

## NOTE

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HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)

ARMY HEADQUARTERS

THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN (4 Jan 44 - 4 Jun 44)

Information from German Military Documents regarding Allied Operations in General and Canadian Operations in Particular

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INTRODUCTORY

1. Canadian operations in Italy from January to the end of June 1944 have been dealt with in Reports Nos. 121, 143, 158, 160, 178 and 179. The present report sets forth the relevant information that has become available from German sources for the period from January 1944 to the Fall of Rome on 4 Jun 44. Information from enemy sources, gathered to round off the picture of earlier phases of the Italian Campaign, has been presented in Hist Sec Reports Nos. 14 (Sicily) and 18 (Southern Italy).

2. A large amount of information concerning the wider aspects of the campaign has come to hand as a byproduct of the search for items of specifically Canadian interest. Where it was felt that it might be of some historical interest, such material has been included; a balanced or complete presentation, however, of the broader picture could not be attempted within the framework of this report.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

3. The majority of the documents on which the present report is based were lent to Hist Sec (G.S.) by the German Military Documents Section in Washington, D.C. Many of the more significant documents have been Photostatted. In all cases where a photostatic copy or a translation is being permanently retained, the first reference to the document is followed by the H.S. Master Index Number.

4. The unbroken series of the War Diaries of the German Tenth Army was once more the most valuable and complete source of information. Material from higher levels was either unavailable or fragmentary; a noteworthy exception being a narrative based on the entries and appendices to the War Diary of the Armed Forces Operations Staff (Wehrmachtsfuhrungsstab). A photostatic copy is being retained of that part of this document which deals with the Italian Campaign in April, May and June 1944 (981A10.(D11); 99 pages). A translation of the portion dealing with the Allied Offensive in May 44 appears as Appendix "A" to this report (981A10.(D11): The narrative in question was prepared during the war by the official war diarist of the Armed Forces Operations Staff, Major Ritter Percy v. Schramm, previously professor of history at the University of Goettingen. It is relatively free from the rationalizations and lapses of

memory which inevitably appeared in the narratives that were written at a later date from memory by high ranking prisoners of war.

( G. M. D. S. - v. Schramm, Narrative based on War Diary of Armed Forces Operations Staff, The Italian Theatre of War, 1 Apr - 31 Dec 1944; uncatalogued at time of writing)

5. Documents from divisional and lower levels were not on hand; it is believed that they were stored by the Germans in what is now the Russian zone, and that they will remain unavailable in consequence.

#### SITUATION OF TENTH ARMY BEFORE THE ALLIED LANDINGS AT ANZIO (22 Jan 44)

6. The present report is a sequel to H.S. Report No. 18, which deals with the picture of the operations as seen by the enemy up to the halt in the offensive operations of 1 Cdn Inf Div after the capture of Torre Mucchia (north of Ortona) on 4 Jan 44.

7. The German Commander-in-Chief for the Italian theatre of war was General Field Marshal Albert Kesselring. The German winter line from Monte Scauri on the Tyrrhenian Sea to Torre Mucchia on the Adriatic was defended by the German Tenth Army under the command of Col-Gen Heinrich v. Vietinghoff.\* \*\*

8. One of the very few available documents dealing with the numerical strength of the German forces in Central Italy contained the following data:

15 Jan 44	In round figures
Tenth Army	150,000
Fourteenth Army	71,000
1 Para Corps	24,000
Under direct command of O.B.SW and in hospitals	21,000
German General in Rome***	5,000

These figures seem to indicate that the Fifteenth Allied Army Group in January 1944 was opposed by ground forces of about 270,000 men. A photostatic copy and a translation of the document are being permanently retained (981A10.(D12)). The figures given in the document seem to have been quite conservative; the strength report of Tenth Army for 1 Jan 44 gives the

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\* To simplify references to these two Commanders; their headquarters or the orders emanating therefrom, the following abbreviations have been used where suitable:

O.B.SW for Kesselring

A.O.K.10 for v. Vietinghoff

\*\* The subsequent employment of the German Fourteenth Army at Anzio, and the formation and employment of the Armeegruppe V. Zangen in Northern Italy are being dealt with in later paragraphs.

\*\*\* Plenipotentiary Representative of the German Armed Forces in Italy, General of the Infantry Rudolf Toussaint. (Bevollmaechtigter General der deutschen Wehrmacht in Italien) For a description of the functions of this officer see: 981 CS. (D2) (German Chain of Command in the Italian Theatre of war)

total strength as 168,215 and the fighting strength as 88,491 (981A10. (D13)). It must be noted that this report included the ground forces of the Luftwaffe, Waffen S:S. and Auxiliary Volunteers under command of the Army.\*

(G.M.D.S. - 75138/28, O.B.SW, Int files, 15 Jan 44; 42092/21, Tenth Army, W.D. 4, vol "B" of Appx, Appx 206, 10 Jan 44 )

9. Information regarding the number of divisions committed or requested by Tenth Army appeared in a formal memorandum covering the various points that had been discussed by O.B.SW on the occasion of a conference with his Army Commander, on 6 Jan 44. Regarding the number of formations employed and to be employed in Italy, Kesselring stated that he had requested the following:

- |    |                                       |  |
|----|---------------------------------------|--|
| a) | Eight infantry divisions              | (already in the front line)  |
| b) | Two armoured divisions                | To be held near the front as operational reserves. (Hitler line and Adriatic sector) |
| c) | Two armoured divisions                | For the Rome area  |
| d) | Three infantry divisions              | For the Genoa - Piombino area  |
| e) | Two infantry divisions (to be formed) | For the Adriatic coast   |
| f) | Two infantry divisions                | For security and pacification of Istria  |

Kesselring estimated his total requirements as 19 divisions. He commented:

I have 17 divisions actually at my disposal (after the arrival of 114 Jg Div and the pending departure of 90 Pz Gren Div and H.G. Pz Div), namely:

nine infantry divisions  
four panzer or panzer grenadier divisions  
one parachute division  
three infantry divisions (in formation)

The Armed Forces High Command has promised not to withdraw any further forces from the area of O.B.SW; it has delayed the departure of 90 Pz Gren Div until 1 Mar at least,

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\* References are grouped in order at the end of each paragraph.

and has indicated that 16 S.S. Pz Gren Div, after having been brought up to strength, will be placed under the command of O.B.SW. (981A10.(D14))\*

(G.M.D.S. - 42092/21, Tenth Army, W. D. 4, vol "B" of Appx, Appx 125a, 14 pages, 6 Jan 44)

10. A schematic Order of Battle of Tenth Army, giving a complete picture of the formations and units under its command, including G.H.2. troops, was issued on 4 Jan 44, A photostatic copy and a translation of the document appear as Appendix "B" to this report (981A10. (D127))

(G.M.D.S. - 42092/20, Tenth Army, W.D. 4, vol "A" of Appx, Appx 88 a, b and c , 4 Jan 44 )

11. On the Allied side, the Eighth Army was deployed in the Adriatic sector of the front from the Maiella mountains to the sea. It was opposed by the forces of 76 Pz Corps, comprising the following divisions:

1 Para Div  
90 Pz Gren Div  
26 Pz Div  
334 Inf Div

A graphic picture of the dispositions and lines of the Corps at the beginning of January is being retained in the form of a photostatic copy of the Adriatic section of Tenth Army's situation map for 5 Jan 44 (981A10(P15)).

(G.M. D. S. - 42092/26, Tenth Army, W. D. 4, vol I of sit maps, 5 Jan 44)

12. Some additional information regarding the German Corps facing the Eighth Army was contained in a letter sent to Tenth Army by General Traugott Herr (Comdr 76 Corps) on 6 Jan 44. Herr said he intended to hold the Corps in the Fairfield of the Foro position (para 13 below) as long as possible, in order to carry out improvements of the line which had been held up by frost and snow. Regarding present and future fighting strength of the Corps he supplied the following figures: \*\* \*\*\*

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\* An appendix to this document deals with the Allied methods of carrying out landings and with the lessons learned therefrom (ibid).

\*\* Fighting strength (Gefechtsstaerke) means: Total actual strength less: Personnel on leave; sick and wounded; on command; "trains" (soldiers in charge of transport, baggage, horses, etc). (G.M.D.S. - 75138/1, O.B.SW, 21 Jan 44)

\*\*\* "Normally the difference between actual strength and fighting strength should not be greater than 200 men per battalion". (G.M.D.S. - 42092/21, Tenth Army, W.D. 4., Appx 125a, 6 Jan 44)

In Main Battle Line on 6 Jan 44

1 Para Div	3,098	Length of fronts	44 kms
90 Pz Gren Div	2,298	Number of	
26 Pz Div	3,433	battalions	29
<u>334 Inf Div</u>	<u>5,410</u>	Fighting strength	14,239
76 Pz Corps	14,239	Machine guns	1,514
		Heavy weapons	297
		Infantry guns	57
		Anti-tank guns	119

Fighting Strength after reaching Foro Line (26 Pz Div behind the Foro line on the Adriatic coast as operational reserve; 90 Pz Gren Div replaced by 3 Pz Gren Div);

1 Para Div	3,176	Length of fronts	46 kms
3 Pz Gren Div	5,109	Number of	
<u>334 Inf Div</u>	<u>5,128</u>	battalions	26
		Fighting strength	13,413
In Foro		Machine guns	1,367
position	13,413	Heavy weapons	262
		Infantry guns	40
		Anti-tank guns	117

The above figures have been taken from a detailed tabulation which was appended to the letter in question. (981A10.(D16))

(G.M.D.S. - 42092/21, Tenth Army, W.D. 4, vol "B" of Appx, Appx 128b, 6 Jan 44)

13. The so-called "Foro" position (extending from the 'Maiella mountains to the sea) was the Adriatic portion of the German Winter Line and consisted of a system of successive defence lines which were connected by switch lines (Riegelstellungen). The exact location of these various lines was shown on a map which was submitted to Tenth Army by 76 Pz Corps on 11 Jan. A photostatic copy of the map and the accompanying letter are being retained (981A10.(D17)). From the letter it can be seen that the Allied line was the nearest one to the Allied forces, and that the "Bertha" and "Cornelius" lines were resistance lines for the purpose of delaying the ultimate withdrawal to the main defence line. \* \*\* Originally it had been planned that the "Emile" line should be the main position; but after further careful reconnaissance it was decided that the "Foro" line should be the main defence position. The "Friedrich" line was the last line of the whole defence system, and was to be completed only after the actual Foro line, which was to be defended decisively, had been built up to a point where construction forces could be spared without detriment to the main construction work.

\* This letter was written by Col Graf v.Kiinckowstroem, G.S.C., who had followed Col Schmidt v.A1tenstadt as temporary C. of S. 76 Pz Corps during the illness of the permanent C. of S., Col Fritz Runkel, G.S.C.

\*\* "The Foro position will be arranged in such a manner that enemy penetrations can be localized and will not force the abandonment of the whole position." (G.M.D.S. - 42092/21, Tenth Army, W. D. 4, vol "B" of Appx, Appx 185, tel cons 9 Jan 44 1820 hrs, Wentzell - Klinkowstroem)



(G.M.D.S. - 42092/22, Tenth Army, W.D. 4, vol "C" of Appx, Appx 223, 11 Jan 44)

14. The tactical situation of Tenth Army was reflected in an order issued by General v.Vietinghoff on 11 Jan. It described the manner in which the withdrawal to the Gustav position was to be carried out:

...In the event of attacks by far superior enemy forces, a step by step withdrawal to the Gustav position will be carried out...\*

A synopsis of this order in the War Diary of Tenth Army reads:

It is important to gain as much time as possible for the improvement of the Gustav position; in view of the heavy casualties that have been experienced it is also important that no further heavy casualties should be incurred before the main position is reached.

(G. M.D.S. - 42092/22, Tenth Army, W.D. 4, Vol "C" of Appx, Appx 222, 11 Jan 44; 42092/19, Tenth Army, W.D. 4, 11 Jan 44)

15. On 15 Jan, one week before the Allied landing at Anzio, the view held at Kesselring's headquarters was that no major landing operation by the Allies was to be expected for some time. Telephone conversation C. of S. A.O.K.10 -O.B.SW:\*\*

15 Jan 1030 hrs

Westphal: ....After a long interruption, it again became possibly yesterday to photograph the harbour of Bizerta. Only a small number of vessels suitable for landing operations was observed. We know beyond any doubt that very few landing craft are available in Italy and Malta and on the eastern coast of Algeria. They are either on the northern coast of Sicily; in the eastern Mediterranean; or they have passed through the Suez Canal. On the whole I consider a large scale landing operation as being out of the question for the next four to six weeks.

(G.M. D. S. - 42092/22, Tenth Army, W. D. 4, Vol "C" of Appx, Appx 299, page 11, 15 Jan 44)

16. In the middle of January, Tenth Army was mainly occupied with an extensive program of regrouping and formation of reserves. The consequent vulnerability of the front reached its maximum on 15 Jan. When the Army's C. of S. telephoned C. of S. O.B.SW at 2245 hrs, he said

At the moment things here look wild; everything is on the move; 15, 44, 71, H.G., 5, 3 and 305 Divs,

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\* A photographic reproduction on a reduced scale is being retained of a large German map showing the course of the Gustav line in detail. (981A10.(D134)) (G.M.D.S, - 52071/17, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, Engr Repts, 1 Feb - 31 Mar 44 )

\*\* C. of S. Tenth Army: Maj-Gen Fritz Wentzell  
C. of S O.B.SW: Lt-Gen Siegfried Westphal

(G.P.M.D. S. - 42092/22, Tenth Army, W, D. 4, Vol "C" of :Appx, Appx 299, page 23, 15 Jan 44)

17. An order from O.B.SW to the fighting formations on 14 Jan 44 did not presage any particular developments, but exhorted the troops to greater tenacity, and criticized the officers of certain formations which had not produced results that could be compared with those of the best formations. The main theme of the order was summarized in the phrase: "The 'Gustav - Foro' position will be held." In a formal, hand-signed postscript the commander of Tenth Army added that many German soldiers had deserted to the enemy. Para 3 of the postscript read:

In the event of a soldier being so devoid of honour as to desert to the enemy, in future the most severe measures against his family will be taken. (981A10. (D18))

(G.M.D.S. - 58533/7, Tenth Army, Files of Sen Arty Comdr, Jan 44).

18. On 17 Jan 44, two battalions of 11 Cdn Inf Bde (5 Cdn .Armd Div) carried out a demonstration in the "Arielli" sector of the Ortona salient. (C.M.H.Q. Report No. 178, Para 6). The Germans realized the diversionary character of the undertaking and continued with their program of moving artillery components of 76 Pz Corps to the western part of the front. The "Arielli" engagement was reflected in the War Diary of Tenth Army by the following entry:

17 Jan: In the area of 1 Para Div the enemy attacked after heavy artillery preparation (20,000 rounds in the afternoon alone) in various places during the whole day, and was repulsed. A temporary penetration was eliminated in a counterattack. The action was apparently a diversion.

1 Para Div reported 27 killed and 36 wounded on that day.

(G.M, D.S. - 42092/23, Tenth Army, W. D. 4, Vol "D" of Appx, Appx 357, page 3, 17 Jan 44; ibid te1 cons 16, 17 and 18 Jan; 42092/19 Tenth Army, W.D. 4, 17 Jan 44 )

19. The records of the telephone conversations for these days show that a certain amount of speculation was going on regarding the Canadian forces in the Adriatic sector:

18 Jan 44 1920 hrs

Wentzell to Westphal: 76 Corps tells me that 5 Cdn Armd Div has been identified. It is not yet clear whether it is relieving or reinforcing 1 Cdn Inf Div.

19 Jan 44 1910 hrs. v.Vietinghoff - Kesselring

K: The situation up there has become less acute owing to the fact that 1 Cdn Inf Div and N.Z. Div have been relieved,

v.V: I do not know this:

K: But it is in your report that the two brigades have been relieved. We need not be afraid that anything will happen there; they are unseasoned troops and we can easily cope with them.

v.V: They all want to show their wares.

K: The trial runs of green troops are nothing famous.

19 Jan 44 1045 hrs

Wentzell: It looks as if 1 Cdn Inf Div were leaving. But it is a strange business to relieve an infantry division by an armoured division. The result will be that he will then have two armoured divisions and only one infantry formation up there.

Westphal: We do not know what's in his mind.

(G. M. D. S. - 42092/23 Tenth Army, W. D. 4, vol "D" of Appx, tel cons, 18 - 21 Jan 44)

20. Although it was taken for granted that 5 Cdn Armd Div had appeared in the Adriatic sector, Major Ludwig v:Koekritz, G.S.C., Intelligence Officer at A.O.K.10, was unable to obtain a positive identification for some time. In the monthly Intelligence report for January 1944, dated 6 Feb 44., the following statement appeared:

Canadian Corps presumably under command of the Canadian Army Corps. 4 Ind Div relieved 2 N.Z. Div. The whereabouts of the latter is unknown. 1 Cdn Inf Div has been moved southwards and 11 Bde 5 Cdn Div appeared in the coastal area. Despite the fact that a considerable number of prisoners was made, up to now it has not been possible to find out whether it is an infantry or an armoured division. As hitherto the division has only been committed with one brigade, it would be reasonable to assume that it is an armoured division.

(G. M. D. S. - 42092/31, Tenth Army, W. D. 4, vol "C" of Appx, Int rep for Jan 44)\*

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\* The Appendices to the monthly report of the Headquarters Intelligence and Propaganda section of Tenth Army contain many documents revealing German methods of psychological warfare. Photostatic copies of two propaganda leaflets that were specially edited for and addressed to Canadian soldiers are being permanently retained. These examples of scurrilous writing had been prepared at the headquarters of O.B.S.W. They were made available in quantities of 140,000 and 150,000; how many were actually dropped or distributed is not apparent. (98IA10. (D19))

(G.M.D.S. - 42092/31, Tenth Army, W.D. 4, vol "0" of Appx, Appx AJ 015 - 1 - 44 and AJ 16 - 1 - 44, Int reps for Jan 44)

21. On 18 Jan, under the command of Fifth Army, 5 Brit Inf Div had launched its large-scale attack on the Gustav line. The initial shock succeeded well. Marshal Kesselring took a grave view of the situation, and called it "the greatest crisis yet encountered". He decided to muster all reserves within reach, to stop and counteract the Allied advance. The records of the numerous telephone conversations during these days give a clear picture of the steps taken by O.B.SW and A.O.K.10. It is quite obvious that Kesselring was deceived, and believed the attack in the Garigliano sector to be the principal action of the current phase. German air reconnaissance as well as Intelligence had failed to create in his mind a true picture of the Allied dispositions and intentions. Thus it happened that Kesselring permitted himself to become fully absorbed in the task of coping with the battle in progress. During the four days preceding the landings at Anzio, he made only one fleeting remark concerning the possibility of an event of this nature. The landings at Anzio came as a complete surprise.

(G.M.D.S. - 42092/23, Tenth Army, W.D. 4, vol "D" of Apx, tel cons 18 - 21 Jan 44)

SITUATION OF TENTH ARMY AFTER THE  
ALLIED LANDINGS AT ANZIO (22 Jan 44)

22. Due to the urgent need at the beachhead for all the troops that could possibly be spared from Tenth Army, further counter-attacks in the Garigliano sector were now out of the question. Over all roads leading towards Anzio, German units were speeding to the scene of the battle that would lead either to the containing of the landing forces, or to the collapse of the right wing of Tenth Army and an immediate threat to Rome.\* While the issue was still in doubt, German anxiety found its best expression perhaps in Hitler's order to change the designation "Fuehrer Riegel" at once.

Westphal: ...By the way, we may not call the "Fuehrer Riegel" by that name any more; the Fuehrer has forbidden it...

Wentzell: We might call it "Senger Riegel".

Signal A.O.K.10 to 14 Pz Corps, 24 Jan 44:

Effective immediately the designation "Fuehrer Riegel" will be replaced by "Senger Riegel". (981A10.(D20))

(G.M.D.S. - 42092/24, Tenth Army, W.D. 4, vol "E" of Appx, Appx 470, tel cons 23 Jan 44; ibid. Appx 491, 24 Jan 44)

23. The reaction of General v.Senger to the designation of the position as "Senger Riegel" is not known. The situation was not without irony, as v.Senger had been openly critical of the position. The minutes of a conference with C. of S. Tenth Army on 29 Jan contain the following entry:

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\* A detailed study of the information from German sources regarding the German operations at Anzio has been prepared by a combined American, British and Canadian team. (981.013 (D7)) (G.M.D.S., Washington, D.C., 1946 "The German Operations at Anzio")

Commander 14 Pz Corps reports his situation. He condemns the "Senger Riegel" as tactically ill-conceived and refuses even to consider falling back to this position. He states that such a step would result in an intolerable widening of the Corps front at a moment when no reserve formations were available for reinforcing the thinned lines.

(G.M.D.S. - 42092/25, Tenth Army, W.D. 4, vol "F" of Appx, Appx 584, 29 Jan 44)

24. The considerations which had led to the construction of the "Senger" switch position were later summarized in a narrative written from memory by Maj-Gen Erich Rothe, then a prisoner of war (Rothe, The Senger Riegel, 1947, 981SOM. (D77)).\* This officer had been in charge of the construction work during the later stages of development. With regard to the tactical purpose and the course of the position he said:

The need for the position from a tactical point of view became apparent during the action on the Garigliano. It could be assumed that, in a forward thrust towards the Northwest in the direction of Rome, in the section of the German Tenth Army, the enemy would not attack with his main forces through the difficult mountain terrain., but:

- a) Along the Appian Way and the coast from Meturno, at first in the plain at Fondi (perhaps making a landing here at the same time).
- b) Along the wide valley of the Liri between the Aurunci mountains and the massif of Monte Cairo, committing the mass of his tanks, which formed his striking forces, in this region.

These intentions of the enemy were to be forestalled by the "Senger position". For, according to previous experience, a large-scale attack could not be intercepted in the forward position existing at the time, but only in a second position, after surrendering the intermediate territory.

The views held on the probable intentions of the enemy were strengthened by the efforts of the Allies to capture Monte Cassino, the key position commanding the German position north of the Aurunci mountains:

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\* Signal Tenth Army to 14 Pz Corps, 3 Mar 44

- 1) Effective immediately 14 Pz Corps is in charge of construction work in the "Senger Riegel"...
- 2) To this end Special Staff "Rothe" will become available to 14 Pz Corps with:

791 Fd Fort Constr Bn  
339 and 566 East Bns  
101, 102, 107 and 108 Ital Constr Bns  
No. 7 Rock Drilling Coy  
2 Coy Slovak Constr Bde

...Oberbauleitung Gittinger of the Organization Todt, now committed in the position, will continue with the following tasks...

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "E" of Appx, Appx 608, 3 Mar 44)

This rear position, called "Stinger position" after the General Commanding Fourteenth Panzer Corps, v.Senger and Etterlin, followed the line:

(Italy 1 : 250,000, Frosinone, sheet 34) Terracina -southeastern slope of M.Giusto (just northwest of, and above the Appian Way) - southeastern slope of M.Calvo - Fondi - (German military map of Italy 1 : 200,000, edition 1, sheet 35, Naples) M. di Valumana (point 611) - point 541 south of M.Vele (with an advanced position for one company at the convent Madonna della Civita, about 1.5 km southeast of point 541) - height 1010 - eastern slope of M.Faggeto - slope west of Villa Carasola - S.Oliva - east of the highway S.Oliva/Pontecorvo - east of Pontecorvo - east of the highway to Aquino - east of Aquino and further in a salient open to the southeast, to and including Piedimonte. Here the position joined the impassable massif of M.Cairo.

25. When it had become evident that the threat to the crucial Alban Hills had been averted for the time being, O.B.SW made use of the breathing spell to consolidate his positions, and to bring some order into the confused mass of heterogeneous units at the beachhead. In an order issued on 24 Jan, Kesselring defined the new tasks of the large formations under his command (9811AZ.D3)). The ground forces were dealt with in paras 3, 4 and 5:

- 3) Tenth Army is defending the present positions, which must continue to rest on the Gulf of Gaeta. Fighting a delaying action, and under pressure of superior enemy forces, Tenth Army is withdrawing its left wing to the Foro position, which is to be defended. Construction work in the present position is to be furthered as a matter of the greatest urgency. At the same time, the "Stinger" position is to be reinforced, under the direction of the General of Engineers, O.B.SW.
- 4) Fourteenth Army is assuming command of the coastal front between Cecina and Terracina (both localities included). The time of assuming command will be given later. The chief task of the Army is to counter-attack, and to throw the enemy forces landed south of Rome back into the sea. To achieve this, it must first of all prevent a widening of the enemy bridgehead. The Army is guarding against new enemy landings between Cecina and the mouth of the Tiber, and is defending the island of Elba.
- 5) Armeegruppe v.Zangen is guarding against enemy landings that part of Italy which lies north of the line Cecina - Porto Recanati. It carries on with the utmost energy the construction work on the Apennine position and on the coastal fronts. \*

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(G.M. D.S. - 64839/2, Armeegruppe v.Zangen, War Diary, Chafsachen, 24 Jan 44 )

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\* A German "Armeegruppe" or "Armeearbeitung" was not an Army Group in our sense, but merely a temporary, provisional organization, intermediate in status and responsibility between Corps and Army. The German term for our Army Group is "Heeresgruppe".

\*\* A collection of photostats of the most important documents concerning the organization and task of Armeegruppe v.Zangen is being permanently retained by Hist Sec (G.S.). (981AZ )

26. Armeegruppe v.Zangen was a new formation, which had been created for the specific purpose of taking over the tasks that had previously been carried out by Fourteenth Army. Its commander was General of Infantry Gustav v.Zangen, previously commander of 87 Corps. The Armeegruppe assumed command of the Italian rear area at 0001 hrs on 24 Jan, whilst Fourteenth Army assumed command of the Cecina - Terracina sector at 1800 hrs on 25 Jan. The composition of the Armeegruppe at the time was as follows:

- 1) 51 Mtn Corps  
  
356 Inf Div with Fortress Bde for Special Employment  
992 Gren Regt (278 Inf Div)  
736, 788 and 792 Fd Fort Constr Engr Bns  
Elements of 65 Inf Div
  
- 2) Commander of Operational Zone "Apenninland" (Alpine approaches )  
  
362 Inf Div  
278 Inf Div (less one regiment)  
Fortress Regtl H.Q. No. 924  
903 Fortress Bn
  
- 3) Commander of Operational Zone "Adriatisches Kuestenland" (Adriatic Coastal Region)  
  
162 Inf Div (Turc )  
509 and 705 Security Bns  
263 East Bn  
2 Coy 198 Georgian Bn

(G. M. D. S. - 42092/24, Tenth Army, W. D. 4, vol "E" of Appx, Apex 471, 23 Jan 44, 1440 hrs; 64839/1, War Diary Armeegruppe v.Zangen, 24 Jan 44)

27. The Adriatic sector had remained quiet during the attacks on the Gustav line and at Anzio. After some delays, Armd Reece Bn Hermann Goering had finally been dismissed to its division during the night 20/21 Jan. It was relieved by elements of 577 Inf Regt (305 Inf Div). On 23 Jan, the mass of 3 Pz Gren Div was still on its way to Roccasecca, whilst 26 Pz Div received orders on the same day to proceed immediately to the area of 1 Para Corps. By 26 Jan, 26 Pz Div had virtually disappeared from the coastal sector, and its place in the frontline had been taken over by units of 305 Inf Div. A photostatic copy of the situation on map of Tenth Army for 22 Jan is being retained. (981A10.(D21))

(G.M. D.S. - 42092/19, Tenth Army, W. D, 4; 23 - 26 Jan 44; 42092/28, Tenth Army W.D. 4, sit maps 17 - 23 Jan 44)

28. The situation in the Adriatic sector was discussed by Kesselring and v.Vietinghoff on 26 Jan:

K: How is the situation with Herr?

v.V: He feels a certain amount of concern regarding a possible thrust along the coast. In addition to the usual patrol activity, the enemy has been clearing mines along the coast, and the harassing fire of the artillery has increased in volume. Herr is mentally prepared for an enemy advance.

(G.M.D.S. - 42092/24, Tenth Army, W. D. 4, vol "E" of Appx, Appx 525, tel cons, 26 Jan 44)

29. During the last two days of January, Hast & P.E.R. (1 Cdn Inf Bde) carried out attacks along the Villa Grande - Tollo road. This action established the fact that the coastal sector was still being strongly defended by the Germans. On 31 Jan, 76 Pz Corps reported to Army:

After one hour of artillery preparation (about 5000 rounds on the positions of 4 Para Regt), at 1530 hrs the enemy attacked our positions near the crossroads Villa Grande - Tollo in approximately battalion strength, with infantry and 7 tanks. The enemy withdrew after a bitter struggle which lasted for about three quarters of an hour, having suffered numerous casualties.

1 Para Div's casualties for the two days, as amended by the daily report for 1 Feb, were: 16 killed and 24 wounded. The telephone conversations during the critical days in the latter part of January showed that the German Chiefs of Staff were literally racking their brains for units that could be taken from relatively quiet sectors to points under attack. There is no doubt that any German commander would have welcomed assistance from the brilliant fighters of 1 Para Div. In assessing the value of Canadian operations in January it must certainly be taken into account that the enemy did not feel free to replace the valuable Para regiments by formations of lesser quality.

(G.M.D.S. - 42092/25, Tenth Army, W. D. 4, vol "F" of Appx, Appx 619, 31 Jan 44; 52071/2, Tenth Army, W.D, 5, vol "A" of Appx )

30. In the telephone conversations of the German officers, the action at Villa Grande was reflected in the following:

31 Jan 2230 hrs

Westphal: With the paratroops you have obtained a new success. They are really wonderful.

Wentzell: Yes, They counted 90 dead (sic). It was again the 1 Cdn Inf Div; where 5 Div is we do not know. But they must be up there; they keep on talking with Corps.

At the conclusion of the conversation, the overall situation on the front was being discussed. The closing words were:



Wentzell: The battle of materiel has been raging now for four months. The British are terribly stubborn.

Westphal: Yes. Such tenacity is terrifying.

(G.M.D.S. - 42092/25, Tenth Army, W.D. 4, vol "F" of Appx, 31 Jan 44)

31. At the end of January the intentions of Tenth Army were formulated by General v.Vietinghoff in a message to O.B.SW:

31 Jan 44 1300 hrs - A.O.K.10 to O.B.SW

The Army intends

To hold the present positions. 14 Pz Corps to prevent any enemy breakthrough, if necessary by a further weakening of 76 Corps. Focal point of defence: the Cassino massif. In the event of pressure by superior enemy forces, 76 Corps to withdraw to the Foro position in a stubborn delaying action and subsequent defence of the position.

v.Vietinghoff

At 1900 hrs on the same day, O.B.SW signalled:

O.B.SW to A.O.K.10:

In full agreement with intentions as reported.

Kesselring

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/2, Tenth Army, W.Ds. 4 - 7, Chefsachen (Top Secret Docs) 31 Jan 44; 42092/25, Tenth Army, vol "F" of Appx, Appx 6 2 2 , 31 Jan 44 )

32. Problems of a tactical nature were scarcely mentioned in the records dealing with the events of January 1944; a noteworthy exception perhaps was a report by the Senior Antitank Officer at Headquarters, Tenth Army. In a document dated 17 Feb 44, this officer stated that in January Tenth Army had destroyed 61 Allied tanks and disabled another 21; not one of these had been accounted for by any of the over 200 heavy self-propelled or tractor-drawn anti-tank guns in the area of Tenth Army. To find the reason for the ineffectiveness of this weapon, he canvassed the commanders of the anti-tank battalions as well as the divisional anti-tank officers. Their experiences were summarized as follows:

The enemy has adapted his tank tactics to the effective range of our heavy anti-tank guns. He employs tactics similar to those used for artillery assault guns; that is, he supports his infantry with his guns from a distance; which, in the event of the attack being successful, allows his infantry to reach our antitank gun positions before we have an opportunity to use our anti-tank guns effectively on his tanks.

Previously, one of the fundamental principles of German antitank tactics had been to separate the infantry from the accompanying tanks. Now it appeared to have become preferable to force the enemy infantry to stay with the tanks. The writer of the report did not see how this could be done, and requested the suggestions of the commanders, while specifically emphasizing the necessity for investigating the possible uses of the weapon as field artillery. (Translation: 981A10.(D22))

(G.M.D.S. - 58533/8, Tenth Army, Files of Sen Arty Cmdr, Item 110, 17 Feb 44)

33. A new schematic order of battle of Tenth Army was issued on 1 Feb 44. A photostatic copy and a translation of this document appear, as Appendix "C" to this report (981A10.(D128)). The total strength of Tenth Army on 1 Feb was reported on 10 Feb in the usual monthly strength report to O.B.SW as being 134,341 men (981A10.(D23)). A photostatic copy is also being retained of the situation map of Tenth Army for 2 Feb 44. (981A10.(D24))

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/2, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "A" of Appx, Appx 18 a, b and c 1 Feb 44; 52071/3, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "B" of Appx, Appx 188, 10 Feb; 52071/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, sit maps, 2 Feb 44)

34. On 1 Feb, 1 Cdn Corps assumed command of the Adriatic sector from Lanciano to the coast, with 13 Brit Corps adjoining on the left. On the German side the front was held:

from the coast to Villa Grande	by 1 Para Div
from Villa Grande to 1/2m SW Arielli	by 305 Inf Div
from 1/2m SW Arielli to Melone	by 334 Inf Div
from Melone to approx 3 miles SW Alfedena	by Blocking Group Bode*

According to the cumulative information provided by the records of telephone conversations, these formations were rated by the Germans:

1 Para Div	Excellent
305 Inf Div	Good
334 Inf Div	Inexperienced
Blocking Group "Bode"	Satisfactory

A change in command on the German side occurred at 1200 hrs 2 Feb, when Headquarters 76 Pz Corps (with Corps troops) moved off to the Southwest and was relieved by Headquarters 51 Mtn Corps. The incoming Corps Commander was General of the Mountain troops Valentin Feurstein; his C. of S. was Colonel Count v.Klinckowstroem, G.S.C., who knew the sector from the time when he had been temporary substitute for Colonel Runkel, C. of S. 76 Pz Corps,

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\* Sperrverband Bode (Blocking Group "Bode"), prior to 29 Jan known as "Corps Group Hauck", was the formation operating in the wide mountain areas between 334 Inf Div and 5 Mtn Div of 14 Pz Corps. (Colonel Bode: Comdr 576 Gren Regt) (G.M. D. S. - 42092/19, Tenth Army, W. D. 4, 29 Jan 44 )

(G. M. D. S . - 52071/2, Tenth Army, W. D. 5 , vol "A" of Appx, Appx 13 , 1 Feb 44; 55779/1 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 2 Feb 44; 52071/1, Tenth, W.D. 5, 1 Feb 44; 52071/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, sit maps, 1 Feb 44)

35. During February, the course of events in the Adriatic sector was determined on both sides by the urgent requirements of the formations locked in the fierce fighting for Cassino. 4 Ind and 78 Brit Inf Divs were transferred from Eighth Army to Fifth Army; on the German side successive battalions of 1 Para Div were rushed west, mainly to the Cassino area, to stabilize difficult situations and to relieve exhausted units of 90 Pz Gren Div. Headquarters 1 Para Div and the last battalion left the coastal sector on 20 Feb. The War Diary of Tenth Army for 21 Feb contained the following entry:

1 Para Div with all components has been withdrawn from the front and is on the way to 14 Pz Corps.

Pending the expected arrival of Headquarters 90 Pz Gren Div, a temporary Headquarters "Ehlert" was organized and on 21 Feb assumed command of the area previously held by 1 Para Div (Colonel Ehlert, O.C. 334 Arty Regt (334 Inf Div)). The plans to bring the mass of 90 Pz Gren Div to the coast did not materialize however; in the evening of 21 Feb O.B.SW ordered:

...90 Pz Gren Div (less elements already in area of 51 Mtn Corps) to be Army Group Reserve and to be moved to the area of Frosinone with the utmost dispatch...

922 Gren Regt to leave Fourteenth 2xmy and to be moved to Pescara sector...

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Feb 41 52071/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, 21 Feb; 52071/4, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "C" of Appx, Appx 415a, 21 Feb 44 )

36. Whilst the Adriatic sector was gradually being denuded of highest grade troops, a flurry of excitement occurred when the British radio was said to have predicted an attack by Eighth Army. Both Col-Gen Jodl and Marshal Kesselring made telephonic inquiries but were reassured by Army that no signs of a major operation had been observed in the area of 51 Mtn Corps.\*

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/2, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "B" of Appx, Appx 145, 224 and 267, tel cons 8, 12 and 14 Feb 44)

37. When the situation at Cassino had become somewhat stabilized, Marshal Kesselring feared that some Allied formations might be transferred from Tenth Army's front to the Nettuno beachhead. On 19 Feb he signalled to A.O.K.10:

One must reckon with the possibility that the enemy may withdraw forces from the Tenth Army front for commitment at Nettuno. Tenth Army must therefore endeavour to pin down the forces of Fifteenth Army Group by constant attacks at many points and with the

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\* For weekly situation maps of the infantry and artillery elements of 51 Mtn Corps see: G.M.D.S. - 55779/3, 51 Mtn Corps, sit maps 15 Feb - 8 Apr 44.

strongest possible forces. This is most urgent in the area of 14 PZ Corps. Intentions will be reported. Kesselring.

(G.M. D. S. - 52071/3, Tenth Army, W. D. 5, Vol "C" of Appx, Appx 370, 19 Feb 44 )

38. At that time, the formations of 14 Pz Corps were hardly in a position to take the initiative. The War Diaries of Tenth Army do not record the execution of any noteworthy holding attacks in the weeks that followed the order. But the records show that plans were being prepared by Tenth Army and 14 Pz Corps for attacks in the Cassino and Garigliano sectors, and that these were dutifully submitted to O.B.SW.\* The telephone conversations of the period permit the conclusion that the planners felt only limited enthusiasm for the contemplated operation, and sensed that it would not come to fruition without prior elimination of the threat from the Anzio beachhead. Early in March General Westphal spent several days at the Fuehrer's headquarters. The last interview with Hitler took place on 6 Mar and lasted for an hour and a half.\*\* Westphal returned to headquarters O.B.SW. on 8 Mar, elated with the praise received and the understandings reached. On 7 Mar he had held a prolonged telephone conversation with O.B.SW. On that same day O.B.SW shelved the plan for Operations "MORGENROETE". The decision was recorded at a meeting between Marshal Kesselring and the Commanders of Tenth Army, 14 Pz Corps and 1 Para Div at the tactical headquarters of 1 Para Div. The minutes of the conference contain the following entry:

7 Mar "MORGENROETE" In consideration of our own numerical strength and of the forces required at the bridgehead, a major attack is out of the question for the time being. Furthermore it would be rather late now, as the enemy has been strongly reinforced; holds large reserves close to the front, and would not fail to take full advantage of his superiority in the air during the period of good weather which is to be expected. The Marshal's question as to whether a success could be obtained with smaller forces was answered in the negative by the Army Commander and the Corps Commander.

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, Vol "E" of Appx, Appx 683, 7 Mar 44; ibid. tel cons, 3, 6, 7 and 9 Mar 44 )

39. Some information concerning the strength, number of casualties, and replacements of 1 Para Div was obtained at the end of February when A.O.K.10 sent an officer to several divisions to obtain first-hand information. Such a course of action was especially appropriate in the case of

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\* Plans were made for "Operation 'MORGENROETE BLAU' and 'MORGENROETE ROT'". The available documentation is fragmentary; it appears in: G.M.D.S. - 53271/2, Tenth Army, Chafsachen (Top Secret Does).

\*\* In a telephone conversation on 9 Mar, Westphal said to C. of S. Tenth Army:

Everything went as expected. Our suggestions were accepted, but the Fuehrer appeared to be bowed down with care (gebueckt vor Sorge).

(G. M. D. S. - 52071/6, Tenth Army, "W. D. 5 , vol "E" of Appx, Appx 718, 9 Mar,44)

1 Para Div. - Although under command of O.B.SW and the intermediate higher headquarters, this division had always considered itself as being responsible to the Air Force; and, in the sure knowledge of its outstanding performance, had often been fractious and nebulous when asked to supply detailed information. \* The visiting officer returned with the following data:

1 Para Div

1) Fighting strength on 26 Feb 44:\*\*

1 Bn 1 Para Regt	210
2 Bn 1 Para Regt	150
3 Bn 1 Para Regt	50
Regtl tps	250
1 Bn 3 Para Regt	150
2 Bn 3 Para Regt	280
3 Bn 3 Para Regt	70
Regtl tps	300
1 Bn 4 Para Regt	360
2 Bn 4 Para Regt	280
3 Bn 4 Para Regt	230
Regtl tps	290
M. G. Bn	185
2 Bn 8 Pz Gren Regt	205
Para Engr En	(still in area 51 Mtn Corps)

These figures axe approximate; detailed reports are still coming in.

2) The authorized strength of the Division is 491 Offrs and 16,400 O.Rs. (Each Regt 90 Offrs and 3250 O.Rs.)

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\* The telephone conversations of the first week of March reveal for instance that Heidrich had consistently failed to report 100 replacements received in January from General Student, Staff officers at Army and Army Group discussed the situation in scathing terms; the matter was even brought to the attention of Hitler, but apparently nothing was done about it and the condition continued to exist and became acute again on later occasions. (e.g. G.M.D.S. 52071/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, Vol "E" of Appx, tel cons 3 - 8 Mar 44; 52071/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, Vol "G" of Appx, Appx 971, 24 Mar 44) .

\*\* "Fighting strength" (Gefechtsstaerke) as defined in para.12 above, footnotes 1 and 2.

3) Casualties of the Division:

<u>Month</u>	<u>Offrs</u>	<u>O.Rs.</u>
Jul 43	42	1,139
Aug 43	32	482
Sep 43	29	497
Oct 43	19	316
Nov 43	11	572
Dec 43	22	1,456
Jan 44	18	750
Feb 44	Unknown at the moment but higher than Dec 43	

4) Replacements received

September - December 1943:	5050
January - February 1944:	540

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/5, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "D" of Appx, Appx 555, 29 Feb 44)

40. The casualties of Tenth Army between 1 and 26 Feb were the subject of a detailed tabulation prepared on 27 Feb. During the period in question the Army suffered 7,169 casualties and absorbed 11,878 replacements; a further 1,675 replacements were noted as being en route to the Army. (981A10.(D25))

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/5: Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "D" of Appx, Appx 526, 27 Feb 44)

41. The total strength of Tenth Army on 1 Mar 44, including ground forces of the Luftwaffe, S.S. elements, and auxiliary volunteers, was reported to O.B.SW on 9 Mar. The total of 154,374 shows an increase of some 20,000 men from the low of 1 Feb a few days after the landings at Anzio (981A10. (D26)). The strength of the individual infantry divisions on 2 Mar was shown in a tabulation dated 5 Mar:

Division	Actual Strength	Of actual strength: Sick, light casualties, on leave, on command	Fighting Strength*
94 Inf Div	11,914	(2,332)	6,596
71 Inf Div	11,834	(2,344)	6,192
44 Inf Div	14,743	(2,305)	8,302
5 Mtn Div	16,977	(1,742)	10,698
90 Pz Gren Div	10,105	(2,847)	5,014
15 Pz Gren Div	14,527	(3,016)	7,878
334 Inf Div	13,337	(1,784)	8,181
305 Inf Div	13,450	(2,009)	8,313
1 Para Div	11,144	(2,969)	4,442

A new issue of the schematic order of battle of the Array appeared on 5 Mar. A photostatic copy and a translation of this document appear as Appendix "D" to this report. (981A10. (D129))

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 5 , vol "E" of Appx, Appx 721, 9 Mar 44; ibid Appx 645, 646, 5 Mar: ibid Appx 648 a,b,c, 5 Mar 44)

42. During the first two weeks of March there was no fighting of consequence on the Tenth Army front. Whilst Allied Fifteenth Army Group was making preparations for the second battle of Cassino, German front commanders were occupied with the tasks of reorganizing and refitting their formations, and higher headquarters examined the various courses of action that offered themselves to an opponent who had the initiative. It may be interesting to note that at the beginning of March, before Allied plans of deception had been carried out, Marshal Kesselring felt that an attack through the Liri Valley could be expected. A memorandum covering his remarks on the occasion of a meeting with his Army commanders on 4 Mar, closed with the sentence:

In summarizing the situation it should be noted that as a result of transfers the fighting strength of Eighth Army has been lessened, and that of Fifth Army increased. The commitment of these British divisions in the Cassino sector permits the conclusion that the enemy has not yet relinquished his plan of carrying out an attack in the Liri valley.

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/6, Tenth Army, W. D. 5 , vol "E" of Appx, Appx 622, 4 Mar 44)

43. Although it had been possible to contain the Allied forces on the beachhead at Anzio, O.B.SW was ever conscious of the danger which threatened Tenth Army from that direction. Should the right wing of Tenth Army collapse as the result of a successful breakout from the beachhead, it would be necessary to have a new line of defence from which Tenth and Fourteenth Armies, now side by side, could further delay the capture of Rome. This new line (Littoria - Valmontone - Avezzano - Pescara) was called the "Caesar" or "C" position.<sup>++</sup> On 3 Mar, O.B.SW had issued the following order: (981A10. (27))

\* "Fighting Strength" as defined in para 12 above, footnotes 1 and 2.

<sup>++</sup> For details of "C" position see:

- 1) Construction work in the "C" position will be pushed forward in such a manner that it will be fully ready for defence not later than 20 Apr, especially in the most important sectors.
- 2) Responsible for construction:
  - a) From the West Coast to Artena region: Fourteenth Army.
  - b) From Artena to the East Coast: Tenth Army.
- 3) Construction work on the Foro position will cease on 10 Mar 44. After that date only indispensable maintenance crews will remain there.

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "E" of Appx, Appx 667, 3 Mar 44)

44. The scope of the work to be carried out on the "C" position can be visualized from the roster of the units that were designated for work in the sector of Tenth Army alone:

Eastern Bns: 339, 412, 555, 556, 560, 616, 620  
2 Bn Slovak Constr Bde

Ital Constr Bns: 101, 102, 105, 107, 115, 118, 119, 133 135, 112, 10  
(Average strength; 500)  
Ital Engr Bn No. 2

(German) Fd Fort Engr Bns: 430, 432, 433

(German) Fd Fort Constr Bns: 790, 791

Rock Drilling Coys: 5, 6, 7, 8

Local Constr Coy: 9  
(Photostat: 981A10.(D28))

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/6 Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "E" of Appx, Appx 755, 11 Mar 44)

45. A memorandum entitled "Mountain Warfare in Italy" was issued by 14 Pz Corps on 10 Mar (981A10(D29)). The report described the hardships of the troops in the mountain areas; hardships which, it was said, belied the widespread ideas of pleasant warfare in the "Sunny South". It was urged that the difficulties be realized at the highest levels and that appropriate action be taken; the hardships suffered by the troops were such as even in the Caucasus had been

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Brit Hist Sec, Central Mediterranean, Operations of British Indian and Dominion Forces in Italy, Part II, Section "F", German Strategy, page 21. -

Hist Div U.S. Army, Manuscripts of German Officers, Manuscript D-211, Maj-Gen Hans Bessel: The "C" position. (981SOM.(D78))



experienced only in most exceptional cases. Specially trained and equipped mountain troops were described as being necessary to cope with the problems of fighting in alpine sectors-ordinary infantry formations were said to be unable to adjust their training, equipment and organization:

Naked rock often prevents the construction of positions; shacks and emergency shelters are non-existent; the troops are exposed without any protection to the fire of the enemy artillery. ... Artillery fire without the use of flash-reducing wads is suicidal ... Officers without the resilience of youth are unsuitable. Battalion, regimental and even divisional commanders have often to share the hardships of the troops.

The document contains some practical hints for mountain warfare. A few weeks later A.O.K. 10 prepared a report: "Experiences in Winter Warfare". The Army's report was largely based on the memorandum of 14 Pz Corps.\* (981A10.(D30))

(G.M.D.S. -- 52071/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "E" of Appx, Appx 738, 10 Mar 44; 52071/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "F" of Appx, Appx 955, 23 Mar 44)

46. The telephone conversations of the German Chiefs of Staff during the second week of March indicated mounting concern over the lack of reliable information on Allied dispositions in the Cassino area. In spite of determined attempts to bring in prisoners, it had only been possible to capture one American officer, and nothing could be learned from him. It was then decided to comb the field hospitals for prisoners who might possibly furnish some clue or carry revealing documents.

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/7 Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "F" of Appx, Appx 786, 13 Mar 44)

#### THE MARCH BATTLE FOR CASSINO

47. The tremendous Allied bombing attacks on the Cassino sector on 15 Mar were recognized by the Germans as the beginning of a new battle for Cassino. At 1040 hrs Gen v. Vietinghoff telephoned Gen v. Senger:

The Cassino massif must be held at all costs by 1 Para Div. If they cannot do it, it is "fate",

And later on the same day:

The second battle for Cassino has begun ...\*\*

The localization of the attacks indicates that the enemy is seeking a prestige success ...

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\* Another report of this period deals with the experiences of 334 Inf Div in the Adriatic sector. This division, at the beginning of the year quite green and much berated, had found itself in the meantime, and had become expert in the execution of raids and patrols. The detailed description of methods and experiences is being retained in translated form (981A10.(D31)). (G.M.D.S. - 53271/5, Tenth Army, W.D. b, vol 2 of Appx, Appx 221, 13 Apr 44)

\*\* The attack on Cassino from 16 - 25 Mar is referred to by Allied historians as the third battle of Cassino; German war diaries often refer to it as the second battle of Cassino, (Operations of British and Dominion Forces in Italy, Part I, The Conquest of Southern Italy, Section "F", para 58, German Strategy)

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "F" of Appx, Appx 819 , 15 Mar 44)

48. The Allied assault began on 16 Mar, but 1 Para Div succeeded in bringing it to a halt. In the telephone conversations of the day the Allies were said to have:

...employed the tactics of E1 Alamein; namely, concentrated fire from planes and guns, and infantry attacks on a narrow front

The effects of Allied artillery were devastating:

... 71 Proj Regt is completely finished; of 94 gun-barrels only five are left ...

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, Vol "F" of Appx, Appx 836, 16 Mar 44)

49. The crisis in this new battle for Cassino occurred on 17 and 18 Mar. After that the fighting lessened in intensity; ceased on 23 Mar; flared up again on 24 and 25, and subsided thereafter. During the progress of the action, the constant optimism of 1 Para Div was a source of amazement at Corps and Army headquarters; after the conclusion of the fighting the telephone conversations showed a mixture of admiration and jealousy. Marshal Kesselring, just back from leave) was being informed over the telephone by v. Vietinghoff of the latest developments. On this occasion v. Vietinghoff said: "No troops but 1 Para Div could have held Cassino".<sup>+</sup>

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/7 Tenth Army, W.D. 5, Vol "F" of Appx, tel cons 15 - 20 Mar 44)

50. Among the documents for 18 Mar 44 appears one of the infrequent situation maps of the 22nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Brigade (22 Flak Bde), Photostatic copies of this document, as well as of the situation map of Tenth Army for 26 Mar, are being retained (981A10.(D32); 981A10.(D33)).

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, Vol "F" of Appx, Appx 869a, 18 Mar 44; 52071/13, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, sit maps, 26 Mar 44)

51. The attempt to take Cassino was the sole major operation of Fifteenth Army Group in March. The Allied striking force had fallen short of the strength required for success; and the Germans felt certain that new attempts in greater force would be forthcoming.

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, Vol "G" of Appx, Appx 1021, 27 Mar 44)

52. With regard to the dispositions of the Canadian forces facing 51 Mtn Corps in the coastal sector, the Germans seemed to be quite well informed. The gradual thinning out of the line; the withdrawal of 5 Cdn Armd Div to the S. Severo - Lucera area (reportedly for training in landing

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<sup>+</sup> In this connection it must not be overlooked that 1 Para Div received substantial support from artillery units of 15 Pz Gren Div, 44 Inf Div, 5 Mtn Div, 90 Pz Gren Div, as well as from G.H.Q. Arty Bns 988, 602; 2 Bn 51 Arty Regt, 71 Proj Regt, 242 Aslt Gun Bde and 22 Flak Bde. (G.M.D.S. - 53271/4, Tenth Army, W.D. vol 1 of Appx, Appx 32, 2 Apr 44)

operations); and the relief in weekly rotation of the battalions of 1 Cdn Inf Div, were duly recorded, but not stressed, possibly to forestall withdrawal of further German forces from the sector.

(G.M.D.S. - 55780/2, 51 Mtn Corps, Int Repts, Mar 44)

53. The efficient work of the Canadian and Indian Field Security Sections in the Adriatic sector was reflected in German Intelligence reports. In C.M.H.Q. Report No. 178, para 92, reference is made to captured Italian front-runners who were handed over to the Field Security Sections, often recognized as enemy agents by "co-belligerent" Italians, and dealt with accordingly. The March report of "Dienststelle Lilli", an espionage organization operating from the area of 51 Mtn Corps, described the situation in the following words:

....

IV. Commitment of confidential agents was stopped at the end of the month because neither they nor frontrunners succeeded in returning from the enemy zone. It must be concluded that the enemy has stopped this traffic by measures which have not as yet been discovered .

... During March, eighteen confidential agents were sluiced into the area of the opponent; by 31 Mar, one had reported back, 14 are "overdue", and four are listed as "committed".

(G.M.D.S. - 55780/2, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Int Repts Mar 44, Appx 13, 4 Apr 44)

54. During the course of the successive delaying actions, Kesselring's forces had acquired a great deal of experience in the art of defensive fighting, and the best tacticians had become more and more impressed by the advantages of fighting on reverse slopes. In a personal letter to Maj-Gen Wentzell (C, of S. Tenth Army), Maj-Gen Baade (Cmdr 90 Pz Gren Div) wrote on 10 Mar:

. . . On this occasion (training demonstration for divisional and higher commanders), do not forget your specialty, the battle on the reverse slope position; it has saved us much blood in the hilly country at Cassino ...

The theory of fighting on the reverse slope was sanctioned by high authority on 18 Mar when O.B.SW stressed its value in a message to headquarters Tenth Army. A photostatic copy and a translation of this document appear as Appx "E" to this report\* (981A10.(D130))

(G.M.D.S. - 52071/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "E" of Appx, Appx 736; 52071/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 5, vol "F" of Appx, Appx 866, 18 Mar 44)

55. The number of casualties in Tenth Army between 1 Sep 43 and 31 Mar 44 was stated in a series of tabulations prepared by the Personnel Section Tenth Army (981A10(D34)). The casualties of each division were shown every ten days; at the end of each month, and by

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\* The problem has been dealt with at length in: Bessel, The "C" position, page 12, op oit, para 43f above

progressive totals for the whole period under review. The statement for March provides the following data:

Month	Officers	NCOs and O.Rs	TOTAL
September 1943	277	8,284	8,561
October 1943	215	7,707	7,922
November 1943	262	10,336	10,598
December 1943	301	13,061	13,362
January 1944	311	13,761	14,072
February 1944	180	8,875	9,055
March 1944	147	9,470	9,617
TOTAL	1,693	71,494	73,187 (9,392 killed)

(These figures comprise: Dead, mounded, missing and sick, less personnel remaining with their units)

The casualty figures of 1 Para Div (always regarded with some skepticism at Corps and Army) were of course included as submitted.

(G.M.D.S. - 52077./24, Tenth Army, W,D, 5, vol "T" of Appx, Feb and Mar 44 )

#### PREPARATIONS TO MEET THE ALLIED OFFENSIVE

56. During the whole of April the Italian front was steeped in the ominous calm that precedes great battles. But while the troops were resting, training and regrouping, a battle of wits, with Rome as its price, was being fought between General, Alexander and Marshal Kesselring. The German general had shown himself as strong in defence and brilliant in improvisation, but less well advised or gifted with intuition in the field of strategical intelligence. He had been surprised in Sicily, at Salerno and at Anzio. Surprise now was more important to the Allies than ever; to strike at his strongest salient would be uncertain and costly; success might be achieved by hurling an overwhelming force against a sector where it was not expected, and at a moment when his mobile reserves were pinned down elsewhere by action or the threat of actions

57. Kesselring had defended the Italian front with two Armies; they had been successful in defence; the winter line had been held; Rome was still in German hands. But where would the Allies strike next? Which attacks would be diversions and which one the main effort? Would they strike through the Belmonte valley,\* at Cassino, at the Liri, at the Garigliano, at Gaeta, from the beachhead, at the mouth of the Tiber, at Civitavecchia, at Livorno? And how to place the mobile reserves? Had it not been seen that reserves would come too late if not held in closest proximity? But would they not be wasted if unavailable in massed formation at the right time and in the right place? These were the problems that plagued Kesselring and his Army Commanders as the time of decision drew near. It will be seen below that Kesselring was deceived and finally

\* Belmonte, about 10 kms north of Cassino, was an inviting starting point for an advance to Sora via Atina.

came up with the wrong answer.. When the big attack was launched his mobile reserves were far from the scene of action.

58. It would be difficult to make out a better case for security in the field than that which is presented by the German records for the period in question. A German Marshal, his Army Commanders, Corps Commanders and their Chiefs of Staff commanded, ordered, demanded and pleaded for the taking of prisoners - just a couple, just one - to throw some light on the mystery of Allied dispositions. Hitler attached great importance to the babblings of a Moroccan deserter; much was made of the statement under narcosis of a wounded and captured British officer "that the Allies would strike when the weather was favourable"; radio interception teams sought to identify units from regimental numbers that had been carelessly divulged in small talk of signal units near the front.

(v.Schramm, folio 1794-PS-11, op cit para 4 above; 53271/6, Tenth Army, W. D. 6, vol 3 of Appx, Appx 377, 23 Apr 4.4; paras 72, 75, 77 below)

59. Any decisions that were to be made with regard to the dispositions of Kesselring's troops would mainly affect the Tenth Army. The bulk of Fourteenth Army was absorbed by the task of containing the Allies in the beachhead. The strength of this Army did not vary greatly; between 2 Feb and 25 Apr, on balance, it increased by 13,000 men; in mid April the total strength was given as approximately 134,000 men. (Information regarding Fourteenth Army has been presented fully in: G.M.D.S. The German Operations at Anzio, op cit, para 22f above)\*\*

60. Tenth Army, as shown in earlier paragraphs, had reported its strength for the first three months of the year as follows:

1 Jan	168,215
1 Feb	134,341
1 Mar	154,347

For 1 Apr Tenth Army reported a strength of 184,005 (981A10.(D39)) and Fourteenth Army a strength of 134,350 (981(D40)). The forces of both Armies therefore numbered 318,355 men. A new schematic Order of Battle of Tenth Army was issued on 5 Apr; a photostatic copy and a translation appear as Appendix "F" to this report (981A10.(131)). On the same day 22 Flak Bde submitted a situation map for 4 Apr. (981A10. D14))

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\*\* In this connection photostatic copies of the following documents are being permanently retained:

Fourteenth Army:	Schematic Order of Battle of Large Formations; 1 Apr 44 (981A10.(D35))
Fourteenth Army:	Schematic Order of G.H.Q. Troops with Fourteenth Army; 1 Apr 44 (981A10.(D36))
Fourteenth Army:	Strength, Evaluation of Combat Value and other Data concerning Formations under Command of Fourteenth Army; 1 Apr 44 (981A10.(D37))
Fourteenth Army:	Tabulation of Arrivals and Departures between 2 Feb and 25 Apr 44 (981A10.(D38))

(G.M.D.S. - 59091/2, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, Appx 287, 288, 291a, 354c)

(G.M. D. S. - 53271/4, Tenth Army, W. D, 6, vol 1 of Appx, Appx 154, 9 Apr 44; 59091/2, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, Appx 316, 10 Apr 44; 58533/10, Tenth Army, Files of Sen Arty Cmdr, Apr 44, 5 Apr; 53271/6, Tenth Army, W. D. 6, vol 3 of Appx, Appx 400, 5 Apr 44 )

61. It is quite improbable that Armeegruppe v.Zangen failed to make periodical strength returns but none have come to hand as yet. Lists of units and orders of battle abound in the papers of the Ameergruppe; in this particular case however, due to constant changes in the strength of many units, they are not reliable guides to numerical strength. The lack of simultaneous strength reports by the various formations indeed would place an estimate on the level of a guess regarding the number of ants in an ant-hill. The order of battle for 1 Apr shows the following large formations:

75 Inf Corps	356 Inf Div
	162 Inf Div (Turcoman)
	Para Pz Div Hermann Goering*
Corps Witthoeft	(in formation)
Corps Kuebler	188 Res Inf Div
	278 Inf Div (in formation)

Numerous G.H.Q., specialist, security and line of communication units.

In addition to this, the rear areas were teeming with the personnel of a multitude of German Air Force, Naval, Police and miscellaneous para-military organizations, most of them engaged in bitter intrigues for the control of sometimes very substantial blocks of hoarded man-power. A good picture of these many German headquarters was given by General Walter v.Unruh in one of the narratives written by German senior officers for the Historical Division U.S. Army. \*\*

(981SOM . (D5))

(G. M. D. S. - 65839/9, Armeegruppe v.Zangen, Appx to W. D. , Order of Battle on 1 Apr 44; Hist Div U.S. army, Manuscripts of German Officers, General v.Unruh, War Experiences, Chapter 12, Italy)

62. An estimate of the number of Italian soldiers serving during April in the area of O.B.SW as members of Italian construction battalions and units of the "Republican Fascist Army" can be made on the basis of a document issued by O.B.SW on 1 May:

At the moment 53,000 Italian soldiers are at our disposal; 13% of these have deserted.

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\* Hermann Goering Panzer Division at that time was an Armed Forces High Command reserve (v.Schramm, folio 1794-PS-12, op cit, para 4 above)

\*\* Early in 1944, the Armed Forces High Command (though never in full agreement with him) had permitted v.Unruh to undertake a tour of inspection to study and possibly solve some problems of man-power policy. The overriding political considerations which had led to the absorption of large numbers of able-bodied men into favoured organizations, had resulted in a drain on man-power reserves which in the aggregate deprived the fighting armies of literally hundreds of thousands of men. But like others who voiced misgivings or critical opinions, v.Unruh was not received by Hitler, nor by Jodl; no heed was paid to his advice, and he was retired and assed into oblivion while the war was still in progress (ibid).

A large part of this force was engaged in construction work on the Apennine position; 17,922 men (including German cadres) were reported as being thus employed on 1 Apr 44.\* (G.M.D.S. - 64839/8, Armeegruppe v.Zangen, vol 3 of Reports, folio 217, 1 May 44: v.Schramm, folio 1794-PS-14, o1 cit, para 4 above)

63. With regard to Italian workers in the employ of the Germans, the War Diary of the firm'd Forces Operations Staff refers to a force of over 50,000 civilians who were occupied with the construction of defences on the west coast. XIL11 over Northern Italy numerous working forces of varying size and reliability had been gathered by the Germans for the purpose of repairing air-raid damage to railway lines, roads and war-plants.

(v. Sohramm, folio 1794-PS-14, op cit, para 4 above)

64. The main concern of the German command in Italy was of course the vastly changing picture of Allied dispositions. The telephone conversations of the first ten days of the month show that the Germans were well aware of the fact that major changes were taking place. With the ill lies in a position to carry out any desired combination, it was thought best to avoid hasty and premature reactions to unconfirmed information. By 11 Apr it seemed at least to be quite certain that the Adriatic sector was being thinned out and that additional German regiments could therefore be moved with impunity to the Western part of the front. The relief of 8 Ind Div by tired 4 Ind Div was considered as a weakening of the sector; the assumed transfer of 1 Cdn Corps Headquarters to Naples seemed to foreshadow the withdrawal of 1 Cdn Inf Div from the sector:

"it would be an anomalous situation for 1 Cdn Inf Div to remain for long under a British Corps Command".

On 12 Apr an entry in the War Diary of A.O.K. 10 described the situation in the following terms:

For the first time, the interrogation of prisoner has now made it possible to form an approximate picture of the regroupings carried out by the enemy within the last few days under cover of heavy smoke screens. The enemy seems to have given up the idea of an

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\* For reasons of security, or in order to create certain psychological effects, the Germans occasionally changed the designation of important defences. What was at first described as the "Apennine position" became later the "Gothic line" and finally the "Green line".

25 Apr 44 Armeegruppe v.Zangen to subordinate formations:

Effective immediately the designation "Apennine position" is changed to "Gothic position". (981A10. (D42) )

16 Jun 44 Armeearbeitung v.Zangen to subordinate formations:

Effective immediately the designation "Gothic position" is changed to "Green line". (981AZ D57))

(G. M. D.S . - 64839/8, Armeegruppe v. Zangen, W. D. , vol. 3 of Appx, Part II, 25 Apr 44; 64839/5, Armeearbeitung v.Zangen, W.D., Part II, Orders, 16 Jun 44)

attack on Cassino; on the other hand one must now expect a large-scale attack on the right wing and a landing on the West coast.

(G. M. D. S. - 53271/4, Tenth Army, W. D. 6, Vol 1 of Appx, tel cons 1-10 Apr 44; 53271/5, Tenth Army W.D. 6, Vol 2 of Appx, tel cons 11, 12 Apr 44; 53271/1, Tenth Army W.D. 6, 10, 12 Apr 44)

65. The War Diary of 14 Pz Corps for 13 Apr shows that an early attack against the Corps front was expected. The significance of the fact that the Allied inter-army boundary was now at the Liri was weighed in several telephone conversations; it seemed to confirm the imminence of a land attack, and to increase the probability of a seaborne operation. Although the bulk of Kesselring's records is not available, it can be gathered from other sources that at the time he gave serious consideration to the possibility of landings at Gaeta-Nettuno, at Civitavecchia, and (later in the month) to one at Livorno. There can be no doubt that he was anxious to prevent a repetition of the initial fiasco at Nettuno; the War Diary of the Armed Forces Operations Staff records the fact that on 13 Apr Hitler expressed concern over the possibility of such landings; large numbers of suitable vessels had been reported from the ports of Northern Africa without any key to indicate whether they were earmarked for Southern France or for the critical stretch of coast between Gaeta and Livorno.

(G. M. D. S. - 58199/1, 14 Pz Corps, W. D. 6, 13 Apr 44; v. Schramm, folio 1794-PS-10, op cit, para 4 above)

66. There is some documentary evidence that Kesselring was asked to give an appreciation of the situation with regard to a landing between Gaeta and the beachhead; the order reached him at 2330 hrs, 13 Apr, and the reply was to reach Hitler's headquarters not later than 0730 hrs, 14 Apr. The required analysis was prepared by Colonel Ernst Zolling, Senior Intelligence Officer at Army Group Headquarters. The forces available in Southern Italy for such a landing were estimated at:

- One armoured division
- Two infantry divisions
- Two to three infantry brigades
- Three to four commando formations

(Photostat and translation: 981A10.(D43))

On 17 Apr this estimate was elaborated and revised as follows:

- 1) Enemy forces on the Italian mainland available for a landing as far up as Civitavecchia:
  - One armoured division
  - One to two armoured brigades
  - Two armoured battalions
  - Two to three infantry divisions



Three to four independent brigades  
(paratroops & Guards)  
Three to four commando formations

- 2) Enemy forces from the High Command reserves in North Africa available for a landing in the area Genoa - Livorno:

Three to four armoured divisions  
two armoured brigades  
eight to ten infantry divisions  
airborne troops equivalent to one division  
three to four commando formations

(Photostat and translation: 981A10.(D44))

(G.M.D.S. - 75138/29, O.B.SW, Int reps, 14 and 17 Apr 44)

67. Whereas speculation at the highest levels revolved around the question of landing operations, the Commander of 51 Mtn Corps quite naturally was mainly concerned with the dangers that threatened his forces on the land front. On 14 Apr General Feurstein issued an order in which he set forth in great detail the present condition of the Corps and the manner in which it was to conduct the coming defensive operations. Regarding wider aspects he stated that an immediate attack in the Corps area was not probable; that the energy was replacing exhausted divisions at Cassino and Nettuno with fresh ones, and that a decisive attack was to be expected on the front of 14 Pz Corps. Radio interception was said to have shown that the headquarters of Eighth Army had been transferred to the Naples area; the conjecture was made that Eighth Army might assume command of the whole southern front, and Fifth Army move to the beachhead. (981A10. (D45))

(G. M. D. S. - 55779/8, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Appx C 244, 14 Apr 44 )

68. At Cassino, General Heidrich felt certain that a new attack on 1 Para Div was being staged by the Allies. His appreciation of the situation, dated 22 Apr 44, began with the following remarks:

Now, as ever, the task is to hold the present position. The massif of Monte Cassino and the mountain range northwest of it form the key-point of -the Corps front. Should the enemy succeed in breaking through over the mountains into -the Casilina plain, the whole Corps front adjoining it to the South would be most seriously imperilled. The present main line of resistance, except for quite minor changes, represents the last chance of preventing this.

Observation results point to a renewed enemy attack. The preparations are apparently well under way. Without any doubt, troops are being assembled in-the area Partinello - Cervaro - Portella. The enemy artillery has been reinforced and is ranging; enemy air

reconnaissance is very active. In my opinion the enemy must carry out this attack in conjunction with his attack in the Nettuno bridgehead...

(Photostat and translation: 981A10.(D46))

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/6 Tenth Army, W.D.6, vol 3 of Appx, Appx 499, 30 Apr 44, dated 22 Apr 44)

69. When General v.Senger proceeded on leave on 18 Apr, General of Artillery Walter Hartmann assumed temporary command of 14 Pz Corps. On 22 Apr, 1 Para Div telephoned that an immediate attack was expected in the mountain area northwest of Cassino (Colle S. Angelo - Massa Albaneta). This report was duly transmitted to Tenth Army, but Corps went on record as "still considering an attack on the right wing as the burning problem". The subject was further touched upon in the War Diary for 23 Apr:

...It is possible that the enemy will advance with some forces (5 Cdn Armd Div) into the Belmonte valley with the intention of separating 5 Mtn Div from the South. The main attack must still be expected on the right wing. According to the dispositions of the enemy, an attack at and north of Cassino could only be undertaken with forces that are too weak for a breakthrough. Differing in this matter from the views of immediately concerned 5 Mtn Div, 14 Corps does not see a major threat in the movements of the enemy in that area.\*

(G.M.D.S. - 58199/1, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, 18 - 23 Apr 44)

70. Later in the day Marshal Kesselring appeared at the tactical headquarters of 14 Corps and General. Hartmann used the opportunity to advocate assembling a motorized reserve well to the rear (15 Pz Gren Div). "The Marshal clung to his old idea of keeping local reserves in closest proximity to the front at as many points as possible", but Hartmann evidently persisted and finally obtained consent. He said that he planned to use the Divisional Headquarters at the coast

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\* Daily reports O.B.SW to Army General Staff:

23 Apr (for 22 Apr): Enemy dispositions; prisoner of war information:

11 Cdn Inf Bde of 5 Cdn Armd Div (with Irish R.C.) in new area of commitment from prisoner taken at Valleluce.

Tel cons Wentzell - Westphal, 23 Apr

Wentzell: Something very queer has happened to us; at the Cefalco a prisoner has been taken from the Inf Bde of 5 Cdn Armd Div.

Westphal: Are they up there too?

Wentzell: Now we are asking ourselves, what is he doing up here at the Cefalco? This seems to indicate that they intend to do something in the general direction of the Belmonte valley.

(G.M.D.S. - H 22/134, O.B.SW, Daily sit reps, 23 Apr; 53271/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 3 of Appx, tel cons 23 Apr 44)

to lighten the burden of 94 Inf Div. It is probable that this was the opening move in the plan to take 15 Pz Gren Div to the southern part of the front; Hartmann did not believe in "string of pearls" tactics, and was willing to weaken the Liri sector, where he did not expect a major thrust, 44 Inf Div was now to be responsible for the left Liri sector; 71 Inf Div for the right. This decision was of advantage to the Allies when the Eighth Army breached the Gustav line in May.

(G. M. D. S . 58199/1, 14. Pz Corps, W.D. 6, 23 Apr 44)

71. At the same meeting Kesselring expressed his current views on the situation. The most important statements were recorded by the Corps; it is interesting to note that Kesselring now believed in a landing at Livorno:

- a) A landing in Southern France is possible, but not very probable, owing to the great distance from the starting bases.
- b) A landing at Livorno is to be expected; its aim will be to cut off Tenth and Fourteenth Armies and to advance to Northern Italy in order to get as close to Germany as possible.
- c) An attack from the beachhead is not expected at this time.
- d) At the centre of 14 Pz Corps the forces of the enemy are not strong enough for a large-scale attack. Unless he draws upon major reserves in the African area, they are strong enough only for attacks with a limited objective. If (meaning 'if a major attack takes place'), then at the right wing. Enemy action at Cassino is expected.

(G.M D.S. - 58199/1, 14 Pz Corps, W. D, 6 , 23 Apr 44)

72. The prevailing conjecture was further strengthened by a telephone conversation between v.Vietinghoff and Kesselring shortly before midnight:

23 Apr 2355 hrs

- v.V. ...Up here we have a Moroccan deserter who claims that it [the big offensive] will start on 25 Apr.
- K. Well!
- v.V. Upon receiving the news that 5 Cdn Armd Div has popped up there (Belmonte area), I gave orders for another battalion of 114 Jg Div to move to the Belmonte valley.



belongings in the evening and had arisen at an early hour "in order to be ready" felt rather sheepish. Said Wentzell on the telephone: "Whenever you are well prepared - nothing happens"

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 3 of Appx, tel dons 23, 24, 25 Apr 44)

76. The relief of 1 Cdn Inf Div by 10 Ind Div began on 21 Apr and was discovered by the Germans on 24 Apr. Signs pointing to a coming move had been noted on 19 Apr; O.B.SW reported to Army General Staff:

20 Apr (for 19 Apr) Considerable movement in the rear area of 1 Cdn Inf Div.

In the telephone conversations of 24 and 26 Apr the subject was referred to in the following remarks:

24 Apr	Wentzell - Weller (51 Mtn Corps)
1035 hrs	There is no change in the signal traffic of 1 Cdn Inf Div. 334 Inf Div must send somebody around and to rear of that division.
1740 hrs	1 Cdn Inf Div is now not being intercepted. If we do not observe this relief it may have very unfortunate consequences.
26 Apr	Wentzell - Weller (51 Mtn Corps)
1025 hrs	All Canadians have left the sector.
2250 hrs	10 Ind Div has been in this area for from three to four days; it has relieved the Canadians. The Indians saw the Canadian vehicles pass by in a southerly direction. It is possible that the Italian units will be flanked by Canadian instead of Polish units.**

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\* 14 Pz Corps to subordinate formations:

1730 hrs 24 Apr

Enemy large-scale offensive seems to be directly imminent. Highest degree of readiness as of 2400 hrs, 24 Apr.

C. of S. 14 Pz Corps,

(G.M.D.S. - 58199/22, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, vol 5 of Appx, Appx 736, 25 Apr 44)

\*\* With regard to the unexpected appearance of 10 Ind Div in Italy, C. of S. Tenth Army said:

The appearance of 10 Ind Div gave me quite a jolt because no intelligence source had noticed either their departure from the Orient or their arrival here. Great gaps in the intelligence service are apparent.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 4 of Appx, Appx 652, 10 May 44)

(G.M.D.S. 75138/29, O.B.SW, Int reps, 29 Apr 44; 53271/6, Tenth Army, War Diary, vol 3 of Appx, tel cons 24, 26 Apr 44)

77. During these days a German radio interception team obtained some scraps of information from a Canadian network:

Short Range Wireless Interception Platoon "Marie". Report for period 1900 hrs 24 Apr - 1900 hrs 25 Apr (981A10. (D48))

...On a network that was intercepted for the first time on 25 Apr (2190 kilocycles), an otherwise uninteresting message at 1440 hrs mentioned Sgt. J.L. Bruneau, Regtl No. D 36391 and an NCO J.M.R. Leonard, Regtl No. D 36662. According to the volume "The British Army", these numbers belong to a regiment with the code number 36 (Canadian Military District No. 4, Headquarters in Montreal, P.Q.). Radio location finder indicates a station somewhere on a line from 0.5 km east of Monte Leucio near Pico to 2 kms south of Rocca d'Evandro.

This information was of little value to the Germans; with the great mixture of numbers in Canadian units it could never have been conclusive; from the point of view of security in the field it might be of interest however that only a few days earlier the Germans had intercepted a message dealing with a Pte Parsons, Regtl No. 7025091 and had concluded that he was of and with 2 Bn London Irish Rifles (Royal Ulster Rifles) of 38 Bde, 78 Div.

(G.M.D.S. - 58200/5 14 Pz Corps, W. D. 6, vol 4 of Appx, Appx 574, ibid, Appx 567)

78. On 28 Apr v. Vietinghoff told Kesselring that Allied dispositions seemed to be undergoing further material changes; on 29 Apr he sent a strong letter to the Corps Commanders urging them to demand the taking of prisoners by all divisions, and on 30 Apr he was informed by Air Liaison that Allied forces were being concentrated behind the Liri front:

30 Apr 2150 hrs. v. Vietinghoff - Hartmann

v.V. The latest information does not prove anything unless confirmed by the taking of prisoners. It seems to be certain however that a concentration is taking place south of the Liri...

The air liaison network reports three enemy formations between Cassino and the Liri. This is quite a bit!

30 Apr, War Diary A.O.K.10:

In view of the fact that one enemy Corps with three formations is being reported between Liri and Cassino, 14 Pz Corps has been ordered to dispatch an operational reserve of one battalion to Pignatoro.

The true size and portent of the Allied striking force being assembled in this sector was not known to v.Vietinghoff, and therefore he was thinking in terms of a mere diversionary attack.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 6 , vol 3 of Appx, tel cons 28 Apr; ibid Appx 479, 29 Apr; 53271/1, Tenth.Army, W.D. 6, 30 Apr 44)

79. The changes in the command arrangements that had been ordered by Tenth Army on 24 Apr were in the meantime being carried out and became effective on 30 Apr. It was strongly felt that the interpolation of a third Corps headquarters would have been the best solution, but none was available and permission to create one had been refused on an earlier occasion.\* When the Army Commander called at Headquarters 14 Pz Corps on 26 Apr, General Hartmann stressed the unsatisfactory aspects of the new arrangements:

Experience has shown that the whole Cassino front from Terelle to south of the Liri must be in one hand and not divided. Either the Corps retains its many divisions and therewith the possibility of juggling with the reserves of five divisions - this was the secret of previous successes - or the Corps keeps only 15 Pz Gren Div, 94 and 71 Inf Divs.

A few days later General Feurstein made similar representations: Corps Group Hauck could not be handled properly from the new location of Corps Headquarters at Pescosolido, and tactical considerations demanded unified command in the Cassino area. With 15 Pz Gren Div moving to the right flank of 14 Pz Corps and 90 Pz Gren Div also keeping its eyes turned to the coast, the Army Commander then by the end of the first week of May gave the order to extend the front of 51 Mtn Corps to the Liri and placed Group Hauck under direct command of the: Army (see para 92 below).

(G.M. D. S. - 55799/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W. D. 2, 30 Apr, 3 May 44; 58199/22, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, 26 Apr 44)

80. At the end of the month Tenth Army issued a comprehensive "Enemy Situation Bulletin". Allied dispositions known or surmised, were entered on an attached map (981A10.(D49)). In this document Allied intentions were appreciated as follows:

A conclusive estimate of enemy intentions cannot be made at the moment as troop movements continue, especially in the area of Eighth Army. It can be considered as highly probable that the enemy is making preparations for a large-scale offensive with the forces of Fifth Army facing our land front and with the southern forces of Eighth Army. The enemy has a sufficient number of troops and landing craft to carry out landing operations on both sides of Gaeta. In the centre and on the northern sector of the front no large attacks are expected.

(G.M.D.S. - 58533/11, Tenth Army, Files of Sen Arty Comdr, May 44)

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\* H.S. Report No. 18, para 163; G.M.D.S. - 53271/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 3 of Appx, Appx 377, tel cons v.Vietinghoff -Kesselring, 23 Apr 44)

81. The map that accompanied the above "Enemy Situation Bulletin" proved that the Germans were not well informed regarding the dispositions of 1 Cdn Corps. Corps Headquarters, elements of 5 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Cdn Armd Bde were shown as being in the rear areas in unknown locations; 1 Cdn Inf Div was tentatively shown in the Volturno sector east of Mignano (ibid).

#### EFFECTS OF ALLIED DECEPTIVE MEASURES

82. At the very time when the above version of Canadian dispositions was being circulated, reports of great Canadian activity in the Salerno - Naples area began to arrive, and an artfully created Fata Morgana of Canadian forces getting set for a landing operation was added to the already nebulous German conception of Allied preparations. Kesselring wired to Army General Staff:

1 May (for 30 Apr)

Intelligence service reports Headquarters  
1 Cdn Inf Div at NOCERA (10 km NW Salerno).  
Numerous Canadian troops and vehicles in Salerno area. (981A10.(D50))

(G.M.D.S. - H 22/134, O.B.SW, Daily sit reps, 1 May 44)

83. During the ensuing few days the daily intelligence reports of the Headquarters Intelligence Section O.B.SW carried the following items:

4 May From Intelligence service:

- a) On 2 May Canadian troop movements (1st Cdn Inf Div?) in Salerno area; direction towards Avellino and Naples,
- b) 36 An Inf Div said to have been moved to Averso for exercises.

8 May From reliable source:

On 7 May, in area Pozzuoli (12 km WSW Naples) extensive landing exercises of an American formation in strength of at least one division and in combination with armoured units.

(G.M.D.S. - 75138/29, Daily reports Int Sec O.B.SW)

84. Some additional information was recorded by Tenth Army's Intelligence section:

5 May A confidential agent reports the concentration of enemy troops in the Salerno - Naples area, Amongst others, 1 Cdn Inf Div is said to be engaged there in manoeuvres.



6 May            A reliable source reports an engineer regiment in the Naples area, possibly 36 Am Engr Landing Regt. In view of the concentrations in that area and of the major role which this regiment has been playing in all major landings, this new information may be of significance.

(G. M. D. S . - 53277/19 , Tenth Army, Int reps May 44)\*

85.     In the absence of more ample information from the files of O.B.SW, the picture as it developed during the first eleven days of May can be visualized to some extent from the telephone conversations that were recorded at Headquarters of Tenth Army. During this time Tenth Army did not capture any prisoners; elements of 5 Cdn Armd Div were believed to be in a sector of secondary importance, and 1 Cdn Inf Div seemed to have been identified in the Salerno - Naples area. The subject was not being further discussed, After the false alarm in the last week of April, everything was quiet now: telephone conversations had become shorter and more perfunctory; senior officers began to apply for leave, and though was being Given to the possible relief of tired 15 .Pz Gren Div. On 10 May, Wentzell (C. of S. Tenth Army; just back from leave) and Colonel Beelitz (temporarily replacing General Westphal, C. of S. O.B.SW) discussed the situation over the telephone:

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\* A considerable part of German operational intelligence was being obtained by means of wireless interception. Allied formations that were lax in matters of wireless security supplied a good deal of information; the worst offender, according to the records, was the French Expeditionary Corps. On 8 May 44 the German Short Range Wireless Interception Platoon "Marie" reported:

Enemy formations, new:

Canadian - new: Royal 22e Regt.

On a French network (2470 Kz) two operators carried on the following conversation:

1048 hrs

First operator:            Then you are a French Canadian too, and right from Montreal?

Second operator:        What a coincidence. We must see one another.

First operator:            You must have served with Royal 22e Regt,

Second operator:        That's right. I'll be seeing you, pal.

After this the operators conversed in the English language. According to the order of battle Royal 22e Regt belongs to the Canadian Brigade (sic) of 1 Cdn Inf Div. Since the network in question is a French network it must be assumed that the above soldiers from Canada are not serving with a Canadian formation but with a formation of the French Expeditionary Corps. (981A10(D51))

It is improbable that the German intelligence officer was right; it is probable on the other hand that he would have raised a hue and cry for information on 1 Cdn Inf Div, had that formation not been reported as being in the Salerno area. It may be well to note that between 0600 hrs and 1300 hrs of that day R. 22e R., was moving from the Lucera country to Montesarchio in strict wireless silence.

(G.M.D.S. - 58200/6, 14 Pz Corps, Int reps May 44, item 599; W. D. R. 22e R., 5-8 .May 44).

10 May           Wentzell:       ...To my great pleasure everything is quiet. Only I do not know what is going on; things are becoming ever more uncertain.

                  Beelitz:        I have told this to the Field Marshal. He looks very intently towards the coast. Yesterday there was another very interesting landing exercise down there near Naples. The Marshal thinks that they have selected an area that typically resembles the Gaeta - Formia - Minturno sector. I would rather say that it corresponds to the sector Gaeta -Terracina.\*

                  Wentzell:       Why that sector in particular? One could well say that it is up there at Civitavecchia.\*\*

                  Beelitz:        No. Up there it looks different .  
                          ...

                  Wentzell:       In past times one heard at least once in a while that such and such division had left Africa; but now one hears nothing. Churchill has certainly succeeded in covering up every move, just as he told us in his speech...

                          The successor of Canaris said that he would do everything in his power. But we hear nothing from the rear areas, into which we cannot penetrate. After all this is his business .  
                          ...

                          Since 10 Ind Div has appeared without any advance notice I have become quite skeptical; I think it not impossible that things are going on of which we have no idea.

                          One can think of a thousand possibilities, but which one will materialize nobody can say. It is just like Napoleon said: "When you prepare yourself for 100 possibilities, the 101st one happens; the one for which you have made no preparations".

                          But if they do anything in the near future, it must be Rome.

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\* Kesselring's opinion was reflected in his own words by a remark which he made to v.Vietinghoff over the telephone on the next morning:

11 May   ...As you know, the landing of an armoured division was being enacted at Pozzuoli.. Looking at the picture of the coast down there, one notes a great resemblance to the area of which Sperlonga is the centre.

(G.M.D.S. - S3271/8 Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 5 of Appx, Appx 670, 11 May 44)

\*\* At that moment Wentzell unwittingly came close to assisting General Alexander's plan of deception.

Beelitz: In which case the question is: Mouth of the Tiber or Civitavecchia?  
The Marshal thinks however that it will be Terracina or Gaeta.

(G. M. D.S. - 53271/7, Tenth Army, W. D. 6, vol 4 of Appx, Tel cons 1-10 May 44)

86. While the records show that Kesselring firmly believed in the imminence of an Allied landing, there are no indications that he had ever quite definitely decided in his mind which particular stretch of coast would be the most probable scene of the action. It will be shown later that long after the opening of the land offensive he clung to the idea of an attack from the sea. To mention one case in point; he did not release 29 Pz Gren Div for intervention at the front until the evening of 20 May, when, after four fruitless requests by his C. of S., the Commander of Fourteenth Army personally had urgently demanded the dispatch of the Division to his crumbling eastern flank (see para 123 below).

(G. M. D. S. - 5 9091/1, Fourteenth Army, W. D. 3 , 20 May 44 )

87. There is no doubt that very serious consideration was given to the possibility of a landing in the Civitavecchia -Tarquinia sector. With 92 Inf Div deployed on its left flank, 29 Pz Gren Div was poised in the Oriolo - Viterbo area for a quick counter-thrust. The War Diary of Fourteenth Army shows that an exercise "Buechsenlicht" (defence of Civitavecchia -Tarquinia sector) was held on 3 May. Kesselring and high officers from many formations were present and explored the various aspects and implications of the hypothetical case. As a direct result of this exercise, 29 Pz Gren Div was ordered to redeploy its forces in a manner more closely corresponding to the tactical requirements of such a situation. The master of deception at Headquarters 15 Army Group had well succeeded in influencing the mind of the enemy commander; in the event 29 Pz Gren Div was retained in the Viterbo sector far too long, and in spite of the fact that at the critique of the exercise it seems to have been the consensus of opinion that from the point of view of Allied strategy a landing at Civitavecchia was not an ideal solution and therefore a course of action less probable than others.

(G.M.D.S. - ibid; 59091/3, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, vol 2 of Appx, Appx 371, 372, 373)

88. The narratives that have been prepared by ranking German prisoners of war undoubtedly are a valuable enrichment to the fund of information on the enemy. But it cannot be overlooked that even to the best of minds the task of writing history from memory presents difficulties of a formidable nature. A case in point is found in connection with attempts to assess the true measure of the effects that were obtained by the allied schemes of deception prior to and during the battle for Rome. General Bessel (one of those who would have preferred a timely withdrawal to shorter positions in order to unite the two Armies and to create reserves) in his narrative "The C Position" states:

..Right into the month of May, O.B.SW clung to the idea that the centre of gravity of the forthcoming battles would be located in the Adriatic sector.  
This was to be fatal...

(Op cit, Para 43 f above)

Such a contention is not founded on fact, and is fully contradicted by the large body of recorded and available evidence.

89. A misapprehension of lesser degree appears in Wentzell's "he Italian Campaign" (Translation: (981.013(D2)))

The German command appreciated enemy intentions as follows

- c) A major landing on about the scale of Anzio, for example in the Civitavecchia area, was considered as possible, but not probable on account of the (implied] dispersal of Allied forces...

Wentzell, although of the high officers of Army Group "C", possibly the one most richly endowed with the gifts of perspicacity and clarity of mind, in this particular instance seems to state his own opinion rather than that of Kesselring, whose processes of thought had of necessity to encompass strategical considerations of broader ramifications. It may also be noted en passant that Wentzell had been on leave during the week in which the Allied landing exercises had been staged for the benefit of German commanders. Under these circumstances it is particularly fortunate that, apart from Wentzell's narrative, an authoritative account of the situation was laid down in the narrative based on the records of the 2xmed Forces Operations Staff (v.Schramm, op cit, Para 4 above). A full translation of the section of the document dealing with the fighting up to the time of the breakthrough into the Senger position appears in Appendix "A" to this report. Due to its importance in connection with the appraisal of "the deception", (although in part touching on matters examined in later paragraphs), the following is being quoted here from that source:

- b) Review of the Situation and our own Countermeasures.

It was immediately clear to the German Supreme Command that the attack under way against the right wing of the Tenth German Army by nine infantry and two armoured formations as well as other unattached armoured formations, was an operation with a far-reaching objective, and that it was the first phase of the planned general offensive of the Allies. From the start our own countermeasures were subject to a severe handicap. Although a number of the enemy formations up to now assumed to be in the rear areas of the southern front were identified at the front itself, the enemy appeared to be holding a further number of unattached formations (e.g. 36 Amer, 1 Cdn Inf, 6 S. African Armd Divs) in the Naples area ready for operational commitment (communication from Gen v.B. 15 May; report from O.B.SW 16 May).<sup>\*</sup> With these he could have made an enveloping landing at any time. Furthermore, three French formations and one American were assumed to be now in Corsica. These were probably the advance troops of the North African reserve, earmarked for a landing in southern France. It was also

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<sup>\*</sup> The picture of Allied dispositions, as seen by the enemy prior to the beginning of the May offensive, appears on a series of "Enemy Situation Maps". Photostatic copies of these maps for 28 Apr, 7 May, 12 May and 13 May 44 are being retained (981A10.(D52)).

(G.M.D.S. - 58200/18, 14 Pz Corps, "Enemy Situation Maps", 1 Jan - 30 Jun 44)

conceivable that this Corsican group had been provided for a new landing on O.B. SW's Tyrrhenian flank; even that the enemy, by relinquishing his designs on the French Mediterranean forces against Italy. This might well mean that the entire western invasion would not take place, and that the Italian theatre of war would become the real "Second Front" (sitrep 19 May). Furthermore, on 15 May the port of Earl was crowded with an unusual number of vessels, which occasioned a passing concern for the Adriatic flank too (sitrep 16 May), and the expectation that the enemy would also advance from the Nettuno bridgehead. The natural consequence of these considerations was that those at high command levels could only resolve hesitatingly and step by step to release the major reserves, which were being held ready on the coasts and in northern Italy, for the threatened right wing of Tenth Army. The situation was similar to that which was to prevail in Normandy a month later. Here too the possibility of a second large-scale landing in the area of Fifteenth Army curtailed the early and concentrated commitment of the available reserves on the Cotentin front.

Soon however, 1 Cdn Inf Div, 6 S. African Armd Div, etc, were identified at the front, and thus the concentration of forces in the Naples area was known to have been dispersed (sitrep 19 May). At about the end of May, another fact became apparent, which was decisive for an appreciation of the enemy's intentions. This was the gradual draining away of the N. African reserve (communication Gen v.B. 2 Jun).

(Wentzell, The Italian Campaign, English text, page 28; G.M.D.S. - 5327/1, Tenth Army, W.D., 4 May 44; 53271/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 4 of Appx, tel cons 10 May 44; Appx "A" to this report, pp. 2 and 3)

#### TENTH ARMY ON THE EVE OF THE ALLIED OFFENSIVE

90. On the day that ended with the opening of the great Allied offensive, command arrangements and dispositions of Tenth Army had reached the point where the Germans were confident of being able to roll with the punch. Keeselring said: "I feel that we have done all that is humanly possible". Allied wireless traffic had been consistently moderate; nothing of an alarming nature had been reported; on the occasion of the customary morning call v.Vietinghoff had said to Kesselring:

11 May 0905 hrs	There is nothing special going on. Yesterday I called at the Headquarters of the two Corps; both Corps commanders told me as one that they did not yet have the impression that anything was going to happen.
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Later in the day the Headquarters of Tenth Army at Massa d'Albe was bombed from the air, but nevertheless v.Vietinghoff departed in the evening for Hitler's Headquarters to receive a decoration.\*

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\* Something that may well have been part of the deceptive plan occurred on the northern salient of the front. Lively vehicle traffic in the Allied sector facing 334 Inf Div and 114 Jg Div had been reported on 9 May:

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D, 6, vol 5 of appx, Appx 670, 11 May 44 )

91. It may be permissible to wonder whether v.Vietinghoff was not led to over optimism by his desire to depart for Hitler's Headquarters and to arrive there without the burden of unpleasant news. During the same conversation in which the commander of 51 Mtn Corps reportedly stated that he did not expect an immediate attack, he had also made serious representations regarding the numerical weakness of his troops. In the War Diary of 51 Mtn Corps we find the following entry:

10 May            Visit of Army Commander and discussion with  
1930 hrs           Corps Commander.

The Corps Commander points out that the present positions of 44 Inf Div cannot be held against the enemy, who is superior in material and numbers. To prevent a shattering of the forces it would be better to withdraw to the Senger Riegel and to give up Cassino, thereby freeing forces for the creation of reserves, Unless the higher command makes this decision, an orderly withdrawal will not be possible. The Army Commander does not share this view and emphasizes the importance of holding Cassino and the present lines.

At the time of his arrival at the southern front, General Fourstein, aged 60, was not well known to the younger general officers, and had been discussed with a tinge of condescension. But in the meantime, he had shown good common sense, zeal and insight, and had risen greatly in their estimation. In this case, however, his opinion was brushed aside despite the logic of his reasoning. Cassino had become a symbol; v.Vietinghoff may have felt that the Fuehrer would never countenance a withdrawal from Cassino without a fight to the bitter end.

(G.M. D. S. - 55889/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W. D. 2, 10 May 44 )

92. The first shuffle in command arrangements had been concluded by the end of April (paras 74 and 79). It had only been an intermediate solution; more and more it was being felt that the Cassino front from Terelle to the Liri ought to be under one command, and that 14 Pz Corps had become unwieldy and overburdened with problems. What was planned to be, and perforce had to be, the final arrangement, was ordered on 7 May and completed by the evening of 10 May:

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Tel cons 10 May:

v.Vietinghoff:    Something extraordinary is the heavy vehicle traffic in the North.

Kesselring:        One must keep an eye on this.

v.Vietinghoff:    Of course. At any rate, nothing can be taken away from there.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 9 May 44; 53271/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 4 of Appx, Appx 652, 10 May 44)

Tenth Army                      Army Order No. 8      7 May 44

(Photostat: 981A10. (D53))

On 10 May, 1800 hrs the following command arrangements will become effective:

14 Pz Corps    from Terracina to Liri river with

15 Pz Gren Div  
94 Inf  
Div 71 Inf Div

51 Mtn Corps from Liri river to right boundary of 334 Inf Div with

44 Inf Div  
1 Para Div  
5 Mtn Div  
114 Jg Div

Group Hauck from right boundary 334 Inf Div to Silvi with

334 Inf Div  
305 Inf Div

Group Hauck directly subordinated to A.O.K.10\*

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 4 of Appx, Appx 611, 7 May 44)

93.     The headquarters of the various formations of Tenth Army on 12 May were in the following locations:

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\* In connection with the planned final line-up of Tenth Army for 10 May 44, copies of the following documents are being retained:

Tenth Army; Planned final Infantry dispositions for 10 May 44  
(14 Pz Corps and 51 Mtn Corps). (Ibid, Appx 611d) - (981A10. (D54))

Tenth Army; Planned final Artillery dispositions for 10 May 44. (Ibid, Appx 3 to Appx 611c) - (981A10. (D55))

Tenth Army; List of attachments of G.H.Q. troops under command of Tenth Army, 4 May 44. (Ibid, Appx 564) - (981A10. (D56))

Tenth Army; Report on number and type of tanks with each division on 10 May 44. (Ibid, Appx 657) - (981A10.(D57))

Tenth Army; Graphic picture of fighting strength of formations on 28 Apr 44. (Ibid, Appx 626) - (981A10, (D58) ) 22 Flak Bde, sit map 20 Apr 44. (Ibid, Appx 639) - (981A10. (D59)).

10 Army      Massa d'Albe (near Avezzano)

305 Inf Div    Spoltore  
334 Inf Div    Roccamontepiano

51 Mtn Corps    Pescosolido

114 Jg Div      Sulmona  
5 Mtn Div      Alvito  
1 Para Div      SW Roccasecca  
                  (Tac H, Q, - Castrocielo)  
44 Inf Div      Monte Leucio  
                  (Note: The infantry regiments of the Division were north of  
                  Cassino; see Para 96 below)

14 Pz Corps    Morgato (near Frosinene)

71 Inf Div      S. Oliva  
94 Inf Div      Massa Valle d'Itri  
15 Pz Gren Div    Fondi

The bulk of 90 Pz Gren Div was being reorganized at the time south of Rome between Ostia and Castel Gandolfo; the status of the Division was that of Army Group Reserve; in other respects it was under command of Fourteenth Army; one reinforced brigade group of the Division was still at Fondi, and received its orders via 14 Pz Corps; that force was composed of 200 (mach) Gren Regt; 2 Bn 190 Arty Regt; 2 Coy 190 Engr Bn (then on command to 51 Mtn. Corps ). \*

(G.M.D.S: - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6. 25 Apr; 53271/6, Tenth Army, D. W. 6, vol 3 of Appx, Appx 414, 25 Apr 44; sit maps 11 May 44 )

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\* Correct orders of battle of Fourteenth Army and Armeegruppe v.Zangen on 11 May 44 appear in Viscount Alexander's Despatch: "The Allied Armies in Italy". (See: Order of battle of Allied and enemy Armies in Italy; excerpt from above despatch (213A15.012(D2)). A map showing the locations, formations and units of Armeegruppe v.Zangen on 1 May 44 is being retained (981AZ.(D36)). At that time the various headquarters of the Armeegruppe were in the following locations:

Armeegruppe v.Zangen	near Verona
75 Corps	near Parma
H.G. Pz Div	near Lucca, north of Livorno
162 Inf Div (Turc)	near Livorno
356 Inf Div	at Sassona near Genoa
135 Fortress Bde	at La Spezia
Corps Witthoef	near Forli
Elements of	in area Ravenna - Rimini -
278 Inf Div	Pesaro - Ancona
Corps Kuebler	between Udine and Goritzia
278 Inf Div	near Trieste



94. As usual the picture of German dispositions had been complicated by the separation of many units from their parent formations. In this particular instance the situation maps of Tenth Army are not really suitable for the establishment of detailed dispositions at any given moment. A situation map, prepared on 11 and 12 May, and many other documents were destroyed in the air raid on Massa d'Albe on 12 May; the period from 4 - 16 May is covered by a situation trace for 14 May and by three maps, each showing in a sketchy manner the progress of events for a certain number of days. All four documents are being retained in photostatic form:

Tenth Army, sit map 4 - 7 May 44 (981A10. (D60))  
Tenth Army, sit map 7 - 10 May 44 (981A10. (D62))  
Tenth Army, sit map 11 - 16 May 44 (981A10. (62))  
Tenth Army, sit trace 14 May 44 (981A10. (D63))

The value of these photostats is lessened by the fact that the slight differences in colour between entries denoting events on different days do not show well on photostatic copies. The same difficulty exists in the case of the pertinent situation maps of 14 Pz Corps. From the point of view of the present report it is therefore fortunate that the very sector in which 1 Cdn Corps operated is shown from day to day in an unbroken series of situation traces prepared by 51 Mtn Corps. The master map and the daily traces from 12 - 31 May are useful for the examination of events in the sector between the Liri and the Casilina; the documents in question are being retained in photostatic form:

51 Mtn Corps, Master Map of Liri sector (981A10.(D64))  
51 Mtn Corps, sit traces 12 - 31 May (981A10.(D65) )

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/13, Tenth Army, W.D, 6, vol 10 of Appx, Appx 614, 659, 673b, 711a; 55779/4, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, vol 2 of Appx "B" (12-24 May); 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, vol 3 of Appx "B" (25-31 May 44)

#### GERMAN DISPOSITIONS BETWEEN LIRI RIVER AND CASSINO ON 12 MAY

95. In the foregoing paragraphs the reasons have been shown that led to the dispositions of Tenth Army as they were on the eve of the attack on the Gustav line. Some aspects have been stressed because they are of specifically Canadian interest; others, in their varying degrees of penetration, reflect the unevenness and the limitations of the source material. Subsequent paragraphs are mainly devoted to the events in the northern Liri sector, An equally full description of operations in other sectors would transcend the scope of the present report. General information assumes a more incidental character, as, strategically speaking, once the battle has been joined the die has been cast and interest in tactical developments becomes paramount for the moment, The lack of German documents from divisional and lower levels prevents the detailed description of situations where Canadian units came to grips with the enemy; moreover, telephone conversations, usually a good source of detail, were greatly curtailed on the critical days by the effects of artillery fire. They provide little added information, and what follows, therefore, has been taken from the slender seams of pertinent fact in the records of Tenth Army and 51 Mtn Corps.

96. When 13 Brit Corps attacked across the Gari on 12 May, the German lines were not strongly manned. Feurstein and Heidrich had been led to believe that the main pressure would be brought to bear against the Monte Cairo hinge; the Gari was evidently being regarded as a formidable obstacle, and therefore the southern portion of the Cassino front had not been strengthened as originally called for by the "Final Plan of Dispositions". At the time of the attack Headquarters 44 Inf Div was responsible for the sector from Massa de Vivo (1 km south of the Via Casilina) to the Liri. But the two infantry brigades of the Division were north of Cassino. \*  
\*\*The town of Cassino was defended by 1 and 2 Bns 4 Para Regt; the fraction between Casilina and Massa de Vivo was occupied by M.G. Bn 1 Para Div. \*\*\* South of the Liri were 131 Regt (of 44 Inf Div but with 71 Inf Div) and 44 Recce Bn (of 44 Inf Div but with 71 Inf Div). \*\*\*\* German troops in the frontal area of Headquarters 44 Inf Div were:

North: 1 Bn 115 Pz Gren Regt (15 Pz Gren Div)  
elements 3 Bn 115 Pz Gren Regt (15 Pz Gren Div)

Centre (astride S. Angelo):

2 Bn 576 Gren Regt (Group Bode; detached from 305 Inf Div)

South: 1 Bn 576 Gren Regt (Group Bode; detached from 305 .Inf Div)

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\* On 8 May, Maj-Gen Dr. Franek had been replaced as Commander of 44 Inf Div by Lieut-Gen Bruno Ortner; on the same day the divisional headquarters had assumed command of the sector north of the Liri:

H.Q. 44 Inf Div has been withdrawn from its old sector to assume command in the Liri sector (hitherto 15 Pz Gren Div) at 1200 hrs 8 May.

H.Q. 15 Pz Gren Div transfers to Fondi and has assumed command of the coastal sector between Terracina and west of Gaeta (Terracing - Sperlonga).

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/7, Tenth Army., W.D. 6, vol 4 of Apex, Appx 624, 8 May 44; 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 7-9 May; 58199-1, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, 8 May, 10 May 44)

\*\* According to the original plans the sector north of the Liri was to have been occupied at that time by 134 and 132 Gren Regts (44 Inf Div). This was not the case; the two regiments had been ordered to remain in their previous positions north of Cassino. On 7 May, 134 Gren Regt and elements of 96 Arty Regt (44 Inf Div) had passed under command of 5 Mtn Div, while 132 Gren Regt came under that of 1 Para Div.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 7-9 May; 53271/13, Tenth Army, W. D. 6, sit map 7-10 May 44 (Photostat: see Para 94 above)

\*\*\* Due to pressure from highest levels, and after much delay and argument, 3 Bn 4 Para Regt had been withdrawn from Cassino on 7 May and was on its way to France to serve as a nucleus for 5 Para Div (then being organized).

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/7, Tenth Army, W. D. 6, vol 4 of Appx, tel cons 1-10 May; 58199/lp 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, 8 May 44)

\*\*\*\* 44 Inf Div (and therefore also its 134 Gren Regt) carried the honorary title "Reichsgrenadierdivision Hoch, and Deutschmeister". In German documents the numerical and the name designations were being used indiscriminately. To prevent confusion this fact must be considered in any research regarding this division. In the present report the short numerical designation is being used.

elements 3 Bn 115 Pz Gren Regt (15 Pz Gren Div)\*

The northwestern Liri sector was therefore being defended by five battalions, including M.G. Bn 1 Para Div (51 Mtn Corps, sit trace 12 May, see Para 94 above)\*\* \*\*\* Artillery dispositions are being dealt with in Para 100.

### THE FORCING OF THE GUSTAV LINE (12 - 15 May)

12 May

97. In German war diaries the events of the day in the northern Liri sector were described as follows:

Tenth Army: At S. Angelo and Petracone the crossing of the Garigliano (sic) by the enemy could not be prevented despite our own heavy mortar and artillery fire.

51 Mtn Corps: During the morning the enemy crossed the Gari about 500 metres south of S. Angelo as well as northwest and southwest of 65 (NW and SW Massa do Vivo). He is bridging the river. Although the penetration 1 km south of S. Angelo is being eliminated during the morning, the enemy is successful in the North. After bringing up 30 tanks just northeast of S. Angelo he is succeeding in penetrating our main line of resistance, but is being blocked at C. Nardone. Heavy cross-river traffic in the area of C. Colle Jarone cannot be stopped in spite of well aimed concentrations of fire; the enemy there made a penetration and is being blocked on the road leading from Petracone to the North.\*\*\*\*

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\* 2 Bn 115 Pz Gren Regt was with 71 Inf Div. (sit maps)

\*\* 1 Coy 33 Anti-tank Bn (15 Pz Gren Div), with twelve heavy anti-tank guns, was in the northern Liri sector with 1 or 3 Bn 115 Pz Gren Regt (it was not shown on the available sit maps).

(G. M. D. S. - 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W. D. 2, Appx "C" 367a, 13 May 44)

\*\*\* Elements of 907 Aslt Gun Bde were also present in the northern Liri sector. Of the bulk of the brigade however the Corps Commander said that owing to lack of fuel it arrived too late to intervene in the fighting for the Gustav Line. He told General v. Vietinghoff that he intended to initiate court-martial proceedings against the Brigade Commander. No additional evidence has been found.

(G.M. D.S. - ibid; 53271/8, Tenth Army, W. D. 6, vol 5 of Appx, Apex 719, 14 May 44)

\*\*\*\* On 11 May 44 the 4th edition of the map; of Italy, 1:100,000 (with new numbers for large squares and reference points) was taken into use. (981A10. D66)

The next change in map code occurred on 25 May 44 (see para 136f). (Note: An explanation of the German method of map references by reference points appear in H.S. Report No. 18, Appx "B".)

(G.M. D.S. - 55779/4, 51 Mtn Corps, :W. D. 2, Appx "B" )

Early in the day the Germans were unaware of the identity of the armoured forces that were bridging the Gari. Later in the day a certain amount of unconfirmed information became available. The intelligence report of Tenth Army for 12 May contains the following entry:

In the southern bridgehead 8 Ind Div with 17 and 19 Bdes has been identified by prisoners. According to the captured Indians about 100 Canadian tanks are attached to this force. (1 Cdn triad Bde) (On the "Enemy Situation Map" of Tenth Army on 13 May, 1 Cdn Armd Bde was shown as being with 8 Ind Div, followed by a question mark). (See para 89 above, footnote)

There was however no doubt in German minds about the serious nature of the attack that was developing in the sector. The advance of armoured elements on the extreme left wing of 13 Brit Corps to the Facciano area exposed the left flank of 71 Inf Div.\* As a palliative 115 Recce Bn (15 Pz Gren Div) was now being sent to the assistance of 131 Gren Regt along the Liri river. As a major counter-measure the commander of 14 Pz Corps demanded and obtained the dispatch of 200 (mech) Gren Regt (90 Pz Gren Div) to the Liri sector.

W.D. Tenth Army: 200 (mech) Gren Regt moves to the area Pontecorvo - S.Giovanni - S.Oliva, Remains at disposal of Army Group "C ". Orders via 14 Pz Corps.

W.D. 51 Mtn Corps: Pointing out the seriousness of the situation, the Corps commander obtains the dispatch of 200 (mech) Gren Regt to the area Pontecorvo - S.Giovanni -S.Oliva. Regarding commitment however, in view of a possible landing behind the front and until a definite focal point can be recognized, the Field Marshal reserves the decision for himself. For the moment the Regiment retains the status of an Army Group Reserve.

By noon 12 May, 51 Mtn Corps was fully aware of the need for reinforcements south of Cassino, and the following orders were issued:

W. D. 51 Mtn Corps

1255 hrs 114 Jg Div to dispatch the reserve battalion of 741 Jg Regt (114 Jg; Div) to the southern flank of the Corps,

1255 hrs 5 Mtn Div to dispatch 85 Rocco Bn (5 Mtn Div) to the area of 44 Inf Div.

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\* "The deep northern flank of 14 Pz Corps is being threatened by the enemy, who has broken through at S.Angelo and who has deployed tanks able to fire to the South between 53/12 and 53/13 (Faccione fraction along the left bank of the Liri) ".

(G.M.D.S. - 58200/1, 14 Pz Corps, Int Repts, 12 May 44)

- 1825 hrs Orders to 44 Inf Div, 5 Mtn Div and 114 Jg Div for the formation of Battle Group Schulz (see below), and for the withdrawal from the front lines of 5 Mtn Div of  
two companies 134 Gren Regt  
two companies 100 Mtn Jg Regt  
two companies 85 Mtn Jg Regt
- 2250 hrs Lieut-Gen Heidrich assumes command also of the area of 44 Inf Div.
- 2305 hrs 5 Mtn Div to dispatch two mechanized batteries to 1 Para Div; two companies of 190 Engr Bn (90 Pz Gren Div) to 44 Inf Div.
- 2400 hrs 44 Inf Div reports that the situation cannot be stabilized with the troops in the sector and requests additional forces.

Regarding the purpose and the composition of Battle Group Schulz, the War Diaries provide the following information:

Tenth Army: To seal off penetrations, a battle group is being formed in the area north of Aquino. \* It will be commanded by Colonel (Karl-Lothar) Schulz; Cmdr 1 Para Regt, and will consist of,

Regtl H.Q. 1 Part Regt  
85 Recce Bn  
2 Bn 721 Jg Regt  
2 Bn 741 Jg Regt  
242 Aslt Gun Bde

This force was being assembled in the Aquino - Castrocielo area during the night 12/13 May. The composition of the forces as it existed on the morning of 13 May was detailed in W.D. 51 Mtn Corps:

As the enemy did not continue his advance during the night, 51 Mtn Corps used this time to bring up the undermentioned forces in order to seal off the penetrations:

To 1 Para Div: Battle Group Schulz, (newly formed) with

Regtl H.Q. 1 Para Regt  
2 and 3 Bns 1 Para Regt  
85 Recce Bn  
A.tk Trg Coy A.O.K.10  
242 Aslt Gun Bde  
10 Bty 95 Arty Regt  
11 Bty 96 Arty Regt

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\* Specimens of the different editions of maps with reference points that were in force during this phase, may be found in: G.M.D.S. -- 58199/30, 14 Pz Corps, Maps with reference points, vol 2, 6 May - 30 Jun 44

Arrived in area Colle San Magno -  
Roccasecca and also to be under command of Battle Group Schulz:

2 Bn 721 Jg Regt (114 Jg Div)  
2 Bn 741 Jg Regt (114 Jg Div)

To 44 Inf Div: 2 Coy 190 Engr Bn (since 20 Feb with 51 Mtn Corps)

1/2 company 3 High Mtn Jg Bn  
1/2 company A. tk Coy 5 Mtn Div

Events were soon to show that the infusion of Battle Group Schulz and 200 (mech) Gren Regt would not suffice to stem the tide.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/19, Tenth Army, Int reps, May 44, 12 May; *ibid* enemy sit map, 13 May; 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 12 May 44; 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 12, 12 May 44; 58199/1, 14 Pz Corps, W. D, 6, 12 May 44)

98. In connection with the ever present threat of an Allied landing the Intelligence Diary of 14 Pz Corps contained the following remark:

12 May           The Corps expects an expansion of the battle through a landing operation. It is believed that the enemy will carry out such an operation once he believes that the coastal forces have been moved to the focal points of the land front.

The daily Intelligence Report of Fourteenth Army to O.B.SW expressed similar views:

12 May           Now that the enemy has launched his attack on the southern part of the land-front, an attack from the bridgehead must be expected at any moment, and going further than this -in connection with the attacks on the southern wing of Tenth Army and from the bridgehead -Fourteenth Army expects new landings either between the southern flank of Tenth Army and the bridgehead in order to envelop the southern wing of Tenth Army, or at the mouth of the Tiber and to the North of it for the attack on Rome,

(G. M. D. S. - 58200/1, 14 Pz Corps, Int Reps, 12 May 44; 59092/4, Fourteenth Army, Int Reps 12 May 44)

13 May

99. A great deal of information regarding the artillery dispositions of Tenth Army on 13 May is being provided by the files of the Senior Artillery Commander of the Army Lt-Gen v.Graffen, (Higher Artillery Commander 316 - Harko 316). The description of the day's events is preceded here by a short review of German artillery strength; a full analysis of the material

would constitute a study in itself. In this connection copies of the following documents are being retained in photostatic form:

- (a) Tenth Army, Number of guns ready for firing on 13 May 44 (981A10.(D67))
- (b) Tenth Army, Schematic order of battle of artillery formations on 13 May 44 (981A10.(D68))
- (c) 14 Pz Corps ,Artillery positions on 13 May 44 (0600 hrs). (981A10. (D69))
- (d) 51 Mtn Corps, Artillery positions on 13 May 44 (0600 hrs). (981A10.(D70))
- (e) 51 Mtn Corps Trace of artillery ranges on 13 May 44 (981A10.(D71))
- (f) Group Hauck, Artillery positions on 13 May 44 (0600 hrs). (981A10. (D72))
- (g) 51 Mtn Corps, sit map; 13 May 44 (981A10.(D73))
- (h) 51 Mtn Corps, Artillery sit map, 13 May 44 (981A10. (D74))

According to document (a) there were 28 different types of gun ready for firing on 13 May. An addition of various sub-totals shows that the artillery units in the Army area had 521 guns ready for firing at their disposal. They were distributed as follows:

In divisional area of:	Number of pieces:
15 Pz Gren Div	25
94 Inf Div	74
71 Inf Div	61
1 Para Div	113
44 Inf Div	24
5 Mtn Div	60
114 Jg Div	51
334 Inf Div	58
305 Inf Div	55
Total	521

Document (b) does not concern itself with the state of repair or the degree of readiness; it supplies the total number of artillery pieces in the Army area:

	<u>German guns</u>	<u>Italian booty</u>	
Light	310	140	
Heavy	126	67	
Projectors	54	--	
Total	490	207	<u>697</u>

This figure does NOT include:

Assault guns and assault howitzers  
 Guns of G.H.Q. Coastal Artillery units  
 Guns of G.H.Q. Anti-Aircraft Artillery units  
 Guns of formations in process of organization within, or en route to the area of Tenth Army.

According to a report submitted at a later date by the Senior Armoured Officer of Tenth Army, on 12 May 51 Mtn Corps was in possession of the following infantry guns:

Type	Total Number	Ready to fire
Heavy Anti-Tank Guns	73	71
Assault Guns (Ital)	21	18
Assault Mortars (Ital)	6	6
Assault Guns (German)	54	35
Assault Mortars (German)	8	6

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/15, Tenth Army, Files of Sen Arty Comdrs, Apr and May 44, 13 May; 53271/18, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 15 of Appx, Misc reps Apr/May 44, May rep of Sen Armd Offr, 15 Jul 44)

100. In evaluating German artillery strength in the sector between the Casilina and the Liri, it must be taken into account that the zone of fighting was within range of many artillery units from the adjoining sectors. The strength of the prepared positions opposite Polcorps in the Cassino sector was so great that there was ample opportunity to engage targets in the Liri sector. South of the Liri the situation was vastly different and events took such a disastrous turn for the Germans that there is little likelihood of targets in the northern Liri sector having been fired upon from across the river. The position maps for the morning of 13 May show the following artillery elements in the area between the Via Casilina and the Liri:

Unit	Number of pieces	Type
H.Q. 242 Aslt Gun Bde	23	7.5 cm guns
242 Aslt Gun Bde	8	10.5 cm guns
H.Q. 2 Bn 190 Arty Regt	2	It fd hows 18
2 Bn 190 Arty Regt	1	10.5 cm gun
H.Q. 2 Bn 51 Arty Regt	3	Lt fd hows 18
2 Bn 51 Art7 Regt	1	100/17 Ital gun
H.Q. 88 How Bn	1	21 cm how
88 How Bn	1	22 cm how
H.Q. 602 Lt Arty Bn	3	It fd hows 18



	Unit	Number of pieces	Type
	602 Lt Arty Bn (tractor-drawn)	1	7.62 Russian fd gun
H.Q.	71 Proj Regt	8	smoke projectors medium
	1 Bn 71 Proj Regt	3	smoke projectors medium
	2 Bn 71 Proj Regt	3	smoke projectors medium
	3 Bn 71 Proj Regt	3	smoke projectors heavy
H.Q.	96 Arty Regt (44 Inf Div)	3	lt fd hows 18
	2 Bn 96 Arty Regt	1	hy fd hows 18
	4 Bn 96 Arty Regt	1	10 cm gun
	2 Bn 305 Arty Regt	3	lt fd hows 18
	From 907 Aslt Gun Bde	3	7.5 cm guns

According to this tabulation the artillery units in this sector had a total of 72 guns at their disposal. (This does not include the guns of the infantry formations; anti-tank, and anti-aircraft guns).\* \*\*

(G.M. D. S, .- 53271/15, Tenth Army, Sen Arty Comdr's files for Apr and May 44, 13 May; 55779/4, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Vol I, various maps)

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\* No document has been found showing the locations of the; antiaircraft artillery units as they existed on 13 May. A location trace showing the dispositions of 22 Flak Bde was issued on 20 Apr. :A photostatic copy of this document is being retained (para 92f, last item). At that time the bulk of the brigade was already concentrated in the southern part of the area of Tenth Army; the main concentrations were in the triangle Roccasecca - Ceprano - Pico and along the rail and road supply arteries as far back as, and beyond Frosinone. (Via Casilina). It seems probable that there was little change in dispositions between that time and the beginning of the "Allied offensive. (G.M.D.S. - Tenth Army, W. D. 6, vol 4 of Appx, Appx 639)

\*\* 242 Aslt Gun Bde was a G.H.Q. artillery formation under command of 1 Para Div.

2 Bn 190 Arty Regt belonged to 553 Special Arty Regt, a G.H.Q. artillery formation under command of 1 Para Div.

2 Bn 51 Arty Regt also belonged to 553 Special Arty Regt, a G.H.Q. formation under command of 1 Para Div.

88 How Bn was a G. H. Q. artillery rump formation under command of 1 Para Div.

2 Bn 305 Arty Regt was attached to 96 Arty Regt. The battalion was on command from 305 Arty Regt (305 Inf Div).

907 Aslt Gun Bde was a G.H.Q. formation with 15 Pz Gren Div; elements were on command with 44 Inf Div.

101. A detailed picture of the field fortifications and mine fields established by German engineers in the Northern Liri and the Cassino sectors of the Gustav and Senger lines is provided by two maps\* that were originally appended to a report of the Engineer Staff Officer (Stops) at headquarters 51 Mtn Corps:

51 Mtn Corps; Map of Gustav and Senger Positions,  
Sector of 1 Para Div (981A10. (D8))

51 Mtn Corps; Map of Gustav and Senger Positions,  
Sector of 90 Pz Gren Div (981AT0.(D9))

A list of the conventional signs then current for position construction is required for the reading of these maps:

Conventional Signs for Position Construction,  
(Photostat and translation: 981A10.(D10))

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/11, 51 Mtn Corps, reps of Engr Staff Offr; 58533/12, Tenth Army, Files of Sen Arty Comdr, June 44)

102. The tactical developments in the Lira sector were the subject of many entries in the war diaries. In the Cassino area the Germans were able to resist effectively; in the northern Liri sector they were forced to yield ground; in the southern Liri sector they were dislodged from Monte Maio and thrown back beyond S, Apollinare,

War Diary Tenth Army:

In the evening strong enemy forces advanced from S.Andrea to S.Apollinare. The remnants of 44 Recce Bn were destroyed in their position. In the area of 44 Inf Div the enemy succeeded in breaking through our defences in several places, Battle Group Schulz was being committed to seal off the penetrations west and north of the bridgehead at Petrarcone. After an encounter with strong enemy forces, the Battle Group took up defence positions along the road from Pignataro to Cassino. M.G. Bn 1 Para Div was surrounded in its positions and received orders to fight its way back to Battle Group Schulz.

W.D. 51 Mtn Corps.:

At 1100 hrs, after violent artillery preparation, the enemy continued his attacks with strong forces from the two bridgeheads in the area of 44. Inf Div and on the right wing of 1 Para Div. The garrison of S.Angelo was outflanked The enemy forces that had advanced towards Panacione in the morning continued their advance in a southeasterly direction and are threatening the rear of our forces...

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\* It will be noted that the two maps represent the situation as it was at the beginning of the assault on the Gustav line. While the fighting in the Liri valley was in progress, engineer units from inactive sectors were rushed in, and laid thousands of additional mines, until they were routed by the onrushing British and Canadian troops. (51 Mtn Corps, ibid)

The newly formed Battle Group Schulz encountered strong enemy forces and is taking up positions on the road from Varlose to Cassino; owing to the enemy superiority in armour and artillery they are suffering heavy casualties... The situation requires the withdrawal of 44 Inf Div to the general line: C.Silvestri - O.Lena - West of Massa Ventecchi.

W.D. 14 Pz Corps:

The enemy advanced in an easterly direction and occupied Monte Maio: To prevent the encirclement of the battalions of 194 and 191 Inf Regts - and in view of the fact that the available forces of the Division are insufficient to close the gap at Monte Maio - the Corps Commander orders withdrawal to the following line by 14 May:

Monte Civita (S. of Shigno - Colle Correzini -Coreno - Vallemaio - Colle Cervarone. Junction with 51 Mtn Corps at Scafa del Comune.

...General Raapke foresees the necessity of withdrawing 71 Inf Div to the Dora position on 14 May. This would lead to the uncovering of the right flank of 44 Inf Div. The Corps Commander therefore orders the improvisation of an intermediate position from S.Giorgio to the South.

...In the afternoon Marshal Kesselring confers with Generals Hartmann and Wentzell at the Tactical Headquarters of 14 Pz Corps. Marshal Kesselring states that the enemy must not reach the, Dora line without suffering severe losses in the attempt. He orders the alerting of 525 G.H.Q. Anti-Tk Bn, [8. 8 cm anti-tk guns, self propelled, called "Hornets"] and of 90 Pz Gren Div. 90 Pz Gren Div to take over the sector between Liri and the Via, Casilina. It can not be decided for the moment whether 90 Pz Gren Div will be employed for defence or for attack. The Regimental Headquarters and two battalions of 200 (mech) Gren Regt have been placed at the disposal of 71 Inf Div .

...The advance of enemy armour along the Via Casilina makes it necessary to commit all anti-tank weapons of 51 Mtn Corps and all available engineer units for the mining of the plain of the Vie. Casilina.\*

...Late in the afternoon the Field Marshal proceeded to the Tactical Headquarters of 1 Para Div to discuss the commitment of 90 Pz Gren Div.

W. D. 14 Army

...In view of the developments in the: situation, a major enemy surprise attack from the beachhead in conjunction with new landing operations must be expected at any moment.

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\* During the day the engineer and anti-tank units of 114 Jg Div and 5 Mtn Div received orders to proceed to the northern Liri sector.

...Owing to the breakthrough of enemy armour south of Cassino, -the Army Group Commander orders the accelerated dispatch of 525 G.H.Q. Anti-Tk En (Hornets) to Tenth Army.

...1600 hrs: Army Group "C" transmits the alert for 90 Pz Gren Div. 1830 hrs : Army Group "C" gives direct orders for the immediate departure of 90 Pz Gren Div to 14 Pz Corps

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 13 May 44  
55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 13 May 44  
58199/1, 14 Pz Corps, M. D.6 , 13 May 44  
59091/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, 13 May 44)

14 May

103. In the southern part of the northern Liri sector, Battle Group Bode was being forced back towards Pignataro by the Indian and Canadian units:

W.D. 51 Mtn Corps 1 Bn 576 Gren Regt has fought its way back to the area 6441 (Pignataro).

During the day the Commander of 44 Inf Div realized that the Gustav line was lost, and he turned his thoughts to the defence of the Senger Riegel. He dispatched an appreciation of the situation to General Feurstein, who in turn signified concurrence by affixing his signature and then forwarded the document to Tenth Army (981A10.(D75)). The main points were:

- a) 576 Gren Regt (Battle Group Bode) has fought exceedingly well but has suffered severe casualties and is no longer able to maintain an unbroken line of defence.
- b) Enemy attacks are being supported by strong groups of tanks (18 - 25 tanks per group). Against these the remaining isolated anti-tank nests are powerless.
- c) Reinforcements now moving into the line may bolster the front, but they will not suffice to form and hold a new front ahead of the Senger position.
- d) The enemy will realize that he is dealing; with scattered elements and will therefore become less hesitant and methodical.
- e) The situation requires either the commitment of strong reserves in close formation, or the withdrawal to the Sengar Riegel during the night 15/16 May at the latest.

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 14 May 44; 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 5 of Appx, Appx 723, 15 May 44)

104. In the sector of 71 Inf Div Monte Calvo had been taken in the meantime, by the C.E.F. , and the Division was falling back:

W.D. Tenth Army

...71 Inf withdrew on the right wing to the Dora line; on the left wing to an intermediate line S.Giorgio - Colle Castellano - Ausonia. The backbone of this position was to be 200 (mech) Gren Regt, now under command of 71 Inf Div.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 14 may 44)

105. During the day the Army Commander called at the Headquarters of 51 Mtn Corps and General Feurstein stated that the Cassino Massif could not be held indefinitely. He also complained about the failure of the Anti-Aircraft Artillery units to participate in the ground operations, and he pointed out that the Corps reserve now consisted of a mere five companies (two companies of 2 Bn 741 Jg Regt and three engineer companies); all at Roccasecca. General v.Vietinghoff said that 200 (mech) Gren Regt was indeed moving to the area of 71 Inf Div, but that 90 Pz Gren Div (less 200 (mech) Gren Regt) was now under command of 51 Mtn Corps, and on its way to the sector with:

361 (mech) Gren Regt  
190 Anti-tk Bn  
190 A.A. Bn  
190 Pz Bn (with 30 assault guns)  
190 Engr Bn  
1 Bn 190 Arty Regt

The situation trace of Tenth Army for 14 May (para 94 above) shows elements of 361 (mech) Gren Regt (90 Pz Gren Div) in the area of Pignataro; on the situation traces o 51 Mtn Corps however, the regiment appears for the first time on 15 May (para 94. above).

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 5 of Appx, Appx 719, 14 May 44)

106. In the afternoon of 14 May, 51 Mtn Corps began to issue orders for the occupation of the Senger positions in the northern Liri sector. 305 Div Fus Bn was directed to move to the area, and to occupy positions near Aquino; a special security garrison was designated as "Blocking Group Strafner" and ordered to occupy the Senger position from the Liri to the Via Casilin a. This force was to consist of:

One Battalion Headquarters (to be supplied by 5 Mtn Div)  
Panther Turret Company of 15 Pz Gren Div  
790 Fd Fort Constr Bn  
three companies of Mountain Jaegers from 5 Mtn Div

Later in the day it was deemed necessary to change the arrangement and to earmark the Battalion Headquarters and the three Jaeger companies for commitment at Pignataro.

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 14 May 44)

107. With regard to information about Allied formations the Germans made little progress. Some Indians who had been captured on 13 May had made the statement that there were 800 tanks in assembly position behind the Gari, but the Germans apparently failed to realize the significance of these remarks, Marshal Kesselring however was growing more and more dissatisfied with the meagre bits of information from the front lines; in a message to Tenth Army he said:

14 May            I must demand of the divisions that they obtain a clear picture of their own situation and of that of the enemy. It is an intolerable condition when a division remains in the dark for 1 1/2 days about the events in its own sector. It is equally intolerable for a division to be in fighting contact with the enemy for two days without knowing whom they are fighting.- I demand a clear picture by 1200 hrs...

In the Liri sector a great many messages between units of 13 (Brit) Corps had been intercepted by the Short Range Wireless Interception Platoon "Marie", but, all important words were in code, and the Germans were baffled by the names that were so well known to the Canadians in the sector.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/8, Tenth :Army, W.D. 6, vol 5 of Appx, Appx 715 14 May 44; ibid Appr 725; 58200/6, 14 Pz Corps, Int Repts, May 44)

15 May

108. By the evening of 15 May the Germans had been driven off the lateral road from Pignataro to the railroad south of Cassino, and the bridgehead of 13 Corps across the Gari was now fully consolidated. In the German War Diaries the events of the day were described in the following terms:

W.D. Tenth Army

North of the Liri and north of Pignataro the enemy, supported by strong armoured forces, broke through our lines in several places. During the afternoon it was possible to seal off the penetrations in bitter fighting and with the assistance of elements of 361 (mech), Gren Regt that had just arrived at the front.

W. D. 51 Mtn Corps:

The focal point of the attacks was again in the sector of 44 Inf Div between Pignataro and Colle Varlese. In the morning the enemy launched the expected large-scale attack. He was supported by heaviest artillery fire and massed tanks. At Pignataro alone he had advanced on our positions with 45 tanks; south of Colle d'Alessandro with another 45 tanks, and south of Colle de Monaco in the area of

Battle Group Schulz with 54 tanks. A total of 250 - 300 tanks was observed along the whole of the front.

The enemy succeeded in breaking through our lines in front of and about 1 km northwest of Pignataro, and in driving one wedge into the locality of Pignataro and as far as 1.5 kms northwest thereof and a second wedge as far as Massa Giagrande. Some tanks even managed to advance as far as Colle di Giorgio.

With the support of our own heavy artillery and mortar fire, the enemy penetrations were sealed off in bitterest fighting, (in the area Massa Felci by committing elements of 361 (mech) Gren Regt).

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army W.D. 6, 15 May 44; 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 15 May 44)

109. The German artillery units engaged in the fighting at Pignataro were named in a report of the Artillery Commander of 51 Mtn Corps:

15 May In the area of Pignataro the enemy was attacked with gunfire from:

71 Proj Regt  
2 Bn 96 Arty Regt  
2 Bn 305 Arty Regt and neighbours

71 Proj Regt fired on the enemy who was attacking 2.5 kms west of Pignataro; the Regiment delivered fire against both armoured attacks in the Pignataro sector.

The measures that had been taken by 51 Mtn Corps between the 12th and 15th May in order to strengthen the sector were summarized in a special Appendix to the War Diary (Photostat and translation; 98A10. (D76)).

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Appx C386 and C397 (photostat), 15 May 44)

110. At 1500 hrs of the same day, Tenth Army issued "Army Order No. 9" (Photostat and translation; 98A10. (D77)) Two significant passages of the text were:

....Whilst assuring the continued defence of the coastal front and the southern wing of the Army, the threatened breakthrough on both sides of the Liri will be prevented by, all available means ...

...Close collaboration of the artillery commanders of both Corps is of decisive importance for the prevention of enemy breakthroughs on both sides of the Liri. On the whole the artillery concentrations will be directed by the Senior Artillery Commander of the Army. He will also ensure the closest co-operation with the anti-aircraft batteries that have been directed to participate in the ground fighting...

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 5 of Appx; Appx 738, 15 May 44 )

111. As Tenth Army had no Army Reserve, General v, Vietinghoff was unable to influence the course of events and had to appeal to Marshal Kesselring for further assistance. At 1800 hrs the following telephone conversation took place:

v. Vietinghoff: We are short of anti-tank weapons. Heidrich needs tanks. Can 26 Pz Regt (26 Pz Div) be made available?

Kesselring: No; I cannot help you. Only passive defence is possible.

The conversation however was not fruitless; it is quite probable that it helped the Marshal to make up his mind regarding the commitment of 26 Pz Div with Tenth Army. At 1900 hrs he called back and stated:

"I can give you one Panther company and one company of 15 Pz Bn (15 Pz Gren Div)".

The War Diary of Fourteenth Army shows that later in the evening the order was received to move one company of 26 Pz Regt to Tenth Army during the night, and that 29 Pz Gren Div was instructed as follows:

15 May 2300 hrs Fourteenth Army informs 29 Pz Gren Div of the "Army Group Order" to move the Division to the present position of 26 Pz Div if that division moves to Tenth Army. Suitable preparations will be made.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, Vol 5 of Appx, tel cons 15 May; 59091/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, 15 May 44)

112. It was evidently during the last hours of the day that the Marshal felt the necessity of making preparations for the transfer of 26 Pz Div to Tenth Army; a battle directive which he had sent to the two Armies somewhat earlier in the evening, had read:

(2010 hrs) Fourteenth Army will make preparations for the speedy commitment of 20 Pz Div in the event of an enemy landing in the area Gaeta -Terracina.

(Photostat and translation; 981A10.(D78))

This document reveals the views and intentions of the Marshal at that moment. The events of the next day were to show that the full measure of the impetus and momentum of the Allied offensive was not being realized and that Kesselring at the moment seemed to hope that the Allied advance might be stopped at the Dora line. The directive contained the statement:

Every man must realize that with arrival in the Dora position, withdrawal has come to an end, and that the position will be held to the last man.



With regard to the situation in the Liri valley he said:

...From the area of Esperia (Dora position) and past Pignataro in the direction of Cassino, a new main line of defence will be created in a manner permitting the continued defence of the Cassino massif. On both sides of the Liri the position will be strengthened by all available means.

...The transfer of 305 Inf Div to the southern part of the front will be accelerated in every possible way.

(G. M. D. S. - 53271/8, Tenth Army, W. D. 6 , Vol 5 of Appx, Appx 734, 15 May 44)

### THE ADVANCE TO THE HITLER LINE

(16 - 19 May)

113. Continued Allied pressure now quickly dispelled unjustified optimism in high places, and the measures that had been advocated by General Fourstein on 14 May could no longer be delayed. By nightfall on 16 May, orders had been issued to abandon Cassino and to withdraw gradually to the Sengor position. The day had started shortly after midnight with an armoured penetration between Massa Felci and Massa Pantanalongo; as the day went on, further penetrations could not be prevented. In the meantime, 14 Pz Corps and Headquarters 90 Pz Gren Div was in command of the area between Battle Group Schulz and the Liri. At noon the Corps Commander recognized the critical situation of Baade's forces and intervened in person. By 1500 hrs, 3 Bn 361 (mech) Gren Regt was outflanked, and tanks had broken through the lines at Massa Felci; at the same time the presence of about 100 tanks was being reported from the area of Battle Group Schulz, Withdrawal to the Sengor line was now imperative, At 1725 hrs Marshal Kesselring and the Army Commander discussed the situation on the telephone:

Kesselring: ... I consider withdrawal to the Senger position as necessary.

v.V: Then it will be necessary to begin the withdrawal north of the Liri; tanks have broken through there.

K : How far?

v.V: To 39 (Piumarola)

K: And how is the situation further north?

v.V: There were about 100 tanks in Schulz's area.

K: Then we have to give up Cassino.

v.V: Yes

Less than one hour later, directives for a general withdrawal to the Senger position appeared in v.Vietinghoff's "Army Order No. 10". (Photostat and translation: 981A10,(D79))

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 16 May 44, 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 5 of Appx, Appx 746 & 759, 16 May 44 )

114. In the early hours of the evening, 9 Pz Gren Regt (26 Pz Div) had received orders to prepare for a move to Itri as Army Group Reserve. Realizing that the valuable division was going to be diverted to Tenth Army, C. of S. Fourteenth Army voiced his misgivings in a telephone call to Army Group, and warned against the piecemeal commitment and destruction of its units.

(G.M.D.S. - 59091/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, 16 May 44)

115. According to the War Diary of 51 Mtn Corps the movement of ammunition supplies to the front was being harassed by continuous air attacks on traffic arteries. C. of S. Tenth Army stated on the telephone that the Army was now expending a daily total of 700 tons of ammunition and 300 cubic metres of fuel; that Army depots were empty, and that the troops had to rely on the arrival of transports from the rear areas. The number of tanks, assault guns and heavy anti-tank guns with the divisions and assault gun brigades of the Army on that day was shown in a tabulation prepared by the Senior Armoured Officer of Tenth Army. (Photostat and translation; 981A10. (D80))

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 16 May 44 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 5 of Appx, Appx 746 and 761: Photostat ) 16 May 44)

116. In the daily intelligence reports of O.B.SW no references to Canadians had been made since 4 May. On 15 May the following was reported:

From Counter Intelligence: During the first half of May, numerous Canadian troops and vehicles were soon at Salerno.

In the evening of 16 May, at the very time when formations of 1 Cdn Corps were moving to the front on the left wing of the 13th Corps, C. of S. Tenth Army expressed uneasiness regarding the whereabouts of 1 Cdn Corps:

1700 hrs

Beelitz: Are all Allied formations committed?

Wentzell: 1 Cdn Corps is not yet in the business, And we do not know whether 5 Cdn Armd Div is in the business. (Moaning: committed somewhere along the front)

Beelitz: Yes, unfortunately there are so many questions without an answer,

Army Group had been informed by Tenth Army of the continuous arrival of reinforcements in the area between Cassino and the Liri; but there were no indications that any German headquarters know of or definitely suspected the presence of 1 Cdn Corps in this sector.

(G.M.D.S. - 75138/29, O.B.SW, Int reps, 15 May 44; 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 5 of Appx, Appx 742 & 746, 16 May 44

17 May

117. The First Canadian Infantry Division had now relieved the Eighth Indian Division, and 3 and 1 Cdn Inf Bdes were driving the enemy towards the Senger line. The presence of 1 Cdn Corps was revealed to the Germans by papers that had been taken from the body of a dead soldier of Hast and P.E.R. 1 km southwest of Pignataro, as well as by the fact that 1 Para Div had captured seven men from 3 Cdn Inf Bde near Piurlarola. In the evening the subject was discussed on the telephone: 17 May 1925 hrs. Wentzell -. Beelitz:

B: The presence of Canadians has been confirmed by a dead soldier?

W: Yes,

B: It is only one division.

W: I do not think that they have split up the Canadian Corps; I believe that 1 Cdn Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div are there.

B: 5 Cdn Armd Div has not been identified. Maybe there is only one brigade. 5 Cdn Armd Div has never been thought to be there.

W: Tanks were there for certain. I do not think that they will split up the Corps, much less the Division.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, Vol 5 of Appx, Appx 775 & 777, 17 May 44)

118. The vigorous advance of the Canadian brigades caused a precarious situation for the German units in the sector. Battle Group Strafnor anal 190 Pz Recce Bn on the front of 1 Cdn Inf Bde were nearly cut off and barely managed to extricate themselves during the night 17/18 May; further north the forces of 361 (mech) Gren Regt were badly mauled by 3 Cdn Inf Bde. The morning report of 51 Mtn Corps on 18 May contained the following remarks:

... Contrary to all expectations the enemy advanced during the night in the area of Battle Group Fabian 3 Bn 361 (mech) Gren Regt and engaged the unit in a series of bitter fights.

... It had not been possible for 190 Pz Recce Bn and the Mountain Jaegers (Group Strafnor) to disengage themselves by the evening, but they succeeded in extricating

themselves during the night. The fighting strength of 190 Pz Recce Bn is now approximately 60-70 men.\*

... The withdrawal of 90 Pz Gren Div (576 Gren Regt) in the centre proceeded according to plan; but north of it 361 (mech) Gren Regt was attacked towards the evening on a wide front. It was enveloped from both sides by superior enemy forces with tanks; overtaken and finally encircled. After critical hours these elements succeeded in freeing themselves from the grip of the enemy, and in withdrawing with their weapons to the positions previously ordered. Fighting strength: 2 Bn 361 (mech) Gren Regt about 120 men; 3 Bn 361 (mech ) Gren Regt about 60 men.

During 17 May, 305 and 334 Engr Bns had reached the area of the Forme d'Aquino, but on the whole the pressure of the Canadians and the dangerous advance of elements of C.E.F, across the Liri towards Pontecerve showed plainly that a speedy withdrawal to the Senger line was the only possible course of action. In view of the worsening situation, 9 Pz Gren Regt (26 Pz Div) had received orders to proceed to Pico in small groups, and 26 Pz Recce Bn received orders to move to Fondi. As was to be expected, C. of S. Fourteenth Army telephoned Army Group, and pointed to the serious weakening of the eastern wing of Fourteenth Army which would result from the removal of 26 Pz Recce Bn, but General Wostphal stated flatly that the situation left him no other choice. - On the same day General v. Senger had returned from leave and resumed command of 14 Pz Corps; his substitute had been General of Artillery Walter Hartmann (para 69 above).

(G.M.D.S, - 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Appx C431, morning report 18 May; 53271/1, Tenth Army W.D. 6, 17 May; 59091/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, 17 May; 56199/1, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, 17 May 44)

#### 18 and 19 May

119. The War Diary of Tenth Army mentions the withdrawal from Monte Cassino during the night 17/18 May and the loss of Esporia on 18 May by 9 Pz Gren Regt (26 Pz Div). The Canadian sector was referred to as follows:

North of the Liri the enemy harassed our withdrawal with very heavy artillery fire. In the afternoon enemy tanks and infantry advanced towards A'quino. Revival of the heavy artillery fire in the evening, and intercepted wireless messages point to further strong tank attacks in the Cassino plain.\*\*

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\* The detailed statements and the situation map of 51 Mtn Corps are being given credence in this case in preference to the differing positions shown (probably due to the lack of detailed information) on the situation maps of Tenth Army

\*\* A message intercepted by Short Range Wireless Interception Platoon "Marie " at 2005 hrs indicated that the Allied artillery from then on was to fire on the "Hitler Line" and that Allied units must not advance to positions closer than 1000 yds from that line. A footnote to the report of the interception platoon states that on that day it was possible to decode the map references of Eighth Army without delay due to information from captured documents. It is interesting to see, however, that on 18 and 19 May the interception platoon still seemed to believe that the messages from the Pignataro and the Pontecorve sector were being originated by 8 Ind Div. (G.M.D:S. - 58200/61 14 Pz Corps, Int reps, 18 May 44)

The area over which the various German battle groups in the Canadian sector were operating can be seen on the situation traces of 51 Mtn Corps (para 94 above). The exact composition of these groups on 18 May was set forth by the Corps in a document which is being retained. in photostatic form (981A10.(D81). The forces north of the Liri under command of 90 Pz Gren Div were listed as follows:

18 May	90 Pz Gren Div
	Right:           Group Bode
	1 and 2 Bns 576 Gren Regt 334 Engr Bn (less one company) elements 44 Fd Repl Bn one company 190 Engr Bn one company 190 Anti-tk Bn
	Group Strafner
	three companies 5 Mtn Div 907 Aslt Gun Bde elements 80 Engr Bn half company 3 High Mtn Jg Bn
Loft:	Group Fabian*
	troops: 2 and 3 Bns 361 (mech) Gren Regt 305 Engr Bn elements 44 Fd Repl Bn one tank company 26 Pz Div Anti-tk Coy 114 Jg Div Anti-tk Coy 5 Mtn Div one company 190 Engr Bn

The May report of the Senior Engineer Officer 51 Mtn Corps showed the distribution of the engineer units on 19 May:

114 Jg Div:	114 Engr Bn (H.Q., 1 and 3 Coys )
5 Mtn Div:	95 Mtn Engr Bn ( 3 Coy) 80 Engr Bn (2 Coy) 8 Rock-drilling Coy
1 Para Div:	1 Para Engr Bn (H.Q., 1 and 2 Coys; (3 Coy wiped out)

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\* Captain Fabian was O.C. 2 Bn 361 (mech) Gren Regt (90 Pz Gren Div)

95 Mtn Engr Bn (1 and 2 Coys )  
114 Engr Bn (3 Coy)  
33 Engr Bn (1 Coy)

790 Fd Fort Constr Bn (3 Coy)  
80 Engr Bn (1 Coy)

90 Pz Gren Div: 305 Engr Bn (H.Q., 1 and 2 Coys)  
334 Engr Bn (H.Q., 2 ,and 3 Coys)  
190 Engr Bn (H.Q. 1, 2 and 3 Coys)  
80 Engr Bn (3 Coy)  
790 Fd Fort Constr Bn (H.Q., 1 and 2 Coys)  
791 Fd Fort Constr Bn (2 Coy)  
80 Engr Bn (H.Q. & Mine-laying P1)

A photostatic copy of a map showing the dispositions of the engineer units of 51 Mtn Corps on 18 May is being retained (981A10. (D82) ). It has been shown in para 118 that 305 and 334 Engr Bns had reached the Forme d'aquino area on 17 May. Of their subsequent activities the Senior Engineer Officer reported:

305 and 334 Engr Bns which were committed between Aquino and Pontecerve succeeded during the nights 18/19 and 19/20 May in planting 3000 additional "T" and wooden mines, until they themselves became embroiled in the fighting and were committed in the role of infantry, to fight tanks.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 18 May; 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Appx C442, 18 May; 55779/11, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Engr reps May - June 44)

120. On the same day (18 May) the tactical headquarters of Tenth Army was moved to Altepiano,\* 26 Pz Div and 1027 Pz Gren Regt were placed under command of 14 Pz Corps by O.B.SW at 1810 hrs; 334 Inf Div received orders to hasten to the right wing of Tenth Army; 278 Inf Div (then with Armeegruppe v. Zangen)\*\* received orders to move from the Rimini - Ravenna area to the left wing of Tenth Army; and 90 Pz Gren Div was placed under command of 14 Pz Corps as of 0800 hrs 19 May. This latter arrangement was made for the purpose of ensuring unified command for the defence of Pontecerve; the orders which were given by the Army and the Corps in this regard are being retained in photostatic form (9811A10.(D84)).\*\*\*

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, Vol 5 of Appx, Appx 807, 18 May; 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Appx C440, 18 May)

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\* Altepiano is situated 800 yds southeast of the road from Subiaco to Guarcine on the road from Vallepietro to Piglio.

\*\* Armeegruppe v. Zangen was renamed Armeegruppe v. Zangen on 19 May 44 (D.H.S, 981 AZ (D39))

(G.M.D.S. - 64839/8, Armeegr v.Z., W.D. 3, Misc reps, 19 May 44)

\*\*\* For views and actions of Hitler and the Armed Forces Operations Staff at the time see Appx "A" to this report, pp 2-4

121. On 19 May it became apparent that it would not be possible to keep the Germans moving and to drive them from the Senger positions without a previous halt and a full-scale assault. The density of German units between Piodimonte and Pontecerve had been greatly increased by the arrival of the forces withdrawing from Cassino, and furthermore, according to the report of the builder of the line (Rothe, The Senger Riegel, op cit, para 24 above), this particular sector had been prepared with exceptional care for the expected tank attacks. The boundary line between 1 Para Div and 90 Pz Gren Div (the latter for that single day under command of 14 Pz Corps) was less than 2 km north of Pontecerve. The detailed composition and the areas of the four major battle groups between the Liri and Piodimonte, as well as the new boundary line, were shown on the unusually well prepared situation trace of 51 Mtn Corps for 19 May (para 94 above). The Piedimonte sector was now being held by Battle Group Schulz; the Aquino sector by Group Heilmann (Colonel Ludwig Heilmann, Cmdr 3 Para Regt) ; the sector just north of Pontecerve by Group Fabian, and the immediate area of Pontecerve by Group Bode with Group Strafner and under command.

122. By this time German Intelligence had obtained a fairly good picture of the opposing forces in the northern Liri sector. The daily intelligence reports of O.B.SW carried the following items:

18 May ... In the Cassino plain the boundary between 13 Brit Corps and 1 Cdn Corps is presumed to be about 1.3 kms north of Pignataro. 1 Cdn Army Tk Bde is probably committed with 1 Cdn Corps.

19 May ... 1 Cdn Corps presumably between Pontecerve and Aquino; 13 Brit Corps between Aquino and Piedimonte,

Prisoner of war information:

1 Cdn Inf Div committed with all three brigades and with 25 Brit Army Tk Bde and 1 Bn Royal Dragoons (Armd Recce Bn) attached. 5 Cdn Armd Div. said to consist of one tank brigade and two mechanized infantry brigades (one of these the 11th) and one additional tank brigade under command. (One infantry brigade (probably the 11th) said to be committed north of Cassino,)

Information from intercepted message:

British and Canadian forces in the Aquino area. (Probably elements of 6 Brit Armd Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div)\*

(G.M.D.S. - 75138/29, O.B.SW, Int reps 18, 19 May 44)

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\* All references to Canadian formations in the Intelligence Summary of Tenth Army for May 44 have been extracted and are being retained in translated form (981A10.(D85))  
(G.M.D.S. - 53271/19, Tenth Army, Int Summary May 44)

## THE DAYS BEFORE THE ASSAULT

(20 - 22 May)

20 May

123. The most important development of the day occurred on the front of 14 Pz Corps, where Gaeta was abandoned and the German troops were dislodged from Fondi. A breakthrough from Fondi to Terracina was now a distinct possibility, but each Army claimed lack of forces and wanted the other one to deal with the problem. The situation was further aggravated by the fact that in the early hours of the evening 25 Allied landing craft had been observed near Circeo, and an additional 19 (with escorts) near Anzio, with the result that General Mackensen was now again acutely apprehensive of an Allied landing. In the evening of 19 May, one reinforced brigade group of 29 Pz Gren Div had been alerted for speedy transfer to the left wing of Fourteenth Army, but the Army considered this measure as insufficient, and on 20 May C. of S. Fourteenth Army telephoned Army Group at regular intervals for permission to commit the whole division. Finally, at 1810 hrs General Mackensen conversed with Marshal Kesselring and made the representations which later in the evening were followed by Kesselring's reluctant decision to release the balance of the Division. This telephone conversation was reflected in the War Diary of Fourteenth Army by the following entry:

1810 hrs      General Mackensen - Marshal Kesselring

Commander Fourteenth Army draws attention to the situation on the left wing of the Army and points to the following possible enemy courses of action:

- a)      Attack from the beachhead in northeasterly direction.
- b)      Landing between Circeo and the beachhead.
- c)      Landing north of the beachhead.
- d)      Break-through from Fondi to Terracina.

The Army Commander urgently requests permission to employ 29 Pz Gren Div, as otherwise it will not be possible to prevent an enemy breakthrough.

The Field Marshal declines to accede for the moment in view of the fact that the reconnaissance reports from Sardinia and Corsica have not yet been received. But 71 (mech) Gren Regt is to be dispatched immediately.

The Army Commander again points out that, unless dispatched this evening, 29 Pz Gren Div will arrive too late to close the gap.



The Marshal reserves decision pending the receipt of the reconnaissance reports from Sardinia and Corsica.

At 2005 hrs Army Group consented to the release of 29 Pz Gren Div, but at the same time informed Fourteenth Army that it was now responsible for the area northwest of Fondi, and that the inter-Army boundary had been moved to the line Sperlonga -Fondi - Castro del Volsci - 2 km northeast Ceccano - 4 km north east Supino, When General Mackensen remonstrated against this widening of his front, Marshal Kesselring said:

2230 hrs            In view of the changed situation of Tenth Army, the; widening of the Fourteenth Army sector is necessary.

At 2240 hrs the result of the day's tug-of-war for 29 Pz Gren Div was formalized by Kesselring in a Battle Directive to the Armies and to Armeeabteilung v. Zangen:

- i            Advance of the American forces via Fondi to the beachhead is imminent.
- ii           Fourteenth Army will prevent an enemy breakthrough on both sides of the previous boundary between the two Armies. Fourteenth Army assumes responsibility for the defence of the mountain massif north of Terracina. The order to prevent a landing in the area Terracina - Circeo remains unaffected and in full force. In order to enable the Army to carry out its task, 29 Pz Gren Div is being placed at the disposal of Fourteenth Army...

The full text of the order is being retained in photostatic form (981A10. (D86))

(G.M.D.S. - 59091/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, 20 May 44; 53271/2, Tenth Army, Chefsachen (Top Secret Does), 20 May 44)

124.    In the area of 51 Mtn Corps the day was relatively quiet. Attacks on Piedimonte were at first repulsed any then followed by the partial loss of the locality. South of the Corps boundary the impetuous advance of the French forces had led to the capture of the Monte Leucio; a French force was approaching Pontecorvo from the south, and 90 Pz Gren Div was threatened with envelopment from the right. By midnight the Division was again under the command of 51 Mtn Corps (para 126 below), Artillery strength in the sector was being bolstered by the transfer of the headquarters of 5 Proj Bde and 56 Proj Regt from Fourteenth to Tenth Army:

20 May            Headquarters 5 Proj Bde with 56 and 71 Proj Regts will be committed as a compact formation in the area between the Via Casilina and the Liri. This will be done in such a manner that the brigade will be able to intervene in the fighting on the right wing of 51 Mtn Corps and as far as possible also on the left flank of 26 Pz Div.

... 907 Aslt Gun Bde will proceed to the area of Fourteenth Army for reorganization... (981A10. (D87))

German artillery positions for 20 and 27 May appeared on situation maps in the files of the Senior Artillery Commander. In the absence of any artillery situation maps for 23 May, photostatic copies of the following are being retained:

Tenth Army, Schematic order of battle of artillery formations on 20 May 44 (981A10.(D88))

14 Pz Corps, Artillery positions on 20 May 44 (0600 hrs) (981A10. (D89 )

51 Mtn Corps, Artillery positions on 20 May 44 (0600 hrs) (981A10.(D90))

51 Mtn Corps, sit map, 20 Mar 44 (981A10. (D91))

51 Mtn Corps, Artillery sit map , 20 May 44 (981A10. (D92))

The picture of German artillery in the sector was rounded out on 21 May, when 22 Flak Bde submitted a situation map showing a massive concentration of anti-aircraft artillery behind the Melfa river in the triangle Ceprano - S. Giovanni - Roccasecca. (981A10.(D93))

(G.M.D.S.-51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 20 May 44; 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 5 of Appx, Apx 863, 20 May 44; 53271/15, Files of Sen Arty Cmdr, 20 May 44;.55779/4, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, vol II of Appx "B", 20 May 44; 532'71/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, Appx 900, 21 May 44)

## 21 May

125. At that time, whenever Kesselring and v. Vietinghoff discussed the crisis on the right wing, they seemed to find some sort of reassurance in mutual expressions of confidence in the strength of the positions north of the Liri: "the defence works were excellent; effective concentrations of artillery and anti-aircraft artillery, under the direct command of the Army's Senior Artillery Commander, were ready for action in the area of San Giovanni Incarico and on both sides of the Melfa; the two divisional commanders were in a class by themselves". But there were no substantial reserves and the storm was about to break. Danger signals were plentiful, on 21 May great masses of Allied armour had been seen along the Casilina; a French attempt to break through to San Giovanni Incarico had barely been averted; the Canadians were moving closer to the main line, and were shelling Pontecorvo and testing the front by raids in force.

In the War Diary of 51 Mtn Corps the situation was summed up as follows:

On the right wing of the Corps the very large concentrations; the observed reconnaissance activity of enemy staffs, and the exceptionally active air reconnaissance which continued during the evening, all point to a large-scale attack for 22 May. As countermeasures for the impending battle one must consider: the arrival of 1 Coy 114

Engr Bn and of 1 (Panther) Coy 4 Pz Regt in the area of 90 Pz Gren Div, and the arrival of 56 Proj Regt on the right wing of the Corps. Further measures are under way:\*

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, 21 May 44; 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 21 May 44 )

126. Other developments of the day in the sector were:

- (a) 90 Pz Gren Div reverted under command 51 Mtn Corps at midnight 20/21 May.
- (b) Headquarters 44 Inf Div received orders to withdraw from the area of 14 Pz Corps, and to resume command of their 132 and 134 Gren Regts in the Belmonte area by 1200 hrs 22 May.
- (c) 3 Bn 721 Jg Regt (114 Jg Div) was placed under command of 90 Pz Gren Div and sent to the Liri flank of the Division as a reserve in the rear of Pontecorvo,
- (d) 51 Mtn Corps received word that 200 (mech) Gren Regt was being assembled at Ceprano for return to 90 Pz Gren Div.\*\* At the same time the remaining elements of 15 Pz Gren Div were to be withdrawn from the front and sent to Tenth Army, which was organizing the Division into an operational Army Reserve in the Pofi area.
- (e) 51 Mtn Corps reported that the situation forbade the withdrawal of 907 Aslt Gun Bde (see para 124) and urgently asked for additional guns.
- (f) 90 Pz Gren Div reported that the heavy artillery barrage on the main line of defence had interdicted any movement during the whole morning. Signal communications were disrupted and the troops were showing battle fatigue, especially 44 Fd Repl Bn and elements of 576 Gren Regt.
- (g) Artillery Commander 51 Mtn Corps (Arko 451) reported:

Prior to his attacks the enemy increases his artillery fire to a sustained barrage; on the occasion of one attempted attack on Pontecorvo (19 May) his fire was estimated at 20,000 rounds within two hours, whereas the total daily mean expenditure of all our divisions is 27,000 rounds.

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\* 4 Pz Regt was a G.H.Q. formation with Fourteenth Army until pulled out and sent to Tenth Army on 19 May, One (Panther) company moved to 1 Para Div and from there to 90 Pz Gren Div on 20 May, while the mass was assembled near Ceprano and committed to assist 26 Pz Div in the vain hope of stemming the tide in the sector south of the Liri. (G.M.D.S.- 53271/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, Appx 861 20 May 44; 58199/1, 14 Pz Corps W.D. 6, 21 May 44; 59091/9 Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, 19 and 20 May; 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps W.D. 2, 21 May 44)

\*\* On the sit maps of 51 Mtn Corps, 200 (mech) Gren Regt was shown for the first time on 25 May; it had been taken from Ceprano to the new line behind the Melfa and indeed was the Division's sole element of any substance (300 men), (para 141 below)

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 21 May 44)

22 May

127. The fighting in the Pontecorvo sector on 22 May was inconclusive and the War Diary of Tenth Army recorded that all attacks had been stemmed. But the valour of the Canadians in that sector was no doubt reflected in the fact that for the second time within four days Battle Group Bode was highly commended and named by the Army Commander for citation in the daily communique of the High Command. Group Bode and Group Fabian, then fighting the Canadians between Aquino and Pontecorvo, had already been commended and named for citation on 19 May. The records of the telephone conversations show clearly that this was not merely a gesture of farewell to doomed men and an implied censure of the disappointing performance of 26 Pz Div, but that it was based on genuine admiration for the troops concerned:

Kesselring: Above all I ask you to convey my full appreciation to the troops of Baade and Heidrich.

2220 hrs v. Vietinghoff : There was not much action today on Heidrich's front, but Baade fought brilliantly.\*

Kesselring: Yes, in their case one could cry with admiration; in the case of the others from rage.

A few minutes earlier Wentzell had said to Westphal:

2210 hrs . . . The Army has been somewhat disappointed by the performance of 26 Pz Div,  
  
... 1 B 67 Pz Gren Regt has exploded again; H.Q. 9 Pz Gren Regt reports that they are encircled at the Monte Leucio .  
  
...Never was a formation committed under such favourable circumstances and with so many guns, tanks and projectors,

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 22 May 44; 53271/90 Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, Appx 913, 22 May 44)

128. During the whole Italian campaign Allied mastery of the air had been a thorn in the flesh of Tenth Army; on 22 May the effects of air attacks were felt more keenly than ever because

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\* On 26 May 90 Pz Gren Div was singled out for commendation by the following remark in the War Diary of Tenth Army:

During the defensive battles of the last few days at the focal point of the large-scale enemy attacks, 90 Pz Gren Div and attached formations have again proven and distinguished themselves by bravery.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 26 May 44)

they did not merely harass the supply services, but interfered with the movements of troops urgently needed on another part of the front. According to the telephone conversations the attacks in the Colarmele .- Avezzano area were particularly upsetting to the Germans:

W.D. Tenth Army, 22 May Today again, Tenth Army was affected by the enemy's control of the air. Due to his aerial attacks it has now become impossible to arrange a time table for the transfer of formations from the right wind to the left.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 22 May 44 )

129. As far as the overall situation was concerned, Marshal Kesselring now thought that he had done all that was possible. He had bolstered Tenth Army over the protests of the imminently threatened Fourteenth Army; he had given his last immediate reserve to Fourteenth Army; and if things went badly he might call on the Hermann Goering Panzer Division, then a High Command Reserve in the Liegurian sector of Armeekorps v.Zangen.\* But soon it was to become apparent that Tenth Army had received too little too late; that Fourteenth Army had lost too much too soon, and that the Hermann. Goering Panzer Division would not be able to save the situation,

#### THROUGH THE HITLER LINE

(23 May)

130. The general situation, as the Germans saw it in the evening of 23 May, was described in the War Diary of Tenth Army:

The day is a critical one. Far-reaching decisions will have to be made. Command has been rendered exceedingly difficult by the interruption of nearly all telephone lines during the night and in the morning. Eye witnesses have reported the descent of parachutists at Ferentino and Frosinone. No positive information concerning their whereabouts has been received. Systematic destruction of the supply routes by fighter bomber formations during the night and by huge bomber formations during the day are paralysing our troop movements and supply routes. Word has been received from Fourteenth Army that the enemy has begun his advance to the Northeast from the beachhead and has obtained considerable initial success, which - if continued - may endanger our own right wing.\*\* For this reason O.B.SW has placed 94 Int Div under

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\* In the meantime the German High Command had decided to send 16 S.S. Pz Gren Div and 16 S.S. Pz Gren Try Regt to the area La Spezia - Pisa, For details see Photostat and translation (981A10.(D94)).(G.M.D.S. - 5321/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, Appx 882, 21 May 44)

\*\* At 2000 hrs Kesselring called v. Vietinghoff on the telephone and after a few perfunctory remarks made the following statement:

For your information I wish to say that contrary to all expectations things do not look good on Mackensen's front. Kee p this to yourself.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, Appx 948, 23 May 44)

Fourteen Army as of 1600 hrs, and the old boundary between the two Armies is in force again.\* on our own front the enemy, far superior in numbers and materiel, continues to hurl himself against our lines. The strong-point of Lenola has been lost. In the area south of the Liri the enemy wins M. Chiavino, Colle Cocco and M. Castello. His main goal seems to be a breakthrough to Pastena and San Giovanni; this has been prevented by committing the last reserves. North of Pontecorvo the enemy obtains a rather deep penetration. Based on the situation as a whole, a fighting withdrawal, to the ItC11 position is under consideration.

(G.M.D.S, - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 23 May 44 )

131. The developments in the Aquino - Pontecorvo sector were recorded in some detail in the War Diary of 51 Mtn Corps.

The day was marked by continued and most violent tank attacks in the area of 90 Pz Gren Div...After an artillery barrage that lasted for several hours the enemy has been attacking since 0600 hrs on a wide front at C. Cappaccione - Camp Vincenzo -Zamarelli and southwest of Aquino. At the same time a strong tank attack from the Southwest is in progress against Pontecorvo. The enemy has made several penetrations, After hard and fluctuating fighting, during which not only our own troops but also those of the enemy suffered severe casualties, it proved impossible to prevent enemy advances to the area of the cemetery north of Pontecorvo and at Masse. Amati : as well as on both sides of Ponte Regno. To protect its right flank 1 Para Div occupied defensive positions at Ponte Regno. \*\* ....

Due to the enemy's deep penetration on the left wing of 90 Pz Gren Div, where the troops in the sector, already badly weakened by 14 hours of artillery fire, and the troops sent in to rectify the situation (one battalion 1 Para Div and two companies 5 Mtn Div) were wiped out, the Corps is in a position that is aggravated by the lack of directives from the Army, despite the repeated and urgent requests for instructions by the C. of S: The threatening complete break-through of the enemy is being prevented by the decision of the Corps - on its own initiative - to abandon Pontecorvo and to withdraw to the line San Giovanni on the Liri - Ponte Regno.\*\*\*

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\* The name of a formation did not always evoke a true mental picture of its strength; at that moment for instance 94 Inf Div had a total of 200 men, At 1600 hrs 23 May this remnant was placed under the command of 29 Pz Gren Div.

(G.M.D.a. - 59091/1 Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, 23 May 44; 53271/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx Appx 953, 23 May 44

\*\* The battalion of 1 Para Div which was destroyed while blocking 2 Cdn Inf Bde south of Aquino was not further identified in the records of 51 Mtn Corps, nor was the identity mentioned of the two companies of Mountain Jaegers that had been rushed in from 5 Mtn Div during the night 22./23 May. (They were either from 85 or 100 Mtn Jg Regt or a composite force from both.)

\*\*\* San Giovanni on the Liri is situated on the left bank of the Liri about four kilometres west-northwest of Pontecorvo; it must not be confused with the larger locality of San Giovanni Incarico about ten kilometres above Pontecorvo on the right bank of the Liri. Ponte Regno is situated about three kilometres from Pontecorvo on the road from Pontecorvo to Castrocielo. Both localities may be found on the master map of the Liri sector, 1:25,000, introduced in para 94.

The lack of directives from Tenth Army was strongly emphasized in the War Diary of 51 Mtn Corps. A glance at the situation map of Tenth Army for 23 May shows plainly that the Pontecorvo salient was doomed (981A10.(D95)). General Feurstein knew very well that his right battalions were being slaughtered in a battle that could not restore the situation; there were however several factors that may explain the silence of Tenth Army. Marshal Kesselring was absorbed at the tactical Headquarters of 14 Pz Corps in the task of coping with the dangerous American breakout from the beachhead, General v. Vietinghoff was in a somewhat embarrassing position, as only the previous day he had spoken to Kesselring of the good fight which was being put up in the northern Liri sector, and Kesselring in the meantime had sent a message of commendation to the troops, and had passed on the information to the highest levels, with the result that Feurstein's men were being praised in the communiqué of the High Command at the very moment in which they were being beaten by the Canadians.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/14, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 11 of Appx, sit maps 21 - 31 May 44; 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 23 May 44 )

132. The failure of Tenth Army to make provisional arrangements for a withdrawal was also reflected in the following entries;

In the morning C. of S. telephoned Colonel Berlin, and urgently repeated his four day old plea for directives for a possible withdrawal; he stated that otherwise an orderly withdrawal might become impossible. The Corps dispatched an officer as special courier to Tenth Army with tentative plans for such a withdrawal.

1450 hrs. OFFICIAL NOTE OF FACT: C. of S. 51 Mtn Corps telephones Colonel Berlin, G.S.C., Ops Offr Tenth Army, and again urgently requests directives for a withdrawal, so that the Corps could make preparations that would prevent the loss of arms and equipment. ..

2330 hrs, OFFICIAL NOTE OF FACT: C. of S, reports to Maj-Gen Wentzell, C. of S. Tenth Army, that according to reports received from the commander of 90 Pz Gren Div, due to enemy artillery fire lasting for 14 hours, 1 Bn 576 Gren Regt, 2 Bn 361 (mech) Regt and Battle Group Strafner must be considered as destroyed. The two companies of 5 Mtn Div came under artillery fire just before going into action and suffered heavy casualties.. For this reason it is impossible to rectify the situation. ... Corps Command therefore orders the withdrawal from Pontecorvo and occupation of a defence line from San Giovanni on the Liri - Ponte Regno. Contact with 1 Para Div at Ponte Regno.\*

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\* In connection. with .the .events of 23. May 44 photostatic copies of the following documents are being retained.

- (a) 51 Mtn Corps, Morning, Intermediate and Final Tactical Reports for 23 May 44 (981A10(D96))
- (b) 51 Mtn Corps, "Official Notes of Fact", 23 May 44 ( 981A10.(D97))
- (c) O.B.SW to 51 Mtn Corps, Message of Commendation 22 May 44 (981A10.(D98))
- (d) 90 Pz Gren Div to 51 Mtn Corps, Commendation of 71 Proj Regt, 23 May 44 ( 981A10.(D99))

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 23 May 44)

133. According to the Intelligence Summary of Tenth Army a counter-attack on the Canadians who had broken through the Sender line 1 km west - northwest of Pontecorvo failed on account of the "phosphorus fire" of the enemy. All references to Canadian formations in that summary (17 - 31 May) have been extracted and are being retained in translated form. (Para 122f above)

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/19, Tenth Army, Intelligence Summary, May 44)

134. It was only on the rarest occasions that eyewitness accounts of events found their way into the records of German formations above divisional level. This occurred however in the case of a report on the fighting for Pontecorvo. The town was defended by 334 Engr Bn, and the Corps Engineer Officer preserved the report of the unit, probably in view of the fact that the Corps Commander had expressed his approval of the report in a marginal note. Although not devoid of self-praise and bombast, the document supplies some information not to be found in other sources. The writer apparently witnessed the breaching of the Hitler line by 3 Cdn Inf Bde. (981A10.(D102)) The substance of this report is being presented here in the form of a series of abbreviated excerpts:

... On orders from Tenth Army, two companies of 334 Engr Bn were dispatched to 90 Pz Gren Div on 15 May ...

... On orders from 90 Pz Gren Div, this force was placed under the tactical command of 190 Engr Bn (90 Pz Gren Div). This was also done in the case of the two companies of 305 Engr Bn ...

... Owing to enemy pressure it had been necessary to withdraw the main line of resistance to the southern fringe of Pontecorvo. In Pontecorvo 334 Engr Bn was installed as defence garrison. The second and third companies of the battalion were in Pontecorvo. From the effectives of these two companies a reserve company was formed .

... Later 3 Coy alone occupied the ruins of Pontecorvo, while 2 Coy was in position north of the town with elements of a tank company .

... In consequence of the southward extension of the sector of 1 Para Div, in the evening of 20 May Battalion Headquarters were moved to a small depression northwest of Pontecorvo in the vicinity of the tactical headquarters of Battle Group Bode .

... Traffic on the road from Aquino to Pontecorvo had become nearly impossible owing to the enemy artillery fire. The town of Pontecorvo was under heavy fire from artillery and waves of fighter bombers .

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(e) Armed Forces High Command, Communiqué for 23 May 44 (981A10.(D100))

(f) 51 Mtn Corps, Order for 90 Pz Gren Div to withdraw to specified line and to take the artillery behind the Melfa, 23 May 44 (2400 hrs). (981A10.(D101))

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, vol 2 of Appx "C")



... At the headquarters of 3 Coy in Pontecorvo there was also an advanced observation post of 71 Proj Regt. During the big attacks of 21 end 22 May this regiment dispersed the enemy and forced him to veer off,

... During the night 21/22 May our reserve company was relieved by a Jaeger company, In view of the expected attack for 22 May our reserve company was now placed on the northern fringe of Pontecorvo as a reserve.

.... In the morning of 22 May 2 Coy was in positions east of Pontecortro between the town and the Field Replacement Battalion.\*

... In the morning of 22 May large enemy tank and infantry formations were seen south of Pontecorvo. Arrangements for continued cooperation were made with Colonel Bode; with Captain Luley, who was in command of a parachute battalion\*\*, and with the commander of a heavy tank company. The forces of 190 Engr Bn on our right were very weak; the Field Replacement Battalion on the left of 2 Coy was even weaker. The projectors of 71 Proj Regt had finished ranging. At 1630 hrs the enemy attack began with a violent artillery bombardment. One hour later our commanding officer was killed. The enemy was stopped and pushed back. The night was quiet.

... The all-out attack on Pontecorvo began on 23 May. It was a tremendous bombardment such as we did not experience even during our baptism of fire at Ortona.

... Finally, at 0900 hrs the artillery preparation came to an end and deathly silence reigned for a few moments. Under cover of tanks the enemy infantry approached Pontecorvo and the battle was on. The enemy, who thought we had been buried long ago in the ruins of Pontecorvo was greeted by murderous fire, .

... In the area of our left neighbour - at the cemetery north of Pontecorvo - the enemy had achieved a penetration. Reconnaissance patrols which were dispatched immediately returned with the .first prisoners - Tommies and Canadians. The penetration was wider and deeper than expected. The thin screen of the Field Replacement Battalion and the infantry forces in the switch position behind the cemetery had been unable to cope with the enemy. From an observation post on a house on the eastern outskirts of Pontecorvo it could be plainly seen how the enemy passed through the gap in company strength; bypassed Pontecorvo, and was followed by another force of two platoons and several tanks. Our reserve company was now committed there, and the attack was supported by

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\* According to the situation maps of Tenth Army for 22 and 23 May, the battalion in question was 96 Fd Repl Bn (44 Inf Div). On the situation maps of 51 Mtn Corps, 44 Fd Repl Bn is shown. 96 and 44 Fd Repl Bns were one and the same unit; in the first case the battalion number was being used; in the second case the number of the division. At that time many units consisted of mere handfuls of men; unless material from lower levels becomes available it may not be possible to establish an absolutely accurate picture without overstepping the limitations imposed by the law of diminishing returns.

\*\* Once more the Parachute battalion remained unidentified in German documents. Captain Walter Luley was the Brigade Adjutant of 4 Para Regt; this might indicate that the unit was a battalion from that regiment. Heidrich was conducting a "war of his own" and was hardly ever heard from unless he was offering advice to his superiors; in view of his high party affiliations, his strong personality, and excellent performance, nobody cared to tackle him.

fire from the heavy machine guns and mortars of our other two companies. Our well directed fire blocked the progress of additional enemy forces at the cemetery. Despite the heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy it was impossible to close the breach.

... Describing a wide arc behind Pontecorvo the Tommies had reached the river Liri and the Engineer Battle Group was therefore encircled.

... At 2100 12rs we sent our last message to Battle Group Bode: "We are encircled by strong enemy infantry and armoured forces and are getting set for all-around defence."

The report concluded with a description of the escape from encirclement of the remnants of the unit.

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/11, 51 Mtn Corps, Reports of Corps Engr Offr)

135. The tactical considerations which led to the construction of the Senger line have been cited in para 24. from the manuscript of Maj-Gen Rothe (Rothe. The Senger Riegel, op cit, para 24 above). The same manuscript also provides some information regarding the kind and number of installations in the Senger position:

Provision was made for a combination of two types of construction: firstly that with armour and concrete protection ( so-called "permanent installations"), and secondly, that of ordinary field installations. In the Pontecorvo - Piedimonte sectors by far the most important sectors the installations were all of the "permanent" type.

The fortifications comprised:

- (a) "Permanent" type: (fortress-like)
  - 1) For anti-tank defence: Eighteen 7.5 cm anti-tank guns in revolving; tank turrets (the German "Tiger" or "Panther" turrets) mounted on armoured pedestals, specially constructed for the purpose, and having a casing of strong reinforced concrete, one metre thick.
  - 2) From 30 - 40 .shell proof shelters of steel construction with a casing of reinforced concrete two metres thick {so-called "O.T. [Organization Todt] shelters"), each to house a section.
- (b) Field Installations:
  - 1) So-called "Tobruk" machine gun positions, with circular mountings for the machine guns.
  - 2) Armoured machine gun nests (for one machine gun with a crew of two)
  - 3) Shelters (proof against single 15 cm hits)

- 4) Dugouts (proof of against medium size mortars)
- 5) Unprotected machine gun and rifle positions.
- 6) Unprotected observation posts for heavy infantry weapons and artillery.
- 7) Communication and approach trenches.

Figures given from memory for the installations mentioned under (b) can no longer approach accuracy. According to my recollection however their number was sufficient for the purposes of from four to five divisions in the front lines. For four divisions that would mean (exclusive of the anti-tank guns mentioned above) approximately:

408	shelters (shell-proof)
2786	firing positions and observation posts for all weapons
2786	dugouts

A permanent record of the German defence installations in the northern Liri sector is available in the form of the maps referred to in para 101. An examination of the map showing the German positions in the sector of 90 Pz Gren Div indicates that six of the grand total of eighteen Panther turrets, and 21 of the approximately 40 shellproof O.T. shelters, were situated in that sector. Their greatest density was just south of Aquino and south of Pontecorvo towards the Liri. It is apparent that the breakthrough was successful in the least well fortified section of the Pontecorvo - Aquino sector. Although the demolitions and preparations carried out in the sector of 51 Mtn Corps were roundly criticized by the Army Commander on 22 May, the main cause of disappointment to the German High Command at the time of the breakthrough was the small resistance value of the southern portion of the position.\*

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D, 2, vol 2 of Appx "C", Appx C 488, 22 May 44)

## EXPLOITATION TO THE MELFA

(24 May)

136. The War Diary of Tenth Army for this day does not provide information that is not supplied in greater detail by other sources. The Army was beaten, and for Food reasons the pages of the War Diary were filled with sad comments and pervaded by pessimism. The more objectively formulated "Final Estimate of the Day" described the situation in the following terms:

Due to the deep armoured break-throughs in the direction of Falvaterra, San Giovanni and Roccasecca by the enemy, who is superior in numbers and materiel, as well as to the developments at the beachhead, the present positions have become untenable. The

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\* "The sudden breakthrough in the Senger position came as a surprise to the Fuehrer. In this connection he expressed anew his displeasure over the trifling achievements of the troops with regard to construction work on the positions ..." (Appx "A" to this report, page 4, bottom)

forward movements of reserves and ammunition have been harassed by the demolition of roads and bridges, or made completely impossible. In view of these facts Army Order No. 11, directing a withdrawal to the Melfa, issued today.\*\*\* (981A10.(D103))

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D: 6, 24 May 44; 53271/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, Appx 1003, 24 May 44)

137. The circumstances surrounding the withdrawal to the Melfa were set forth in the War Diary of 51 Mtn Corps:

24 May The day was marked by a tank battle, and by our withdrawal on the southern wing as a result of the very great enemy pressure during the night and during the day.

The unprecedented artillery bombardment of the previous day; the ceaseless air attacks; the blinding of our battle stations with phosphorus and the attacks by armour and infantry occurring immediately thereafter, have depleted the formations and exhausted the troops, who have been fighting for eleven days without any air support.

During the night 23/24 May 90 Pz Gren Div had been taken back to the line San Giovanni.(on the Liri) Ponte Regno, in order to establish an emergency line of defence. But already at 1000 hrs the enemy attacked with 100 tanks, supported by artillery and aircraft, on the boundary between 1 Para Div and 90 Pz Gren Div. After breaking through at Ponte Regno and overcoming the remaining elements of 361 (mech) Gren Regt to the West thereof, he succeeded in advancing to the Melfa and to Stazione Roccasecca. In embittered battles in the sector of 90 Pz Gren Div, 18 enemy tanks were destroyed while we lost four.

Enemy forces advancing from the area of San Giovanni (on the Liri) and Pte Cupo encircled 190 Pz Recce Bn. An attack towards the North along both sides of the road Pontocorvo -. Aquino was in progress since 1720 hrs, but has been stopped,

In accordance with Army Order No. 11, the Corps intends to occupy a new line of defence on the northwestern bank of the river Melfa - southern fringe of Roccasecca - Castrocielo - Mte. de Campanella -Belmonte, The Corps has no reserves which might be used to improve a situation which the enemy has failed to exploit to the fullest possible extent, in that he did not push on to the Via Casilina through our very thin lines. Fighting strength of the battalions is now

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\* Army Order No. 11 was received at Headquarters 51 Mtn Corps at 2150 hrs, and so merely countenanced a situation that had existed de facto since early afternoon. Verbal orders for the immediate withdrawal of 1 Para Div to the Melfa had been given by C. of S. 51 Mtn Corps at 1600 hrs. (For map code see footnote below)

\*\* On 25 May the 5th edition of the map of Italy 1:100,000 (with new numbers for squares and reference points) was taken into use. Map references in Army Order No. 11 were based on this.map. (981A10.(D104)) (G.M.D.S. -55779/1, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, 24 May; 55779/4, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, vol 2 of Appx "B", Appx 19)

about 30 men each. 1 Bn 100 Mtn Jg Regt has been released for return to the Corps, but it must first be moved up.\*

138. The tactical reports of 51 Mtn Corps for 24 May are being retained in photostatic form (981A10. (D105)) . In the absence of source material from lower levels they are useful merely for the establishment of a general picture of events; their lack of detail however precludes the reconstruction of individual engagements. At 1330 hrs Corps reported to Army that at 1130 hrs an armoured break-through had occurred at Ponte Regno. At 1540 hrs Corps reported that at 1400 hrs enemy tanks had broken through south of Stazione Roccasecca and were moving towards the Melfa: "No more reserves; urgently request 1 Bn 100 Mtn Jg Regt". And at 1600 hrs (for 1530 hrs): "Enemy tanks at the Melfa southwest of Stazione Roccasecca"\*\*. At 1600 hrs Ops Offr 1 Para Div and C. of S. 51 Mtn Corps were in telephonic communication. Hearing of the armoured break-through at Stazione Roccasecca, Klinkowstroem gave orders for the immediate withdrawal of 1 Para Div to the far bank of the Melfa.

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Appx C503, 24 May 44; 55779/1, 51 Mtn Gorp W.D. 2, 24 May 44 )

139. On 24 May 51 Mtn Corps prepared a list of the infantry and armoured elements that had been moved from inactive sectors to the focal points of the battle from 11 - 24 May 44 (981A10.(D107)). According to this document 90 Pz Gren Div had been reinforced by the following elements:

From 44 Inf Div: 44 Fd Repl Bn

From 5 Mtn Div: three companies of Mountain Jaegers  
half company 3 High Mtn Jg Bn  
one battalion headquarters and two composite Jaeger companies  
Anti-tk Coy 5 Mtn Div

From 114 Jg Div: one company 114 Engr Bn  
Anti-tk Coy 114 Jg Div (tractor-drawn)  
3 Bn 741 Jg Regt\*\*\*

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\* On 23 May, at the height of the fighting in the northern Liri sector, Tenth Army had ordered the Corps to withdraw this battalion from the front of 5 Mtn Div and to rush it to 14 Pz Corps. 51 Mtn Corps objected strongly, but the order was enforced. When the pitiful remnants of 90 Pz Gren Div reached the Melfa, they were of course unable to offer any serious resistance, and 1 Bn 100 Mtn Jg Regt was moved back to 51 Mtn Corps. On the sit trace for 25 May (para 94 above) the unit was shown on the left wing of 200 (mech) Gren Regt. (G.M.D.S. - 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, vol 2 of Appx "C", Misc Appx, 24 May 44 )

\*\* A photostatic copy of this signal is being retained (981A10.(D106)). (G.M.D.S. - 53271/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, Appx 984, 24 May 44)

\*\*\* This was the only German document to mention the transfer to 90 Pz Gren Div of 3 Bn 741 Jg Regt. .All other documents mentioned only 3 Bn 721 Jg. Regt. It is quite probable however that some elements of 3 Bn 741 Jg Regt reached the fighting zone, as elements of this Regiment were listed in a Canadian report regarding the enemy in the Hitler line (Lt-Gen E.L.M. Burns; the "set-piece" attack - lessons from the break-through of the Hitler line, 6 Jul 44, 249C5.2(DII). It is interesting to note that interrogations enabled the Canadians to produce at that time an essentially correct list of the enemy units encountered.

From other formations:           305 Engr Bn (less one company)  
  334 Engr Bn (less one company)  
  one tank company of 26 Pz Div  
  one Panther company of 4 Pz Rept

Over and above 361 (mech) Gren Regt and 576 Gren Regt, these then were the German units that were destroyed by 1 Cdn Corps between 17 and 24 May 44. 115 Pz Gren Regt was virtually destroyed before the intervention of the Canadian Corps. \* \*\* \*\*\* \*\*\*\*

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W. D. 2, Appx C515, 24 May 44)

140. After the communication difficulties on 23 May, the telephone conversations of 24 May were lengthy and interesting. It is not possible to record here the many details revealed in 25 pages of recorded conversations; the document is being retained however in photostatic form

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\* Information regarding the loss of guns by the artillery appears in para 141 below

\*\* Nothing more was heard from 15 Panther Turret Coy (15 Pz Gren Div) and 790 Fd Fort Constr Bn, which had been rushed to the Senger line on 15 May. In the absence of any definite evidence, the telephone conversations of the period permit the conclusion that many crews of the armoured turrets perished in the Senger line, and that the remnants of the construction battalion were withdrawn behind the Melfa where they prepared some makeshift positions

\*\*\* 1 Bn 361 (mech) Gren Regt had been with Battle Group Heilmann since 19 May and most likely operated alongside 2 Bn 361 (mech) Gren Regt on the boundary with 90 Pz Gren Div (Sit trace 51 Mtn Corps, 19 May 44, para 94 above). The remnants of 1 Bn 115 Pz Gren Regt were also with battle Group Heilmann

\*\*\*\* The question has been raised (C.M.H.Q. Report No. 179, para 199) whether or not during the night 23/24 May the forces of 90 Pz Gren Div had been strengthened by the arrival of an organized containing force, possibly composed of the following units:

2 Bn 4 Para Regt (from Aquino)  
334 Engr Bn (from the Adriatic)  
305 Engr Bn (from the Adriatic)  
Witzmann Battle Group (composite force of elements 85 and 100 Mtn Jg, Regts)  
3 Bn 721 Jg Regt (newly arrived)

In the light of German records the situation must be explained in a slightly different way. The morning report of 51 Mtn Corps merely stated that an emergency front had been established in the new line from San Giovanni on the Liri to Ponte Regno. From the available documents it can be gathered with certainty that no forces from outside the divisional area reached the front forward of the Melfa line on 24 May. The last reinforcements to arrive had been a battalion headquarters and two companies from 5 Mtn Div in the morning of 23 May. (It is very probable but not conclusively verifiable: that this was 2 Bn 85 Mtn Jg Regt). This force was indeed intended for commitment as an operational reserve for shoring up the front of 90 Pz Gren Div on 24 May; but according to the tactical reports of the Corps it had been necessary to commit the group on 23 May, due to the "severe losses" experienced by 361 (mech) Gren Regt; this was a very bland way of showing that the group had been nearly destroyed in its assembly positions on 23 May by a hail of artillery fire. The two engineer battalions had been in the line for a week and were only shadows of their former selves; 3 Bn 721 Jg Regt had been holding the "backdoor" of Pontecorvo for several days and was evidently moved in as a stop-gap. In the tactical report of 90 Pz Gren Div for 24 May the situation was described as follows:

At 1000 hrs the enemy broke through with about 100 tanks in the area of 1 Para Div (our left neighbour); then with part of the tanks veered off into our own divisional area and rolled up the front from behind. 2 Fan 85 Mtn Jg Regt was shattered. A tank battle followed...

(Photostatic copies of tactical reports for 23 and 24 May, and text of preceding paras)

(981A10. (D108)) . In view of the grave deterioration of tile situation on the front of 14 Pz Corps, Wentzell called Westphal at 1420 hrs and asked for permission to withdraw farther than agreed. Kesselring was absent and Westphal had to refuse. Shortly afterwards Westphal called v. Vietinghoff and explained his position:

... I had to refuse; only a short while ago Todl rang up; "the Fuehrer absolutely demands that any withdrawal be carried out step by step and with the consent of Army Group". If at all possible, no withdrawal to be made without the personal concurrence of the Fuehrer.

At 1950 hr s Wentzell reported events in the Melfa sector:

Wentzell: I have been in communication with Klinkowstroem; he tells me that the enemy has attacked with over 100 tanks and has passed the Melfa. Several battalions have been destroyed . ... All our Anti-tank Artillery is there!

Westphal: Well, all I want is that you should defend yourself in that sector.

(G:M.D.S. - 53271/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, Appx 996, tel cons 24 May 44)

141. Later in the evening the Operation Officers of Tenth Army and Army Group 'C' discussed the situation at length. On this occasion a good deal of information regarding events and conditions during the retreat to the Melfa were supplied by the Operations Officer of 51 Mtn Corps, Major Burchardt, G.S.C:

2235 hrs. Berlin - Beelitz

Berlin: ... 26 Pz Recce Bn has now a strength of one officer and 15 men. Maybe some stragglers will turn up. Unfortunately that is the way it looks. Major Burchardt is here at the moment, and I will let him tell you in person how things are at the front.

Burchardt: The fighting in Baade's sector today was so hard that his battalions have virtually ceased to exist. One battalion of 361 (mech) Gren Regt was totally destroyed; the other one was overrun in today's tank attack and was practically destroyed. 576 Gren Regt must also be considered as destroyed. Fighting strength is as follows: 200 (mech) Gren Regt has 300 men; that is fine, but of the whole 361st (mech Grenadier Regiment only one hundred men arc left. I have these figures from Oster who was there. On the Melfa, in Baado's sector we have now only 200 (meth) Gren Regt and the remnants of 361 (mech) Gren Regt, Then there is 1 Bn 100 Mtn Jg Regt which has reverted to the Corps. And according to the experiences of the last few days, it cannot be expected that the new positions will have been prepared to any great extent. During the last four days a pitifully small construction battalion has prepared a few fox-holes in the northern and southern sectors. But no positions have been dug for the guns and

projectors, and the artillery fire of the enemy is so intense that all guns left in the open are being destroyed within a very short time. 56 Proj Regt lost ten 15 cm and four 21 cm guns because the regiment was committed so suddenly that there was no time to prepare positions. To send in heavy weapons in such a manner is not very useful as they will be destroyed by the artillery and fighter-bombers, The tank attacks of the enemy are being carried out by bell-shaped formations of 20 - 30 tanks which advance to our position and direct such a concentration of fire on it that our guns are destroyed before they have fired from five to ten rounds. Baade lost ten assault guns. In this Melfa plain the positions may be held for a few days at the cost of very heavy casualties, but in the end everything; will be done for (kaputt).

Beelitz: Was the penetration across the Melfa a deep one?

Burchardt: According to my latest information he has reached the Melfa and crossed it at some points. Baade was in the southern sector with 200 (mech) Gren Regt and in the northern sector with miscellaneous remnants. He was in contact with the equally small forces of Heidrich.

Beelitz: Where?

Burchardt: Baade's right flank is northwest of 5763. (approx 2 km southwest of Stazione Roccasecca)

...

Burchardt The situation is the result of the sustained artillery bombardment preceding the advance of massed tanks, which are followed by the infantry. However brave the troops may be, they are powerless against tanks. In the Sender position the enemy first blinded and then destroyed the Panther turrets.

Berlin: The situation is precarious indeed.

(Ibid)

An evaluation of the troops who drove the Germans from the Liri Valley is contained in an "Experience Report" prepared by Capt Dietrich v. Menges, Corps Intelligence Officer 51 Mtn Corps. A translation of the document appears as Appendix "G" to this report (981A10. (D132)). The author mentions the thick growth of the Liri plains With its rows of hedges and trees and continues:

Here the Indian and Canadian troops showed themselves particularly adept. On the whole they were definitely superior in fighting value to the British troops of 4 and 78 Divs.

...



(G.M.D.S. - 55780/4, 51 Mtn Corps, Int Rep May & Jun 44)

## THE ADVANCE TO FROSINONE

(25 - 31 May)

142. Once again the Army Commander was torn by opposing forces. Discipline demanded that he pay heed to the Fuehrer's order for fanatical resistance; professional insight urged him to accede to the demands from lower levels for speedy retreat as the only means of salvation. The dilemma was solved for all concerned by the energetic action of 5 Cdn Armd Div which established firm bridgeheads across the Melfa during the day. At 0400 hrs the following order had been received from Kesselring:

25 May 0228 hrs      To the Commander of Tenth Army  
                                 To the Commander of Fourteenth Army

For immediate attention:

With the beginning of the enemy attack from the beachhead the current battle has entered its decisive phase. The main goal must be to paralyse the offensive spirit of the enemy by the infliction of very heavy casualties. This can only be done by fanatical defence of the designated main defence lines. I therefore forbid the withdrawal of any division and the giving up of any strong-point without my prior explicit consent. The lines which will be held by Fourteenth and Tenth Armies have been verbally indicated by myself during the past day. The point of juncture between the two Armies is now at 41/68 (between Monte Calvo and Monte Calvilli; old code). Tenth Army will hold the bridgehead south of San Giovanni as long as possible. Kesselring, O.B.SW (98IA10.(DI09))

At midday v. Vietinghoff telephoned Feurstein:

I would like to emphasize once more that according to the Fuehrer's orders the Melfa line must be held for several days. An early withdrawal is out of the question. Enemy elements that have crossed the river must be thrown back ...

In the records of 51 Mtn Corps this conversation was preserved in the form of an "Official Note of Fact": (98IA10. (D110))

1230 hrs

The Colonel General gives the order to hold the Melfa line for several days

General Feurstein replies that he will issue the order but does not believe that it can be carried out with the troops on hand.

The Colonel General gives the order that in this case elements from Heidrich's left wing, will have to be made available: Heidrich will have to take over a larger sector.

Feurstein: I report as a matter of duty that we will not bring back many men if we have to hold at all costs.

Col-Gen : We must accept that risk; Army Group has given explicit orders to hold the line for several days.\*

Feurstein: I report to the Col-Gen that the enemy has already crossed the Melfa in two places and that no forces are available to rectify the situation.

(handsigned) Count Klinkowstroem

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, Appx 1035, and 1032, 25 May 44; 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Appx C521, 25 May 44)

143. The War Diary of 51 Mtn Corps mentioned various crossings of the Melfa and continued:

During the afternoon the enemy increased the depth of his penetrations over a wide front and the complete collapse of the sector could only be prevented by the decision of the Corps to withdraw.

According to the tactical reports for the day, the Canadians crossing the Melfa river near its confluence with the Liri were opposed by 1 Bn 100 Mtn Jg; Regt. At 2350 hrs 51 Mtn Corps issued a "Corps Order" for the next phase of the retreat in the direction of the Caesar line (981A10. (D111)) . 90 Pz Gren Div and 56 Proj Regt were placed under command of 14 Pz Corps as of 1600 hr s 26 May.

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/1 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2., 25 May 44; 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Appx C530, 25 May 44)

144. The effectiveness of the Canadian artillery during these days was indirectly demonstrated by an angry signal to both Corps. Only a few days earlier Maj-Gen Baade had nothing but praise for the German artillery in his sectors but now he condemned the artillery units which apparently had ceased their counter-battery work and were anxious to rake for safer Ground with their remaining guns:

25 May 1715 hrs. To: 51 Mtn Corps and 14 Pz Corps

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\* In a prolonged and painful conversation on the next day v. Vietinghoff and Kesselring wrestled with the problem of reconciling reality with Hitler's orders. The Marshal said: "It is the Fuehrer's explicit order and also my belief that we must bleed the enemy to exhaustion by hard fighting . ... You have always been optimistic; why has your attitude changed?" v. Vietinghoff knew very well who was being bled to exhaustion but kept his temper throughout the complicated discussion. (G.M.D.S. 53271/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, Appx 1061, 26 May 44)

The enemy artillery is not being opposed and feels more and more free to place its guns in the open fields and to mow down our infantry. In this way a third element has been added to the unhindered destruction of our infantry by British planes and massed tanks. Due to this condition the following units have been completely destroyed in the heavy fighting of the last few days:

44 Fd Repl Bn  
2 Bn 85 Mtn Jg Regt  
305 Engr Bn  
2 Bn 361 (mech) Gren Regt  
2 Bn 576 Gren Regt  
1 Bn 200 (mech) Gren Regt  
High Mtn Jg Bn Strafner

Baade Cmdr 90 Pz Gren Div\*  
(981A10.(D112))

(G.M.D.S. - 55779/9, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D. 2, Appx C525, 25 May 44)

26 and 27 May

145. On 26 May 1 Cdn Corps continued its advance along the axis Ceprano - Pofi - Frosinone. Battered 90 Pz Gren Div was now in the orbit of 13 Brit Corps, and 11 Cdn Inf Bde, moving towards Ceprano, was resisted by elements of 26 Pz Div. The situation maps of 14 Pz Corps and of Tenth Army for 26 and 27 May show 26 Pz Bn (with 150 men) and 1 Bn 1027 Pz Gren Regt (then under command of 26 Pz Div) in the area of Ceprano. (Situation traces of 14 Pz Corps from 23 May - 6 Jun 44 are being retained in photostatic form) (981A10.(D114)). South of Ceprano on 26 May, and at Ceprano on 27 May, were also the two infantry regiments of the Division; 9 Pz Gren Regt (with 60 men) and 67 Pz Gren Regt (with 100 men). The tactical report of the Division for this day read:

During the day enemy pressure increased south of San Gianvanni as well as east of Ceprano. After midday there was sustained and heavy harassing fire on the whole sector; the heaviest fire was laid on Stazione Ceprano. At 1900 hrs an enemy attack on Ceprano was repulsed and two enemy tanks were destroyed. The Division expects an attack on Ceprano for tonight. At 1730 hrs Tenth Army ordered withdrawal to a new line from Ceccano to 2 kms southwest of Strangolagalli; this order had been passed on to the divisions and the movement had begun when a counter-order arrived at 1915 hrs. In view of the present condition of signal communications it is probable that reoccupation of the abandoned positions cannot be carried out before they have been occupied by the enemy.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 26 May; 58199/32, 14 Pz Corps, sit maps 4 Mar - 30 Jun 44; 58199/14, 14 Pz Corps, tac reps, 26 May.44)

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\* A trace of all German artillery positions on the southern wing; of Tenth Army at 1200 hrs 25 May is being retained in photostatic form (981A10.(D113)). (G.M.D.S. - 53271/10, Tenth Army, W.D. 6., vol 7 of Appx, Appx 1128, 27 May 44)

146. During the day the Commander of Tenth Army realized that a break-through from Artena to Valmontone, was a distinct possibility. Visualizing a situation where the entrance to the Sora valley would be blocked, and the Via Casilina cut off, the whole southern wing of Tenth Army and some elements of Fourteenth Army would then be forced to retreat to the Caesar line over the road from Frosinone to Subiaco with some forces using the secondary road via Fiuggi to Genazzano.\* A difficult traffic problem was bound to arise in the three mile stretch north of Alatri where only one road existed; a rapid advance of Eighth Army would lead to the encirclement of 14 Pz Corps. It was not illogical for the Army Commander now to suggest a further quick withdrawal while at the same time offering substantial assistance for the coming battle at Valmontone. Evidently believing that Hermann Goering Panzer Division would succeed in stabilizing the situation at Valmontone, Kesselring refused permission and ordered Tenth Army to hold its positions for that day and the next one. However stubborn in defence himself, and mindful of the fate of 29 Pz Gren Div at Priverno and Roccasecca di Volsci, Marshal Kesselring was not at the time the master of his ship, and indeed was under severe pressure from Hitler's Headquarters.\*\* The awkward situation was tellingly reflected in the telephone conversations:

1825 hrs      Wentzell - Beelitz

W:            ... We have .to get out of here as fast as possible or we will lose the whole Fourteenth Panzer Corps.

B:            Everything is being upset; Butlar ... (the recorder at this point dared not make a verbatim report and merely entered: ... words indicating that the Armed Forces High Command was the source of all the trouble.

1915 hrs      Wentzell - v. Altenstadt (C. of S. 14 Pz Corps)

German synopsis:

A catastrophe. Orders from the highest authority; the proposals of the Corps are out of the question ... The refusal of the Armed Forces High Command can only be based on ignorance of the situation.. the disaster will begin tomorrow.

2310 hrs      Wentzell - Klinkowstroem

Tenth Army has had a run-in with the Field Marshal and the High Command ...

During the night Marshal Kesselring laid down the law to his Army Commanders:

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\* Photostatic copies of a map and a trace showing the course of the Caesar line from Valmontone to M. Velino are being retained (981A10. (D115)) . (see also paras 43 and 44 above) (G.M.D.S. - 58199/23, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6' vol 6 of Appx 15 May 44• 53271/14, Tenth Army, vol 11 of Appx, Appx 1014b, 24 May.

\*\* For details regarding orders from highest quarters see Appendix "A" to this report, pages 5, 6 and 7.

27 May 0200 hrs. Very Urgent. Submit Immediately.

1. The Fuehrer has ordered that the Caesar position be defended at all costs. The object of our present fighting must not however be to reach the Caesar line soon; rather, whilst stubbornly holding the sectors designated from time to time, to inflict such heavy casualties on the enemy that his fighting potential will be broken even before the Caesar line is reached.
2. During the last few days the "centre of gravity" of the fighting has been transferred to the right wing of the Army Group. As soon as possible therefore, Fourteenth Army must receive sufficient reinforcements to enable it to throw back the enemy, who has penetrated as far as the VELLETRI VALMONTONE area; ALSO THEREBY keeping the supply routes of Tenth Army open. In order to obtain these reinforcements, the inner wings of Fourteenth and Tenth Armies will be gradually withdrawn to lines ordered from time to time by O.B.SW. In accordance with the directive of 24 May (wireless message O.B.SW Ops No. 5581 Secret), withdrawal from these designated lines may only take place at my express order. Furthermore for Fourteenth Army it is important, in addition to strengthening the land front, that mobile reserves be created as quickly as possible on both sides of the Tiber, as the possibility of a landing in this sector will continue to exist.

Kesselring  
O.B.SW (Army Group C )  
Ops No. 5673/44 Secret

A potostatic copy of this document is being retained.  
(98A10.(D116))

(G.M.D.S. - ,53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 26 May 44; 53271/9, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 6 of Appx, Appx 1061, 26 May 44; 59091/3, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, Appx for May 44, Appx 466a, 27 May 44)

147. The dominant note of 27 May was the effect of Allied air attacks on roads and communications. The War Diary of Tenth Army stated:

The withdrawal proceeds according to plan. Serious difficulties are being experienced as a result of the systematic destruction of all supply routes and traffic centres by continuous heavy bombing, and the disruption of traffic by ceaseless fighter-bomber attacks. During the last few nights serious traffic blocks occurred in the mountains where there are virtually no alternative routes or detours, and where the immediate repair of destroyed roads is most difficult. Due to the air attacks the Italian workers engaged in this task have fled to the mountains.

In the evening the Operations Section of Army Headquarters moved to Palombara.

(G.M.D.S. - ~53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 27 May 44; 53271/10, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 7 of Appx, App x 1025 27 May 44 )

148. The capture of Coprano by 11 Cdn Inf Bde was not unopposed. In accordance with the revised orders of the previous day 26 Pz Div offered considerable resistance and fell back only in the evening when counterattacks proved fruitless. The tactical report of the Division for 27 May reads in part as follows:

During the whole day heavy artillery fire on the whole divisional front. An enemy advance with two companies and six tanks at about 1 km southeast 6241 (due east of Ceprano on the road from Isoletta to Acre) was halted by our artillery fire shortly before 1000 hrs. At 1100 hrs the enemy launched an attack from the Northeast with strong forces and a few tanks on the sites where the bridges had been demolished on the eastern outskirts of Coprano. It was possible to keep the enemy down by artillery fire until at noon his infantry broke into Ceprano. After renewed heavy fire on our artillery and infantry positions the enemy attacked from 6241 (above) in the direction of Ceprano and succeeded in breaking into our main defence line west of Coprano with two infantry battalions. Reports regarding the outcome of a counterattack with tanks at 1600 hrs have not yet been received. \*

An enemy attempt to move tanks across the Liri south of 6241 ( above ) was defeated by our artillery; enemy bridging equipment was destroyed. Numerous tanks in assembly positions on the east bank of the Liri indicate that after dark and when the bridges are ready the enemy will cross the river with the intention of carrying out an armoured breakthrough along the Via Casilina on 28 May . ...

The Division withdraws to 6222 - 6227 (Cassato della Mola - Colle Castagna).

(G.M.D.S. - 58199/14, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, tac reps, Vol 13, 27 May 44)

149. By 0900 hrs 28 May, 26 Pz Div was ensconced in the now positions and the Via Casilina was free for the expected advance of Allied armour. But nothing, happened, and the German officers, who had so insistently demanded permission to withdraw, covered their considerable embarrassment by various references to the efficacy of German mine fields:

1815 hrs v. Altstadt - v. Vietinghoff

Advance tanks of the Moroccan Division made their appearance at Ceccano, but in the centre the enemy did not show up. They have tremendous difficulties with our minefields.

Due to bridging trouble at the Liri the Germans had a breathing-spell of one day; it was fortunate perhaps that Tenth Army was bent on retreat and devoid of artillery reconnaissance planes which might have called for fire concentrations on the bridge-head.

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\* Signal 26 Pz Div to 14 Pz Corps, 2000 hrs 27 May: Attempt to eliminate enemy penetrations south and east of 6241 has apparently failed. The Division leaves rearguards and withdraws at 2130 hrs (*ibid*).

(G.M.D.S. - 58199/14, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, tac reps, vol 13, 28 May 44; 53271/10, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, Vol 7 of Appx, Appx 1155, 28 May 44)

150. With the advance of the Eighth Army apparently slowing down, thus facilitating a reasonably orderly retreat for Tenth Army; and with Fourteenth Army reporting a temporary stabilization of the front, Marshal. Kesselring now felt that he had done well to sit tight when others began to waver, and the telephone conversations of the day proceeded on a note of unwanted amiability. His views on the existing situation and his will to resist to the last were reflected in a directive to Fourteenth Army late in the evening:

28 May 44  
2000 hrs

- 1) The enemy has concentrated all available forces on his left wing, in so doing denuding the remainder of his front to a very great extent. In addition, the reserves which we had previously assured to be in the rear areas of the Italian theatre, are already committed here almost exclusively.
- 2) In any case the task of O.B.SW is to continue the defence of Central Italy, and with it the city of Rome.
- 3) The right wing of Fourteenth Army prevents a breakthrough in the C-position, and, by concentrating all available forces in the Valmontone area, where the enemy has pushed forward, throws him back towards the South. Construction of the Campagna switch position is to proceed with all available means, drawing freely on the population of Rome for this purpose.
- 4) By strong concentration of forces on its right wing, Tenth Army prevents an enemy breakthrough by way of the Sacco valley in the direction of Rome. In addition, to reinforce the right wing of the Army, 44 Reichsgren Div 'H.u.D.' is to be quickly relieved from its previous commitment and committed west of the Liri.

After obtaining previous approval in each case from O.B.SW, the Army withdraws - offering bitter resistance -- over the defence lines designated at the O.B.SW conference on 27 May (S.F.S. O.B.SW Ops No. 228/44, Top Secret, 25 May 44) to the new defence line 1 km N 69/11 (NE Monte Nero) (junction with Fourteenth Army here) - 6928 (near Gavignano) 6955 (near Aragni) -- 2427 (Ferentino) -- 2349 (Caporilli) - 6370 (north of San Francesca) - 6312 (Liri river above Ponte Macciocca) - 5316 (San Donato Val di Camino) .- 7742 (Villetta Barrea) ; then merging into the Gustav position. This main line of resistance (III) must be defended decisively for some time yet.

Thus it is the task of the operational staff to ensure that time is gained for adequate reconnaissance of the new line of resistance, .and for the planned construction of a strong anti.-tank defence in the sector Gavignano - Anagni (a special order is being issued for bringing up anti.-tank weapons.)

Furthermore, the pivoting back across the intermediate lines of the left wing of 51 Mtn Corps is to take place only under enemy pressure,.

On arrival at the line III, cores of defence must be formed at the entrances to the valley, especially against tanks.

A.O.K. 10 directs in detail how connection should be made between the lines I, II and III and the Gus tav position.

Kesselring  
O.B.SW (H.Q. Army Group 'C')

(981A10.(D117))

(G.M.D.S. - 59091/3, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, Appx for May 44, Appx 473a, 28 May 44)

151. With reference to the fighting on 29 May, Tenth Army's War Diary stated:

Our present method of leaving rearguards in contact with the enemy whilst the mass of the infantry destroys all roads and then withdraws to new positions, reduces our own casualties and causes those of the enemy to be palpably higher. With this in mind, Army Order No. 13 was issued today .... The order demands stubborn resistance, to gain time for work on the 'C' position, Any withdrawal, must have; the previous concurrence of the Army Command or. The order lays down the next lines of resistance.(981A10.(D118))

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 29 May 44; 53271/10, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, Vol 7 of Appx; Appx 1216 and 1217, 29 May 44)

152. During the day Canadian forces advanced from Ceprano, and, though delayed by blown bridges, mines and artillery fire, during the night 29/30 May reached a general area within five miles of Frosinone, The evening report of 26 Pz Div dwelt mainly on the damage done to the Canadians. A lieutenant of 26 Pz Regt was said to have destroyed one Churchill and four Sherman tanks; late in the afternoon artillery fire was said to have resulted in the destruction of an additional seven tanks in the vicinity of Pofi (981A10. (D119)). According to the Intelligence Summary of 14 Pz Corps: "5 Cdn Armd Div suffered grievous losses in men and materiel in the assembling, deployment and subsequent attack without gaining any successes". Since the Canadian armoured brigade group succeeded in traversing a considerable stretch of difficult country under constant harassing fire, this must have been meant in the sense that there were not many casualties on the German side.

(G.M.D.S. - 58199/14, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, tac reps, 29 May 44; 58200/1, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, Int reps, 29 May 44)

153. During the days of the heavy fighting, German formations had evidently reported changes in the pattern of Allied tactics, and on 29 May Marshal Kesselring summarized recent battle experience in a message to Tenth Army:



29 May

(1) Not only the French, but also the British and Americans have abandoned their methodical fighting methods. Recently, they have been prompt in exploiting penetrations and breakthroughs (of their armoured formations in particular), and have tried to turn them into strategic breakthroughs. By quickly bringing up infantry behind the tank formations in carts, as do the Russians, the terrain won was so strongly occupied that subsequent counterattacks by the local reserves did not suffice to retake the ground lost. For this reason penetrations must be cleaned up by immediate counterattack. Any delay endangers the success of the countermeasures,

(2) Formation of sharply defined "centres of gravity" was again apparent in the commitment of all arms, especially of the artillery, but also of the tank formations, which were committed in strength of up to 400 tanks in close formation.

(3) Especially remarkable is the great degree of mobility across country possessed by the French (Moroccan) troops, who quickly cross even terrain which has been pronounced impassable, taking with them their heavy weapons, generally loaded on mules; and always try to envelop our positions - sometimes bypassing them in a wide arc - and force them from the rear.

(4) Sections of terrain which have become swampy and inundated through flooding, and which were considered impassable, have been crossed surprisingly quickly by the enemy with amphibious vehicles (amphibious lorries, and, according to unconfirmed reports, amphibious tanks) . Therefore such sections of terrain must be guarded too, at least with small forces.

Among at other measures, mining of the rearward fringes of individual swampy areas appears suitable.

(5) Commitment of the enemy Air Force has been stepped up still further, to a point not previously experienced. In this field too, there has been the most distinct formation of "centres of gravity".

After achieving a penetration in the main battle area, the enemy tries, by uninterrupted fighter operations against the supply vehicles by day and by night, even against single vehicles, to prevent the bringing up of reserves and supplies. Sections of road on which no dispersal is possible, such as passes, bridges and other defiles, are special targets (for example, against one important bridge 100 separate attacks were made within 24 hours). This caused delays of as much as from two to three days in bringing forward reserves and in regrouping. By reason of such overwhelming commitment of aircraft, time schedules were impossible. Thus necessary

countermeasures were often not put into effect at the right moment.  
O.B.SW intends to put the following countermeasures into effect:

- A) Appointment of traffic control officers with an adequate force of military police.
- B) Accurate determination of the roads which may be used by mechanized, and those which may be used by horse-drawn vehicles; and those restricted to one-way traffic.
- C) Holding in readiness of construction forces at defiles, for speedy restoration of demolitions, and for the quick removal of destroyed motor vehicles,
- D) Formation of light flak forces. As the light flak units available are not sufficient to afford complete protection, it is proposed to commit them as roving units.

O.B.SW  
(H Q. Army Group 'C')

(981A10.(D120))

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/10, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, Vol 7 of Appx, Appx 1259, 30 May 44)

154. On 30 May 78 Brit Div advanced north of the Via Casilina and reached Ripi. To the left, forward of the Canadians, the C.E.F, was advancing from the Ceccano area towards Supino. Moving towards Frosinone between these two forces were the leading elements of 1 Cdn Corps. They were met with some considerable resistance from 26 Pz Div.\* Especially 2 Cdn Armd Bde north of Arnara was harassed by fire from German tanks and anti-tank guns. During the day 26 Pz Div reported to Corps that a group of German tanks was carrying out a counter-attack at Colle Micatelli. In the tactical report of Corps to Army the events were described as follows:

The main attack of the enemy was directed against 26 Pz Div. From early morning strong armoured forces were pushing from Arnara towards the North. In seesaw fighting they were at first delayed in the forefield; but by constantly bringing up reserves they managed to advance to the main line of resistance. Here the advance was stopped by artillery fire and counterattacks by tank reserves of 26 Pz Div and the Corps. Continuation of these massed attacks on 31 May must be expected.

The fighting between Filippo (south of Torrice on the Via Casilina) and Colle Micatelli was also mentioned in the day's telephone conversations:

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\* According to the sit map of 14 Pz Corps for 30 May (para 145 above) the infantry forces opposing the Canadian advance to Frosinone were a conglomeration (of the remnants) of the two Pz Gren Regts of 26 Pz Div, 1 Bn 104 Pz Gren Regt (15 Pz Gren Div), 334 Div Fus Bn (334 Inf Div) and 2 Bn 578 Inf Regt (305 Inf Div)

30 May 1835 hrs. Wentzell.<sup>+</sup> - Kesselring

W: ... At the moment there is pretty hard fighting in the area 6212 - 6213 (Filippo - Colle Micatelli)

K: Rearguards?

W: No, they are main forces.

K: I approve of this.

W: Yes, they have all the Hornets and tanks there, as he is attacking with armoured forces. But there is no hope that we can give him a knock there.

K: I should have liked that very much.

On the next day Kesselring asked: Who attacked at 6212 - 6213?

Wentzell: It was 5 Cdn Armd Div ...

2350 hrs. v. Altenstadt - Wentzell  
v. Altenstadt: The affair at 6212 has been stopped; our tanks fought well but also suffered some losses.

(G.M.D.S. -- 58199/14, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, the reps Vol 31, 13 May 44; 53271/10, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, Vol 7 of Appx, Appx 12381 30 May 44)

155. In the evening of 30 May, 14 Pz Corps estimated the situation in the sense that the C.E.F. would make an attempt to encircle the Corps from the South by advancing along its deep right flank; there was no doubt that pressure on Frosinone would increase. Tenth Army's order for withdrawal was issued at 1945 hrs.\* (981A10.(D121)). 14 Pz Corps then ordered withdrawal during the night to the following line: M. Ermo (point of contact with 76 Pz Corps) Morrolo - Air Field Frosinone - Castel Massimo -S. Angelo in Villa - M.S. Liberata - Castelliri. Reconnaissance to be made of new defence lines to the rear.

(G.M.D.S. - 58200/1, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, vol Int reps, 30 May 44; 53271/10 Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 7 of Appx, Appx 1237, 30 May 44; 58199/1, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, 31 May 44)

156. On the morning of 31 May, "D" Coy of L. Edmn R. entered Frosinone, and its advance elements had a sharp encounter with enemy rear guards. (C.M.H.Q. Report No. 179, para 231.).

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<sup>+</sup> During the closing days of the battle for Rome v. Vietinghoff and Westphal were ill from overwork. (Appendix "A" to this report, page 11, bottom)

\* During the day Kesselring had told Wentzell on the telephone that; the situation on the left wing of Fourteenth Army was beginning to deteriorate again. (G.M.D.S. - 53271/10, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 7 of Appx, Appx 1238, 30 May 44)

Judging from Canadian reports the enemy opposition may not have been quite as strong as the German records would seem to indicate:

W.D. Tenth Army: At about 1000 hrs the; enemy penetrated Frosinone from the Northeast, and after hard street-fighting forced 1 Bn 134 Gren Regt to withdraw to the Northwest.

W.D. 14 Pz Corps: In the area of 26 Pz Div the enemy penetrated Frosinone from the Northeast. In violent street-fighting the rearguard battalion committed there (1 Bn 134 Gren Regt) offered embittered resistance, and on receiving orders to do so, evacuated the town at 1130 hrs and fought its way back to the defence line west of Frosinone.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1\$ Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 31 May 44; 58199/1, 14 Pz Corps, W.D. 6, 31 May 44 )

157. Many pertinent German records refer to the grave apprehension that existed of an immediate armoured advance from Frosinone to Ferentino, and at 1935 hrs General v. Senger, indicating urgency by his own signature in place of the customary signature of the C. of S., sent the following signal to Tenth Army:

Situation imperatively demands immediate dispatch of considerable tank and anti-tank formations for defence against imminent attack by massed tanks between Morolo and Ferentino. Our forces numerically insufficient. Assembly position 6956 (on Via Casilina, south of Anagni) v. Senger (981A10. (D122))

German fears were based on the known presence of 5 Cdn Armd Div, and the nature of the country beyond Frosinone, which seemed to invite the advance of armoured forces, In the event however, the advance was carried out by a combination of infantry and armoured forces.

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/10, Tenth Army, W.D. 6. vo1 7 of Appx, Appx 1277 , 31 May 44)

158. The loss of Sera in the evening of 31 May now compelled 51 Mtn Corps to withdraw its left wing. The Corps' daily report for 30 May was an indirect reply to critical remarks which Kesselring had made regarding the recent tactics of its left wing:

Since the dispatch of substantial forces to the "centre of gravity" in the battles of the Cassino sector, there are now only odd battalions amounting to approximately one reinforced regiment within the framework of each division. They can no longer be called divisions, ... Effective immediately the Corps has ordered the following changes of designation:

44 Inf Div	to	Sperrgruppe Ortner
5 Mtn Div	to	Sperrgruppe Schrank

114 Jg Div to Sperrgruppe Ohlsen\*

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 31 May 44; 53271/10, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 7 of Appx, Appx 1236, 30 May 44)

#### DEFEAT OF ARMY GROUP "C" AND FALL OF ROME

159. In the meantime the relentless attacks of Fifth Army had resulted in the piercing of the Caesar line on both sides of M. Artemisio (northeast of Velletri), and the last German line of resistance south of Rome appeared to be doomed. In the area adjoining the right wing of 14 Pz Corps, 29 Pz Gren Div was threatened on the left by the advance of 1 Cdn Corps and the C.E.F.; on the right by the forces of Fifth Army pressing towards Valmontone, The M. Ermo - Carpineto - Montelania salient of 29 Pz Gren Div had become untenable and the division was gradually withdrawing. Tactically de facto, and by orders of Army Group at 0001 hrs 1 Jun, the Division became a part of 14 Pz Corps, The progressive interdiction of the supply routes and the loss of M. Ermo now gave seemingly just cause for thoughts of further withdrawals, and the Operations Officer of Tenth Army proceeded to Kesselring's Headquarters to obtain approval. This was refused however. Tenth Army's situation map for 1 Jun presents a clear picture of the German positions from the Tyrrhenian Sea to the area of Castel di Sangro. For the sector of 14 Pz Corps the map supplies the positions of the individual infantry units in the front line. A photostatic copy of the map is being retained (981A10.(D123)).

(G.M.D.S. - 53271/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, 31 May 44; 55291/14, Tenth Army, W.D. 7, vol "N" of Appx, sit maps 1-10 Jun, 1 Jun 44)

160. On 1 Jun, continued efforts by II U.S. Corps to expand its gains in the Valmontone salient, and pressure from the C.E.F., led to a further deterioration of the German position southwest, south and east of Valmontone. Marshal Kesselring demanded categorically that Valmontone be held on 1 and 2 Jun. Fourteenth Army reported that 76 Pz Corps was devoid of any tangible reserves, and predicted that the sector would collapse on 2 Jun unless substantial reinforcements were rushed to the front, This was of course impossible; the plight of Fourteenth Army was such that a hastily alerted police battalion from Rome had to be thrown into the breach at Velletri (a battalion that was admittedly unsuitable for the purpose, and in the event indeed retreated with the greatest haste). It was known that there were still two reserve battalions of H.G. Pz Div in the area, but at the moment even military police were unable to locate these units. The danger of a deep wedge being driven between 76 Pz Corps and 14 Pz Corps was very real; the loss of Palestrina, which would certainly be a consequence of such a development, would add new difficulties to the withdrawal of Tenth Army. In order to protect the right wing, of Tenth Army, and to bolster the tottering forces of 76 Pz Corps, Kesselring end v. Vietinghoff now decided to rush most of the immediately available forces of the Army to a concentration area between Paliano and Serrone. Apart from this transfer of the Army's "centre of gravity", 14 Pz Corps received orders to withdraw to the line: 7565 south of Colle di Mondo) - 6956 (Silvestri, south of Anagni) - 2345 (about halfway between Trivigliano and Vico nel Lazio) - 6361 (Fontana di Campoli).

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\* Sperrgruppe = Blocking Group

(G.M.D.S. 55291/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 7, 1 Jun 44; 55291/2, Tenth Army, W.D. 7, Vol "A" of Appx, Appx 20; 59091/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, 1 Jun 44)

161. It does not fall within the scope of this report to discuss the considerations which caused the left wing of Eighth Army to reduce pressure on 14 Pz Corps to the point where contact was lost at times with the withdrawing foe. The fall of Rome was now a virtual certainty; the next task would lead the Eighth Army further inland, and not nearer to the coast. The German commanders, deeply imbued with the doctrine of encirclement and annihilation, quickly availed themselves of the opportunity to salvage the remaining equipment of 14 Pz Corps and to shift the mass of the troops to the extreme right wing of the Army. This was done not only for the admitted purpose of complying with Kesselring's order to hold the Valmontone sector at all costs, but also with an eye to getting the forces back to the "C" line. In the morning of 2 Jun v. Vietinghoff stated his views to Kesselring:

0855 hrs            I should like to make the urgent request that you give no permission to withdraw 14 Pz Corps to the "C" position. Otherwise I shall lose the greater part of the equipment. At the front, for all practical purposes, no further damage is being inflicted on the enemy.

Kesselring changed the subject, and for the time being evaded a definite answer. This was the beginning of a series of interminable telephone conversations in which the Marshal turned and twisted, and explored every conceivable possibility of retarding the Allied tide. Throughout the critical days before the fall of Rome he was in frequent consultation with the German High Command. The sources on hand do not reveal whether or not he was in full agreement with the orders received; had he disagreed however, it would most likely have been reflected in his conversations with the Army commanders.

(G.M.D.S. - 55291/2, Tenth Army, W.D. 7, Vol "A" of Appx, Appx 20, 2 Jun 44)

162. In the War Diary of Fourteenth Army the main events of the day were recorded in the following entries:

2 Jun    Despite bitter resistance the enemy succeeded in breaking through our now very weak lines of resistance at various points. In the zone of 76 Pz Corps he continued his attacks against H.G. Pz Div during the whole day and succeeded during the morning on breaching the thinly held lines on both sides of Valmontone. During the course of the afternoon enemy spearheads appeared along the Via Latina the Via Casilina and in the direction of Palestrina,

1455 hrs: Due to the precipitate flight of the Police Battalion "Rome" the enemy was able to advance on the left wing of 362 Inf Div and is now advancing to the Northwest along the Via Latina.

... Attack on Rocca Priora by strong armoured forces. The Marshal issues orders for preparations to be made for the demolition of the bridge between Genzano and Ariccia, and for blocking the road to Frascati (Via Latina).

1630 hrs: On the statement of the Acting Chief of Staff of Army Group "C" that for 3 Jun too the task of the Army would be "to prevent a break-through", C, of S. Fourteenth Army replied that the breakthrough had already taken place that day.

2130 hrs: Commander Fourteenth Army points out to Marshal Kesselring that no preparations have been made for a possible evacuation of Rome. The Marshal then makes arrangements for a conference to deal with this problem . ... The Marshal states that 90 Pz Gren Div has received orders to attack at Palestrina.

(G.M.D.S. - 59091/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 3, 2 Jun 44)

163. The repercussions on Tenth Army of these events in the zone of the neighbour Army were recorded in detail, 90 Pz Gren Div had originally been ordered to attack at Valmontone, but had arrived too late to carry out the order, and was now moving on to Palestrina. As soon as Kesselring heard of the breakthrough towards Palestrina he said to Wentzell: "The situation is extremely dangerous". So in the evening Tenth Army received the order to withdraw its right wing to the general line Tivoli - Subiaco. The "Final Estimate of the Day" in the Army's War Diary read:

The situation of the neighbouring Army becomes ever more precarious. In obvious prosecution of his intention to achieve the strategical envelopment of Tenth Army the enemy is pushing his forces ever farther to the West, The breaching of the line Rome -Tivoli is imminent. With Tivoli in the hands of the enemy, an advance to the Northeast from there would mean the annihilation of 14 Pz Corps. The Army therefore makes the decision to occupy the Tivoli sector with a group of its own forces (15 Pz Gren Div and 1 Para Div) at the cost of weakening the Army's front.

(G.M.D.S. - 55291/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 7, 2 Jun 44)

164. On 3 Jun the forward elements of 1 Cdn Inf Div reached the area south of Anagni and a patrol advanced as far as Colleferro where contact was made with the C.E.F. On the same day, the 6th South African Armoured Division took over command of the sector from 1 Cdn Inf Div. On the next day 1 Cdn Corps was withdrawn into Army Reserve, Information from German sources regarding Canadian operations, embodied in this report in background material of somewhat wider proportions, comes therefore to an end and will be resumed in a report dealing with later operations. By the evening of 3 Jun 76 Pz Corps had been forced back to the railroad line Rome - Tivoli; 14 Pz Corps was retreating with all speed; 51 Mtn Corps lead. received orders to commence the long withdrawal through the mountains; the main task of Tenth Army at the moment was the prevention of an Allied advance from the Palombara area to the North. On 4 Jun the advance forces of Fifth Army entered Rome.

165. How great a part of the German war potential was tied up by the Allied operations in Italy can not be ascertained from the documents on hand. This information, it is believed, will be forthcoming as a result of research projects now being carried out by His t Div U.S. Army. The total strength of the divisions in Kesselring's command during May and June 1944 was recorded

in graphic form on a document which is being retained in photostatic form (981A10. (D124)).  
The following figures were given:

Army Group "C"

(Less G.H.Q, pool formations and supply troops)

	May 1944	June 1944
Authorized Strength	328,000	376,000
Actual Strength	303,000 (22 divs)	315,000 (26 divs)
Casualties	38, 600	22,000 (1-20 Jun)
Reinforcements and Convalescents	13,600	40,000 (Estimated )

(G.M.D.S. - 64832/8, Army Group "C", W.D. June 1944, vol of Appx)

166. At the time of the fall of Rome, Tenth Army was a skeleton force still capable of organized manoeuvre but in need of complete overhaul and rejuvenation. Exact casualty figures were not available for some time, but a good picture of the numerical strength of the fighting divisions and their individual components appeared in a tabulation representing the situation as it was on 1 Jun 44. (981A10. (D 125))

(G.M.D.S. - 55291/2, Tenth Army, W.D. 7, vol "A" of Appx, Appx 34, 2 Jun 44)

167. The Army's casualty figures for the period from September to the end of March 44 have been quoted in para 55 of this report. Detailed figures for April and May were made available by the Personnel Section of the Army at the end of June.

The April total of Casualties was 5,353; the May total 16,885. The grand total from September 1943 to the end of May 1944 was 95,426; of this number 11,785 had been killed in action. The figures comprise the dead, wounded, missing and sick, less personnel remaining with their units, Photostatic copies of the tabulations are being retained. (981A10.(D126)) From the point of view of Canadian operations the above figures are of limited interest inasmuch as they fail to include the casualties of 90 Pz Gren Div which, at the beginning of the Allied offensive in May, was a component of Fourteenth Army. The destruction of the forces of this particular division has been described in detail, however, in earlier paragraphs of this report.

(G.M.D.S, - 53271/18, Tenth Amy, W.D. 6, Special Reports, Apr & May 44)



168. The number of reinforcements reaching Tenth Army in May was negligible. According to a statement submitted by the Army to Army Group on 30 May, the total number of arrivals in May was 5 officers and 1483 O.Rs. (981A10.(D133))

(G.M.D.S. - 532 1/10, Tenth Army, W.D. 6, vol 7 of Appx, Appx 1262, 31 May 44)

169. An estimate of the casualties and equipment losses of Army Group "C" during the Allied Offensive in May was apparently submitted to the German High Command by Marshal Kesselring during the night 28/29 May. One week before the evacuation of Rome, the losses of the Army Group were estimated as at least 25,000 men, 2000 L.M.Gs, 500 H.M.Gs, 420 Hy A. tk guns, 148 tanks, 295 guns (Appx "A" to this report, page 8). In addition the motor vehicle situation was bad, and transport capacity was constantly being further reduced by air attacks and an increasing shortage of tires and spare parts. The story of the subsequent strengthening and re-equipment of Kesselring's forces must be developed. as an integral part of the report during with the next phase of the Campaign in Italy.

170. This report has been prepared by Capt A.G. Steiger, Historical Section (G.S.).

(C.P. Stacey) Colonel,  
Director,  
Historical Section (G.S. )

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