by artillery.

In accordance with these orders the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, moved out shortly after midnight on 15 December to attack Hill 730, but was pinned down in front of Hill 816. At 1000, 15 December, the fighting strength of the 1st Battalion was about 155 men, whose ammunition had been exhausted. Pack trains replenished supplies during the afternoon, and the attack was continued on 16 December. A knoll close to Hill 730 was occupied, but the main objective could not be taken. The 504th Parachute Infantry could do no more than establish itself on the lower slopes of Hill 687.

Along the lower slopes of Sammucro a co-ordinated assault by tanks and infantry was attempted by the rest of the 143d Infantry and the 753d Tank Battalion. The 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, held a line extending halfway down the mountain from the cliffs, while the 2d Battalion occupied the line on down to the Venafro-San Pietro road. These two battalions resumed the

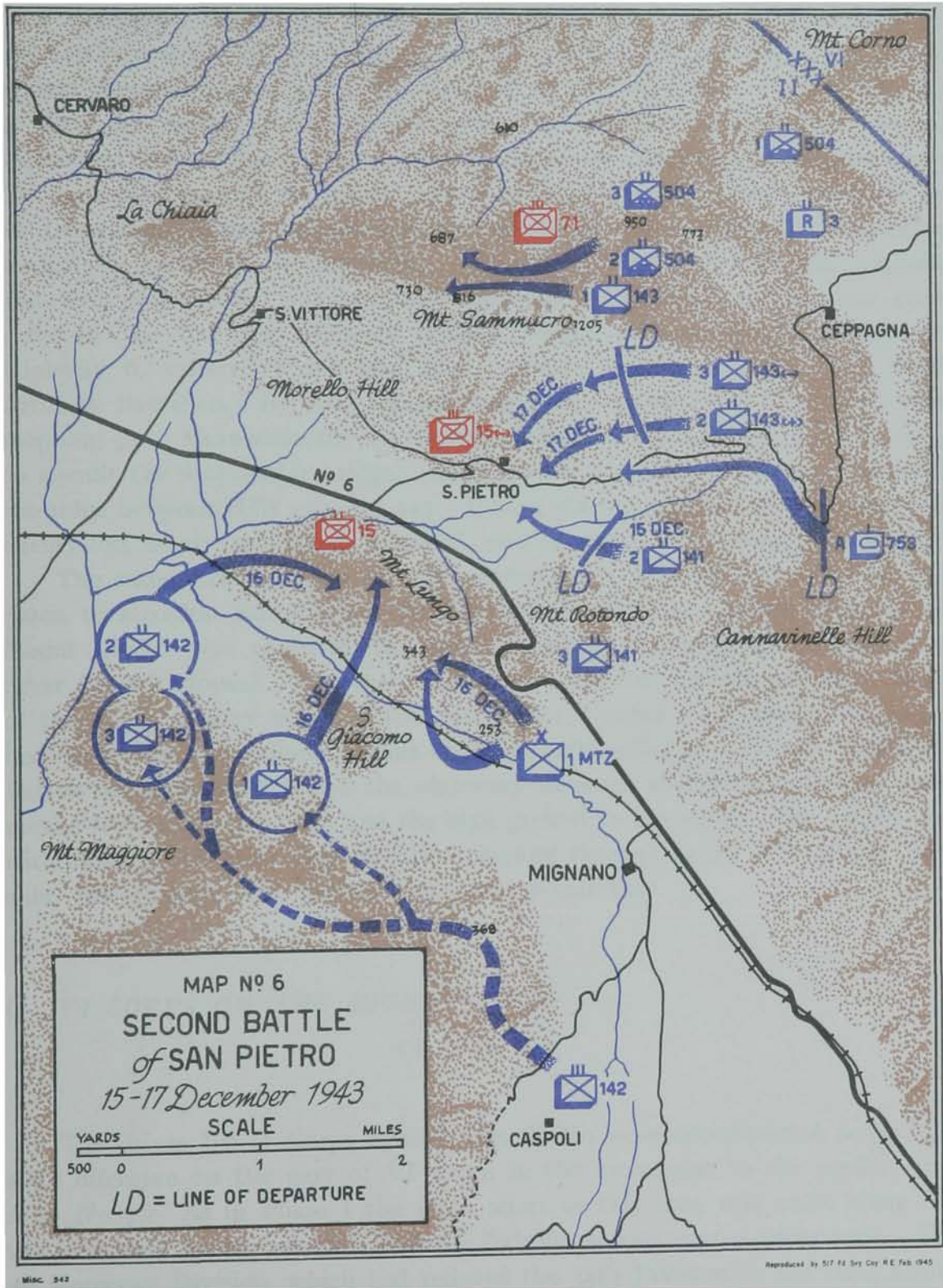
(1) Like so many other features, this hill bears different numbers on maps of different scale. The 1:50,000 series shows it as Hill 730; the Italian 1:25,000 series labels it Hill 720; the 36th Division Field Order No. 40, 13 December, refers to it as Hill 729.

attack at 1200, 15 December, together with the 753d Tank Battalion, which was committed in this attack on the possibility that tanks could get through the formidable defenses and clear the way for our infantry to enter San Pietro. The terrain, however, proved to be extremely difficult for tank operations. The narrow road was mined and the ground on either side was a series of rock-walled terraces three to seven feet high, covered with olive trees and scrub growth. Stream beds, gullies, and accidents of terrain prevented cross-country operation. Trees limited visibility to about 25 yards and rain had made the ground very soft.

Prior to H Hour the artillery, including 8-inch howitzers, fired its prearranged concentrations on the enemy positions and smoked Mount Lungo to screen the attack from observation on the left. One company of the 753d Tank Battalion supported the attack with fire from the north slopes of Cannavinelle Hill, and one company of the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion between Mount Rotondo and San Pietro had a similar mission. Company A, 753d Tank Battalion, made the attack. Two tanks succeeded in reaching the outskirts of San Pietro, where one of them was destroyed. Four were disabled by mines, four more were disabled or destroyed by artillery fire, two threw their tracks, and two turned over on the terraces. At the close of the day only four tanks were able to return to their assembly area. Seven had been destroyed and five disabled. The infantry attack had been no more successful; the German emplacements, held by the 2d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, could not be captured.

The line of departure for the 141st Infantry's attack across the valley was about a mile north of Mount Rotondo. Leading the assault, the 2d Battalion jumped off at 1253 but was met at once by heavy fire from the front and both flanks. Each company paid heavily for the few yards gained. By 2000 the rifle companies were down to an average of 52 officers and men each. The attack was renewed at 0100, 16 December. By that time all communications had been destroyed and supporting artillery fires could not be arranged. Nevertheless, our infantry stormed the defenses with grenades and bayonets, and succeeded in getting a few men into San Pietro. Reorganization at 0200 revealed that the 2d Battalion had a total strength of 130 officers and men; but the attack was renewed at 0600. No further progress could be made, and by 1530 most of the troops had returned to the line of departure.

While the units on the right and center were meeting little success, the 142d Infantry was attacking Mount Lungo. In preparation for its attack the regiment occupied San Giacomo Hill between Mounts Lungo and Maggiore on 12 December, and during the night captured Hill 141 on the northwest nose



of Maggiore and Hill 72 a mile to the north. These preliminary moves having been completed by the 3d Battalion, the other two battalions assembled on the northern slopes of Mount Maggiore on 14 December and began the attack against Mount Lungo during the night of 15-16 December. On the left the 2d Battalion swung around to the west nose of Lungo and pressed forward vigorously up the ridge. After destroying numerous machine-gun emplacements this battalion reached its initial objectives on the top of Lungo by dawn on 16 December. Equal success met the efforts of the 1st Battalion attacking toward the center of the mountain. Through a number of individual exploits and well co-ordinated small-unit actions the 1st Battalion reached the crest early in the morning. Enemy trucks, rushing reinforcements forward on Highway 6, suffered direct hits from accurate shooting by the 132d Field Artillery Battalion. By 1000 the mountain was captured and our troops were mopping up. Meanwhile the 1st Italian Motorized Group jumped off at 0915 to assault the southeastern ridge. Early in the afternoon the Italians occupied the ridge between Hills 253 and 343. During the struggle for Mount Lungo the enemy lost nearly 200 killed, wounded, and captured. Our losses were slight.

The success of the 142d Infantry undoubtedly influenced the German decision to abandon San Pietro. Within three hours after the last positions on Mount Lungo were captured, the enemy launched a furious counterattack to cover his withdrawal. The main thrust was directed against the right flank of the 143d Infantry north of the San Pietro-Venafro road, where the enemy had maximum concealment. This counterattack ended at 0100, 17 December. Patrols after daylight found the elaborate defenses abandoned, and our lines moved forward to the town and the high ground to the north. The enemy had withdrawn to his next defensive line running through Cedro Hill, Mount Porchia, San Vittore, and northeast into the mountains.

C. VI CORPS ON THE RIGHT FLANK

15 21 DECEMBER

The drives by II Corps against San Pietro were accompanied by a full-scale offensive on the part of VI Corps in the mountains to the north. (*See Map No. 7.*) As in Phase I the main effort in this zone was made along the two east-west roads, but this time the fighting spread over a wider area. The 2d Moroccan Division, which had relieved the 34th Division on the right flank, received the mission of taking the high ground east of Cardito, overlooking

the Colli-Atina road, while the 45th Division on the south was to gain the high ground south of Mount Monna Casale on the Sant'Elia road. Ammunition restrictions placed at the beginning of the month caused some limitation on artillery fires, but the weather permitted extensive air support in front of VI Corps on 10-18 December. Principal targets of the air attacks were the towns on the main roads as far as Sant'Elia and Atina, the forward supply point at Viticuso, and enemy gun positions near Cardito. On 14 December, the day preceding the attack of VI Corps, our P-40's pounded the road net behind the enemy lines.

The 2d Moroccan Division made preparations for a wide envelopment of the enemy left flank by the 8th Moroccan Infantry (8^e Régiment de Tirailleurs Marocains) and two battalions of the 4th Moroccan Infantry (4^e Régiment de Tirailleurs Marocains). These hardy units, together with two tabors of goumiers, moved on the night of the 14th toward San Michele Pass, from which they were to advance west through the mountains by towering Mount Mare and sweep southwest on the morning of 15 December toward Cardito. After this maneuver force had made sufficient progress, the 5th Moroccan Infantry (5^e Régiment de Tirailleurs Marocains) on Mount Pantano would attack west. At the same time a frontal push was to be launched by the 45th Division, reinforced by the 1st Ranger Battalion; the 2d and 3d Battalions, 504th Parachute Infantry; and two battalions of chemical mortars. The 179th Regimental Combat Team was to advance up the Lagone draw toward the Sant'Elia road, and on the left flank the 157th Regimental Combat Team planned a pincers movement against Hill 831, a foothill of Mount Cavallo. To oppose the assault of the 45th Division the enemy had fresh units from the 44th Grenadier Division: the 1st Battalion, 134th Grenadier Regiment, in the Lagone area, and the 1st Battalion, 131st Grenadier Regiment, south of the Sant'Elia road. Elements of the 5th Mountain Division were just coming into the line in front of the French.

The terrain feature of greatest importance in the zone of the 179th Infantry on the right flank of the 45th Division was the steep draw running west from the Filignano flat between Hill 769 and La Bandita. During the previous fighting in this area our troops had gained the scrub-covered plateau dotted with knobs which comprised Hill 769, and other units had driven up the draw to the outskirts of Lagone. Unfortunately, the French maneuver group failed to get into position on time, with the result that the 2d Moroccan Division was unable to take the offensive as planned. Nevertheless, at 0630, 15 December, the 179th Infantry attacked west after a short artillery preparation. The 3d Battalion, attempting to capture Lagone, was held at the edge of the

hamlet throughout the day. The 1st Battalion on Hill 750 advanced northwest and captured Hill 760 less than a mile west of Lagone. During the night of 15-16 December the enemy, thus threatened from the rear, abandoned the village. On 16 December our troops occupied Lagone and La Bandita, which had been defended by elements of the 100th Grenadier Regiment (5th Mountain Division). The French made a slight advance on Mount Pantano at the same time and took Hill 895.

On the south flank of the 45th Division the pincers movement of the 157th Infantry against Hill 831 met very stiff opposition. The 1st Battalion attacked northwest against Hills 470 and 640 on 15 December, but succeeded in holding only the east slopes of the latter. Little more success attended the efforts of the 2d Battalion to seize Fialla Hill and Hill 770. However, on the afternoon of 17 December our patrols reported that the enemy had withdrawn all along the line. This withdrawal coincided with events in front of II Corps, where the enemy had also pulled back on 17 December. The 45th Division immediately pushed forward to regain contact. During the period 17-21 December the front moved forward with little opposition to the west slopes of Mount Cavallo. The 2d Moroccan Division also advanced on the right of VI Corps and captured the rest of Mount Pantano, Cerasuolo, and Hill 1054. North of the Atina road a foothold was gained on the southern slopes of Mainarde Ridge. The advance therefore was greatest in the center where two and one-half miles were gained along the Sant'Elia road, with very little change on the flanks of VI Corps.

D. PROBING THE ENEMY LINES

19-31 DECEMBER

1. *II Corps Tests the Defenses of San Vittore.* With the capture of Hill 1205, San Pietro, and Mount Lungo, II Corps gained control over the Mignano Gap. But patrols soon discovered that the next German line was only a few hundred yards beyond San Pietro and ran from Hill 730 on Mount Sammucro southwest to Morello Hill and on across Highway 6. (See Map No. 6.) This line barred the way to San Vittore two miles northwest of San Pietro. Between the two villages lay more of the rolling, terraced slopes of Sammucro covered with olive trees and fissured by many gullies. The entire San Pietro-Cervaro road was under fire from German artillery, mortars, and machine guns.

The first effort to capture San Vittore took place on 19 December when the 3d Battalion, 141st Infantry, attacked Morello Hill from the southeast

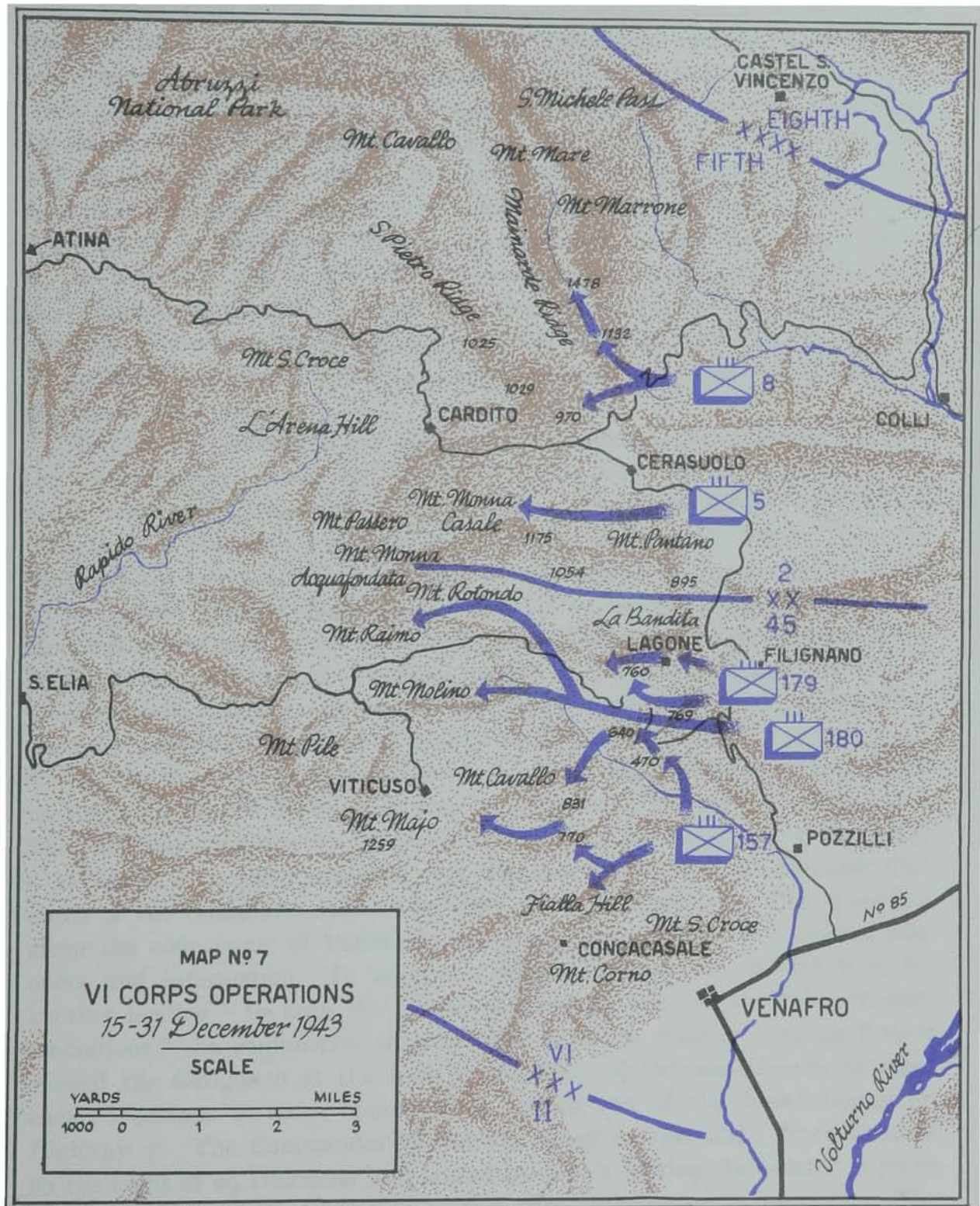
while the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, attempted a flanking movement on the right. With the aid of accurate artillery fire the 2d Battalion, 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, repulsed the attack. Then the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, was ordered to clear the slopes of Sammucro northwest of San Pietro to enable the 3d Battalion to attack San Vittore from the northeast. At the same time the 143d Infantry was to fight its way to positions north of Morello Hill. The key to this plan was Hill 730, which the enemy held with more than 200 men. The plan was tried on 21 December but met with no success.

The effort to take San Vittore could not succeed until Hill 730 and the ridge running northeast to Hill 610 had been captured. General Walker assigned this mission to the 1st Special Service Force, reinforced by the 504th Parachute Infantry and the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry. Difficulties of supply and movement caused a lull in activity until the night of 24-25 December when the 1st Regiment lashed out in a vicious attack that captured Hill 730 on Christmas Day. By 26 December the 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry, had occupied the ridge to Hill 610. In these attacks the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment fought bitterly and fell back only when the combat efficiency of its engaged units had been destroyed.

While these victories were being won in the mountains, the 141st Infantry succeeded in capturing Morello Hill on 26 December. Three days later combat patrols and a reinforced company fought their way in and out of San Vittore. The enemy refused to give up the town so long as the hills to the north remained in his hands. By 29 December the 34th Division was coming in to relieve the 36th Division, which was practically exhausted after six weeks of almost constant mountain fighting. The 142d Infantry was not to rest, however, and relieved the units which were garrisoning the hills and ridges of Sammucro.

2. *Inching Forward on the VI Corps Front.* During the last ten days of December there was no large-scale offensive by VI Corps, and a considerable portion of the line saw no activity. Artillery fire was limited, but the leaflet war continued. The *Frontpost* and other publications were sprinkled over enemy territory by plane and specially packed artillery shells. Patrols went out constantly to determine where the next battles in front of VI Corps would have to be fought.

After the readjustment of 17-21 December the enemy's line in front of VI Corps was anchored on the south at Mount Majo (Hill 1259), followed the Viticuso road north to Mount Molino, then crossed the Sant'Elia road to Mount Raimo, Mount Monna Casale, and Mainarde Ridge. (*See Map No. 7.*) On the south, at the boundary between II Corps and VI Corps, there was a



rough salient from Mount Majo to Concacasale through which enemy patrols operated freely. On the north, from Mount Marrone on into the Eighth Army zone, there was another area where the opposing forces maintained reconnaissance patrols. Along its line VI Corps conducted only piecemeal operations. An attack by the 8th Moroccan Infantry on the north flank of the French was delayed by bad weather until 24 December, when Hill 910 was captured. Two days later the regiment attacked the Mainarde feature and captured Hills 1132 and 1478 on 27 December. The assault continued through three feet of snow on the next day, but on the 29th bad weather and supply difficulties brought the operations to an end. The 5th Moroccan Infantry jumped off on the south on 29 December in a thrust which netted Hill 1175 and knobs at the east end of Mount Monna Casale. Further advance proved impossible and the French dug in on their gains.

In the 45th Division zone the 180th Regimental Combat Team attacked the mountains on either side of the Sant'Elia road, where elements of the 100th and 134th Grenadier Regiments were in strong defensive positions. Objectives of the drive were the hills from Mount Molino to Mount Rotondo. Preceded by heavy artillery fire, the assault battalions jumped off at 0615, 30 December. The 3d Battalion, 180th Infantry, occupied Mount Raimo and Mount Rotondo north of the road, but lost the former to a strong counterattack. South of the road the 1st Battalion reached the slopes of Mount Molino and then fell back. Another attempt to take Mount Molino failed on 31 December; the only gain from two days of bloody fighting was one hill.

3. *10 Corps Reconnaissance across the Garigliano.* While II Corps opened up the north side of the Mignano Gap, 10 Corps remained quiet in its positions. The only major activity on the south half of the Fifth Army line in the period 9 December-4 January consisted of a seaborne raid by the 9 Commando just north of the Garigliano mouth the night of 29-30 December. This operation, given the code name of Partridge, had the primary objective of gaining prisoners and information. In addition, higher authority felt it was time for another landing "to keep the enemy guessing and increase the value of demonstrations." In conjunction with the raid from the sea the 2 Scotch Guards crossed the Garigliano at the mouth, and the 3 Coldstream Guards attacked enemy positions in some houses at the south end of the blown bridge on Highway 7. The Commandos themselves sailed in two LSI's from Pozzuoli on the night of 29 December and landed by LCA's, hitting the beach 600 yards north of the mouth of the Garigliano just after midnight on 30 December. The scheduled night-bomber program to drown the noise of landing craft was cancelled because of bad weather, but the raid was a complete surprise and very

successful. The Commandos ranged at will over Mount d'Argento, the Roman amphitheater at Minturnae, and the north bank of the Garigliano. At dawn they withdrew. Twenty prisoners had been taken, and ample information gained on minefields and wire entanglements in the area. The whole operation had been covered by excellent artillery and naval bombardments.

E. AIR SUPPORT DURING THE SECOND PHASE

Because of the terrain, the bad weather, and the nature of enemy defenses, air support played a minor role in the first battle for San Pietro. San Vittore was attacked on the 7th and 11th, and San Pietro was bombed on 9 December. On 15 December and for the next three days XII Air Support Command continued a steady support of the II Corps attack. Considerable success was scored against artillery positions at Mount Lungo (24 sorties), Cervaro (156 sorties), Mount La Chiaia (24 sorties), Mount Porchia (60 sorties), and Mount Trocchio (36 sorties).

The attack of XII Air Support Command against the main bridges in the Liri Valley was intensified during Phase II and carried over into Phase III. Four bridges bore the brunt of this effort: the Sant'Ambrogio bridge over the Garigliano near its junction with the Gari; the Pontecorvo bridge southwest of Cassino on the Liri River; the Atina bridge over the Melfa River; and the Melfa River bridge on Highway 6 about ten miles west of Cassino. Each of these structures was important in the enemy's supply system. Smallness of the targets, poor visibility, bad flying weather, and strong enemy defense against air attacks combined to interfere seriously with the success of bombing missions. The Sant'Ambrogio bridge came through unscathed after 44 sorties by A-36's and 48 sorties by P-40's in the two weeks 24 November-8 December. Several hits were claimed, but ground observers reported to the contrary. No better success attended the efforts to knock out the Pontecorvo bridge. In 15 days, 11-25 December, 12 B-25's, 36 A-36's, 48 P-40's, and 72 A-20's bombed the bridge. Hits were reported, but reconnaissance revealed the target still intact. However, on 14 January 51 B-25's attempted to destroy the structure and claimed one probable hit. The assault on the Atina bridge had similar results. One hit was claimed by 24 A-36's on 13 December, and two days later 28 P-40's bombed the same target. Reconnaissance showed the bridge to be undamaged. On 27 December 24 A-36's scored near misses, and on the 30th communications and the town of Atina were bombed by 34 A-36's and 24 A-20's; but the bridge was not hit.

The scale of air attacks increased against the Melfa River bridge on Highway 6. On 13 December 48 P-40's aimed for the target; on 14 December a total of 144 sorties were flown by P-40's. Seven hits were claimed on the approaches, and five probables on the bridge itself. Reconnaissance revealed that the bridge was still in service. From 15 November to 15 January at least 264 P-40's and 108 B-25's were briefed to attack the bridge. Traffic was interrupted for only four days, 8-11 January.

F. *SUMMARY OF THE SECOND PHASE*

For all practical purposes Phase II of the Winter Line campaign came to a close at the end of the year. Several factors had combined to make the fighting more difficult and bitter than was experienced during Phase I. The weather, which had been bad early in December, became progressively worse. Non-battle casualties consequently increased and further reduced the combat strength of front-line units. Much of the fighting occurred in areas where the terrain was even more rugged than that of the Camino hills, where supply and evacuation were extremely difficult, and where the enemy had prepared very strong defensive positions.

Objectives of Phase II had been only partly achieved. In the center of Fifth Army II Corps had captured Mount Lungo, San Pietro, and Mount Samucro. These victories, won at heavy cost, had broken the strongest German positions along Highway 6. But on the right flank the enemy's strong defense prevented VI Corps from fulfilling its mission of capturing the high ground in the vicinity of Sant'Elia and Atina. It had, however, kept pace with II Corps and made gains of approximately three miles. French troops had acquitted themselves with distinction and proved to be a most valuable addition to Fifth Army. Again the lack of reserves to follow up initial successes was felt keenly. Our troops, though attempting to carry on, were often too exhausted to exploit their hard-won gains.