

NO. 27

HISTORICAL SECTION (G.S.)

ARMY HEADQUARTERS

28 Sep 49

**THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN: The Battle of Rimini  
and the subsequent Advance to the River Ronco  
(11 Aug – 31 Oct 44)**

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

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REPORT NO. 27

## HISTORICAL, SECTION (G.S.)

### ARMY HEADQUARTERS

#### THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN: The Battle of Rimini and the Subsequent Advance to the River Ronco 11 Aug – 31 Oct 44)

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

1. Information from German military documents concerning the earlier phases of the Italian campaign has been set forth in Historical Section (G.S.) Reports No. 14 (Sicily), No. 18 (Southern Italy), No. 20 (Central Italy) and No. 24 (From the Fall of Rome to the Evacuation of Florence). The present report is a direct continuation of Report No. 24. It deals with the information from German sources for the period of the Allied advance through the Apennine positions, but differs from the preceding report in the manner of presentation and coverage.

Material of general interest is overshadowed by specific information on the role of 1 Cdn Corps in the dislodging of the enemy from his Apennine strongholds. Developments in the area of Fourteenth Army less spectacular and decisive than in the previous phase, are dealt with cursorily and mainly in connection with the supporting actions carried out by the elements of 1 Cdn Armd Bde. The operations of 1 Cdn Corps during the time in question have been described in detail in Historical Section, Canadian Military Headquarters, Report No. 187 (The Breaking of the Gothic Line and the Capture of Rimini) and Historical Section Report No. 25, (From the Marecchia to the Ronco). The role played by 1 Cdn Armd Bde under command of 13 Brit in the drive of Fifth Army through the central

part of the Gothic Line has been described in Historical Section, Canadian Military Headquarters, Report No. 175.

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

2. 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 (G.M.D.S.). Washington, D.C. A number of those documents have been photostated; in all cases where a photostatic copy or a translation is being permanently retained, the first reference to the document is followed by the Hist Sec (G.S.) Master Index Number.

3. In preceding reports the information from the War Diaries of Tenth Army was frequently supported and amplified by material from Corps and Army Group levels. Records of lower formations and units were almost totally lacking, a circumstance regretted most keenly whenever the details of an action would have been of particular interest to the Canadian military historian. In the case of the present report this situation was aggravated by the unavailability of the records of 76 Pz Corps, the formation which controlled the divisions opposing the Canadian advance. The substance, therefore, of this report had to be drawn almost entirely from the fortunately well kept records of Tenth Army. Those in turn are available only up to 31 Oct 44. Almost no German material has been found for the last three months of Canadian operations in Italy, and in consequence this series of reports comes to an end with the presentation of the material covering the suspension of the Allied offensives in Italy at the end of October 1944.

4. Despite the fact that diligent search by competent agencies has hitherto failed to unearth the War Diaries of 1 Para Div, it might be well to remember that German commanders were encouraged to prepare, and deliver for safekeeping to the headquarters of their affiliated reserve formations, full copies of their own official War Diaries. It would be difficult, for instances, to believe that the ambitious and competent Heidrich should have failed to deposit the records of his famous division in some relatively safe place. If not destroyed, they may come to light at some future date and add to our store of information on the, battles with their perennial foe and nemesis, the First Canadian Corps.

### DISPOSITIONS OF TENTH ARMY ON 11 AUG

5. During the last days of July and early in August, when Allied Pressure forced Fourteenth Army to fall back behind the Arno river and to evacuate the city of Florence, Tenth Army, to conform with the movements of the neighbouring Army, and alternately prodded by 2 Pol Corps and 10 Brit Corps, continued its gradual withdrawal in the direction of the Gothic defences. Following the exchange of the two Corps Headquarters on 8 Aug (Hist Sec Report No, 24, para 77) on 11 Aug Tenth Army from right to left was disposed as follows:

Tenth Army (Headquarters at Pizzocalvo, 12 km out of Bologna)

51 Mtn Corps (Headquarters 2 km south-west of Dovadola)

**715 Inf Div<sup>1</sup>**  
**334 Inf Div**

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<sup>1</sup> From inter-army boundary at S. Donato a Toree (on river Arno, 6 km west of Pontassieve).

15 Pz Grn Div<sup>2</sup>  
305 Inf Div  
114 Jg Div<sup>3</sup>

76 Pz Corps (Headquarters at S. Pietro, 1.5 km south-east of Meleto  
(near Monte Gridolfo))

5 Mtn Div adjoining 114 Jg Div  
71 Inf Div in coastal plain  
278 Inf Div on land front to coast

and 1 Para Div<sup>4</sup>

Corps Whitthoeft<sup>5</sup>

162 (Turc) Inf Div (Cattolica – Ravenna area)  
98 Inf Div<sup>6</sup>  
Venetial Coast Command (Gen of Inf Dostler)

The dispositions of the two Corps on the land front, have been taken from the following documents:

Tenth Army, sit map 10/11 Aug 44 (Photostat 981A10.(D202)) (G.M.D.S. – 61437/17,  
Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 1-13 Aug 44)

51 Mtn Corps, sit map 12 Aug 44 (Photostat 981A10.(D203)) (ibid)

76 Pz Corps, sit map 12 Aug 44 (Photostat 981A10.(D204)) (ibid)

The balance of the information presented in this paragraph and the footnotes thereto, is based on the entries between 1 and 15 Aug in the main volume of the aggregation of source material, which in its entirety constitutes Tenth Army's War Diary No. 8 (G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, August and September 1944)

(Note: A full order of battle of Tenth Army for 15 Aug appears as Appendix "A" to this report (see para 13 below)).

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<sup>2</sup> In process of being withdrawn into Army Reserve; disengagement of last substantial elements completed by 24 Aug (para 35 below).

<sup>3</sup> To Corps boundary between Passano and Cantone, approximately 11 km south-west of Mercatello (on river Metauro).

<sup>4</sup> Complete in Corps reserve in coastal area between Fano and Cattolica.

<sup>5</sup> Corps Whitthoeft under command of Tenth Army since 17 Jul 44.

<sup>6</sup> Relieved 94 Inf Div in Ravenna – Cesena area. Took over command in area at 1800 hrs 2 Aug, was complete in area by 15 Aug.

**TENTH ARMY'S INTERPRETATION OF THE SITUATION  
PRIOR TO THE ALLIED CROSSING OF THE METAURO RIVER  
(11 – 25 AUG)**

6. According to the documentary evidence, during the second week of August Tenth Army had reached the conclusion that the Adriatic sector, far from teeming with enemy formations, was actually very lightly held (Hist Sec (G.S.) Report No. 24, para 79). Furthermore, the records written at the time of the events show quite clearly that any changes in the dispositions of Tenth Army between 11 and 25 Aug were either a direct consequence of the Allied invasion of Southern France or were in response to local tactical requirements. The gradual changes leading to the dispositions as they were at the time of the Metauro crossings, will be mentioned in the following paragraphs; they are of lesser importance, however, than other facts related below in connection with the appreciation of the situation as it developed from day to day in the minds of the Corps, Army and Army Group commanders and their Chiefs of Staff.

**11 Aug**

7. The situation, as seen by the enemy on the morning of 11 Aug, is shown below by a series of excerpts from the day's telephone conversations:

0910 hrs v. Vietinghoff (Heinrich, Col-Gen, Comd Tenth Army) – Kesselring (Albert, Field Marshal, Comd Army Group "C")

v.V: ...And then I have an idea which I should like to mention casually. In the area of Hoppe<sup>7</sup> and Raapke<sup>8</sup>, if one were to throw in some additional forces, one might perhaps carry out a small counter-attack and possibly wipe out the Poles.<sup>9</sup>

K: That would be very desirable, but for the moment my eyes are turned steadily towards the right, so that I do not think that any forces could be spared.

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<sup>7</sup> HOPPE, Harry, Lt-Gen, Comd 278 Inf Div.

<sup>8</sup> RAAPKE, M., Lt-Gen, Comd 71 Inf Div.

<sup>9</sup> Under the circumstances this was of course a somewhat pathetic idea; impracticable in view of the total remaining German strategic potential; ill-timed in view of the explosive situation in the tyrrhenian area. Such enterprises of opportunity were still possible at the time when Ludendorff had attempted to create a workable pattern for total war by subordinating all agencies of the state to the military. But now, in his attempt to create such a pattern in a different way, Hitler had made the armed forces the tool of the political high command, and army commanders had become cogs in a machine. As far as Kesselring is concerned, his performance in Italy shows that he was aware of the impossibility of separating strategy from political considerations; despite his frequent misreadings of Allied intentions he served his master well – it was the master rather who fished him.

**v.V:** I quite understand. We would need Heidrich, Rodt and Baade<sup>10</sup>. If it were possible to make these available, it would be possible to achieve something worthwhile within four to five days.

**K:** I believe so too, unless possibly after all the Canadians should be massed in their rear area. Have you found out just where they are?

**v.V:** It is not clear yet. First radio interception said they were behind the left wing. But now deserters say there is no one there. So it may have been a radio deception.

**K:** Who is on Raapke's left wing near Corinaldo? Is there anything new from there?

**v.V:** Up to now there have only been reports about Poles from there. At the moment this is really all. ...

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/4, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 9-12 Aug, Appx 244, tel cons 11 Aug 44).  
(Photostat 981A10.(D205)<sup>11</sup>)

#### 12 Aug

8. With his attention centred on the Tyrrhenian flank, on 12 Aug Marshal Kesselring was further put at ease regarding the situation in the Adriatic sector by the commander of Tenth Army. General v. Vietinghoff reported the absence of any substantial British or Canadian forces in the rear area of 2 Pol Corps; what he did not know of course was that a great trek of Eighth Army's assault divisions to this area was already under way. A picture of comparative quiet and serenity was conveyed by the following remarks:

0905 hrs v. Vietinghoff - Kesselring

**v.V:** It has been quiet with us. There is nothing special going on, and due to the various statements of deserters, we now have a definite feeling that there is no one behind the Poles.

**K:** That there is nothing behind them?

**v.V:** Yes, nothing. There are only Poles and Italians there, The Poles have become somewhat more intermixed with the Italians; there is a British armoured brigade there, but there are no signs of the presence of British forces in any strength, It has been established by agents that in

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<sup>10</sup> HEIDRICH, Richard, Lt-Gen, Comd 1 Para Div.

RODT, Eberhard, Lt-Gen, Comd 15 Pz Gren Div.

BAADE, Ernst Guenther, Lt-Gen, Comd 90 Pz Gren Div.

<sup>11</sup> Item 981A10.(D205) is a complete set of photostatic reproductions of Tenth Army's telephone conversations from 11-31 Aug 44.

one rear sector even the bridges have not been repaired, so that in my opinion, there is no question of a large-scale frontal attack.

**K:** What about a seaborne hook?

**v.V:** I consider it possible on psychological grounds. Agents' reports keep coming in of some impending action in the Balkans. But it has always been my experience that when all agents' reports point to something happening at a certain point, then nothing happens there. And for this reason I consider it possible that the forces from Taranto and Bari are meant for action against us.

**K:** That may well be...

(G.M.D.S. 61437/4, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 9-12 Aug, Appx 262, tel cons 12 Aug 44).  
(Photostat 981A10.(D205))

9. As mentioned in several of the day's telephone conversations (ibid), two Allied convoys had been observed in the vicinity of Corsica. Decisive events could not be far off, and Marshal Kesselring was making his final arrangements for the projected counter-moves to a landing at Genoa.<sup>12, 13</sup> In view of the quiet situation on the Adriatic coast he was now ready to draw upon those formations of Tenth Army, which had been earmarked for service as a mobile Army Group Reserve in just this case (case GUSTAV; Hist Sec Report No. 24, paras 72 and 75). With the mass of 15 Pz Gren Div at the moment still entangled in fighting (only 104 Pz Gren Regt of the Division had already been assembled near Bologna) O.B.SW at 1410 hrs gave Tenth Army (in substance) the following orders:

...Transport arrangements will be made permitting 1 Para Div to move off in the direction of Genoa on 12 hours notice.

...Army Group "C" holds in readiness the transport required for transfer on short notice of one regimental, group of 98 Inf Div.

...The Blocking Group of 162 (Turc) Inf Div to be ready for movement on 12 hrs notice.

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<sup>12</sup> The definite expectation of an Allied landing in Southern France would presumably have made such measures seem less urgent; in that event the Allies would surely follow the valley of the Rhone to eliminate Nineteenth Army as a threat to the right flank of the armies invading France from the West, but hardly debouch laboriously from the mountain passes on Kossalring's deep right flank, which could be turned so much more easily from Genoa (See also para 13, footnote 1.).

<sup>13</sup> PRETZELL, Horst, Lt-Col, G.S.C., at that time First Operations Officer of Tenth Army, in his post-war narrative: "Material for the Presentation of the Battle of Rinini" said:

In antithesis to Tenth Army, until after the middle of August O.B.SW clung to the belief that the enemy would execute a large-scale landing in the Genoa area ... (981,011(D3), translation, p.3)



**(G.M.D.S. - 61437/4, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 9-12 Aug, Appx 264a, 12 Aug 41).  
(Photostat 981A10.(D206))**

**In addition to these precautionary arrangements, 104 Pz Gren Regt (15 Pz Gren Div) and 4 Para Regt (1 Para Div) were alerted in the evening for immediate departure in a westerly direction.**

**10. Probably encouraged by the full success of an earlier, though much more elaborate, deception scheme creating the illusion of a build-up of Canadian forces on the Adriatic (Hist Sec Report No, 24, para 63), 1 Cdn Inf Div before their departure to the east coast tried to make the Germans believe that a Canadian assault force was being deployed in the Florence area. Had the Germans heard of this, no doubt they would have been further confirmed in their belief that a major thrust in that sector was imminent. By one of the vagaries of war, however, the Germans, although at the time desperately anxious to obtain information regarding Allied dispositions along the Arno, and despite the great number of civilians in the area, apparently never heard of the "Red Patchos" having, been seen there. Careful perusal of all records of Fourteenth Army for the period from 6-26 Aug reveals only a few casual references to Canadian forces:**

**12 Aug            According to reliable sources 56 Inf Div and 5 Cdn Armd Div confirmed in the rear area of Eighth Army...**

**According to radio interception, Canadian formations south of Florence.**

**17 Aug            According to prisoner of war statements: Canadian tanks attached to 8 Ind Div.**

**(G.M.D.S. - 62242/1, Fourteenth Army, Int Repts 1 Jul - 30 Sep 44, vol 3, Kurzmeldungen, 12 Aug and 17 Aug 44). (Photostats 981A10.(D207) and (D208)).**

**The "accidental" capture by the enemy of a well coached member of a Field Security Section for instance, then, as on some other occasions, might have greatly strengthened the total effect of deceptive measures; the Main War Diary of Fourteenth Army for the period contains unusually frequent references to intensive reconnaissance work and on 14 Aug the plaintive statement:**

**The taking of prisoners meets with difficulties, as the opponent refuses to become engaged in close combat.**

**(G.M.D.S. - 622241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 1 Jul – 30 Sep, 14 Aug 44)**

**Due to the great importance of keeping track of Allied changes in dispositions, Fourteenth Army at the time was issuing revised versions of the "Enemy Situation Map" at intervals of three to four days. None of these maps show Canadian forces as being in the Florence area;**

1 Cdn Corps was firmly believed to be complete in the reserve of Eighth Army. (G.M.D.S. - 62242/2, Fourteenth Army, Appx to Int Reps 1 Jul - 30 Sep 44)

### 13 Aug

11. Mainly in order to facilitate the disengagement of 115 Pz Gren Regt and other elements of 15 Pz Gren Div for the purpose of joining the Army Group Reserve, a local withdrawal of the left wing of 51 Mtn Corps was ordered for the night 13/14 Aug, 76 Corps for the day reported merely harassing fire and encounters with assault detachments. At 0915 hours Generals Herr<sup>14</sup> and v. Vietinghoff discussed the situation on the telephone; Herr said that local attacks, but definitely not a major attack, were being expected on the left wing; v. Vietinghoff said that the Corps would have to get used to the idea of losing 1 Para Div; he did not think, however, that the Allies were planning a landing in Italy. Herr agreed, and expressed the belief that the landing would take place in France. (G.M.D.S. - 61437/5, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 13-16 Aug, Appx 286, tel cons 13 Aug) (Photostat 981A10.(D205))

### 14 Aug

12. There was no fighting of any consequence in the area of Tenth Army. 305 Inf Div (with headquarters at Badia Prataglia) extended its command over the area previously held by 15 Pz Gren Div. Headquarters 76 Pz Corps were established at Gradara (south-east of Cattolica). 1 Bn 4 Pz Regt (a G.H.Q. tank formation) was placed under the direct of 76 Pz Corps (ibid, Appx 304). (Photostat 981A10.(D209))<sup>15, 16</sup>

### 15 Aug

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<sup>14</sup> HERR, Traugott, Gen of Pz Tps, Comd 76 Pz Corps

<sup>15</sup> Item 981A10.(D209) is a complete set of photostatic reproductions of Tenth Army's daily final situation reports to O.B.SW for the period 11-31 Aug 44.

<sup>16</sup> If only to show that 'an army - is an army' wherever you find it, a message is quoted below that was addressed to all General Staff Officers by Col-Gen Heinz Guderian (appointed Acting Chief of Army General Staff after the, attempt on Hitler's life):

24 Jul The report and command technique of the General Staff is unsatisfactory. Reports must be made conscientiously. Expressions like "if possible - as soon as the situation allows - as a rule - for the time being" are signs of senile calcification and will not be used. ...

Guderian

14 Aug Tenth Army to O.B.SW: All notified.

(G.M.D.S. - 61437/5, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 13-16 Aug. Appx 312a and 312b, 14 Aug 44)

13. The day's tactical developments on the Army front were of a minor nature; harassing fire on the left wing of 71 Inf Div increased in intensity; strikingly stepped-up Allied aerial activity included bombardment of the city and port of Ravenna. In the area of Corps Witthoeft 98 Inf Div was now complete in its assigned positions. At 0700 hours the Naval Liaison Officer notified Army Headquarters by telephone of the Allied landings in Southern France.<sup>17</sup> Apparently no further news regarding this development was received during the day; in uncertain anticipation of the possible repercussions, the day's telephone conversations were short and desultory.<sup>18</sup> (G.M.D.S. - 61437/5, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 13-16 Aug, Appx 338b, 15 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D210)).

#### 16 Aug

14. With Marshal Kesselring having been called to Hitler's Headquarters in connection with the developments in Southern France, the day's telephone conversations were mainly between Roettiger and v. Vietinghoff. Army Group "C" had no information from the latest invasion front; the Armed Forces High Command was said to be in the same position. 76 Pz Corps reported a further increase in the intensity of harassing fire on the sectors of 278 and 71 Inf Divs. This was taken as a sure sign that a resumption of the Polish advance was imminent, and it was decided to let the opponent complete his deployment and then to make a quick local withdrawal to the line Pagino – 1.5 km south of Barchi – Meloni – 1 km north-west of Fudi (on the coast). (G.M.D.S. – 61437/5, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 13-16 Aug, Appx 348b, tel cons 16 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D205)). (Formal consent by Army Group "C": Ibid, Appx 375, 16 Aug)

#### 17 Aug

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<sup>17</sup> Much useful information regarding the developments in Southern France will be found in: Hist Div U.S. Dept of the Army, Manuscripts of German Officers, "The Italian Campaign" Part II, Chap 60, "The Development of the situation in North-Western Italy in Connection with the Allied Landing in Southern France (Photostat 981SOM(D80j)). The definiteness with which General Roettiger therein speaks of the expectation by Army Group "C" of an Allied landing in Southern France can hardly be reconciled with the many indications in contemporary documents (H.S. Report No. 24, para 74) of Kesselring's belief that a landing at Genoa was just as probable. According to the records there is no doubt that most general officers of the Army Group expected the landing to take place on the French coast. Whether Kesselring shared this opinion but stressed the danger of a landing on the Italian coast in order to spur on his commanders can not be determined without reference to the Army Group's records written at that time. Unfortunately these are not available.

<sup>18</sup> The increasing audacity of the Italian guerillas at the time was reflected in a telephone conversation of that day:

1300 hrs            WENTZELL, (Fritz, Maj-Gen, C. of S. Tenth Army) – ROETTIGER,  
(Lt-Gen, C. of S. Army Group "C")

W: Here we are having fearful trouble. Four Italians have been shot between the Army commander's residence and Army headquarters. The guerillas have taken horses from the farmyards. That too was in the vicinity of the headquarters. The Army commander is furious and insists some action be taken lest Army headquarters itself be attacked in the end ... it is certainly alarming when 300 metres from our headquarters four Italians have to be laid low; ... our sentries are all Santa Clausee [very old] ...

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/5, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 13-16 Aug, Appx 326b, tel cons 15 Aug 44). (Photostat 981A10.(D205))

15. In connection with the problem of dispositions in the Adriatic sector, the commander of 76 Pz Corps made the following remarks:

0910 hrs Herr – v. Vietinghoff

... During the last few days the volume of traffic in the mountains has been rather striking. I do not think that this means a troop movement. In Ancona the enemy is unloading busily; it may be assumed that there are movements of supply going on, which extend far inland.

According to the reports - 300 vehicles per hour - it must be a colossal mechanized movement. It could of course be that the enemy is exchanging some of the foreign troops for reconnaissance units - pressure must be put on Schrank<sup>19</sup> or Raapke to get hold of a prisoner somehow. The order has already been given. A dead Englishman has been found in the area where the commotion has been going on; the whole thing may be a relief movement. ...

(G.M.D.S. - 61437/6, Tenth Army, W.D.8 Appx 17-19 Aug, Appx 374b, tel cons 17 Aug 44). (Photostat 981A10(D205))

16. The landings at Marseilles had now made a major landing at Genoa fairly improbable and in the evening of 16 Aug Wentzell had said to Hauserg<sup>20</sup>:

1810 hrs ...Looking at the situation as a whole we have too much in Italy; taking the broader view, the troops are now needed elsewhere...

(Ibid, tel cons 16 Aug 44)  
(981A10.(D205))

It was therefore no surprise when in the morning of 17 Aug the order was received through the headquarters of Army Group "C" for immediate dispatch [to O.B.Wes] of 15 Pz Gren Div via the Brenner Pass. The pertinent orders from Army Group to Army, and from Army to 51 Mtn Corps are being retained in photostatic form (981A10.(D211) and (D212)). (G.M.D.S. - 61437/6, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 17-19 Aug Appx 374 and 373, 17 Aug 44)

18 Aug

17. On this day 51 Mtn Corps reported sporadic harassing fire and lively vehicle traffic on the road west of the Arno from Talla to the North and on the road Monterchi - Città di Castello. 76 Pz Corps reported some harassing fire in the sector of 5 Mtn Div and, in the early evening, increasing pressure on the out posts of 71 and 278 Inf Divs. The outpost elements of both divisions were forced to yield ground, those of the former division at C. Micci (2 km SW Monte Porzio), those of the latter at Mondolfo. At Mondolfo the Polish

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<sup>19</sup> SCHRANK, M., Maj-Gen, Comd 5 Mtn Div

<sup>20</sup> HAUSER, Wolf, Maj-Gen, C. of S. Fourteenth Army

infantry was supported by artillery and ground attack airplanes. (G.M.D.S. - 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, 18 Aug 44)

18. While the senior officers of Tenth Army continued their vague speculations regarding the meaning of the intensive traffic in the rear areas of the opponent, the daily intelligence report of Fourteenth Army (for unknown, but, no doubt, if they were known, interesting reasons) carried the following item:

From reliable source: Unusually large supply transports are being carried out at the present time in the Adriatic sector. They include bridging equipment. In connection with the intensive aerial activity in that sector, it seems that the enemy there is making preparations for large-scale operations.<sup>21</sup>

(G.M.D.S. - 62242/1, Fourteenth Army, Int Rep: 1 Jul - 30 Sep 44, vol 3, Kurzmeldungen, 18 Aug 44). (Photostat 981A10.(D213))

In the meantime Marshal Kesselring had returned from Hitler's headquarters, and the morning conversation with the commander of Tenth Army opened as follows:

0910 hrs v, Vietinghoff - Kesselring

K: I have just been away for two days ... how are things looking down your way?

v.V: At the front of the righthand Corps all is quiet, but in front of the Corps on the left, in Schrank's area and east thereof, for some days rather marked activity has been observed behind the enemy front. Whether, as the Corps thought at first, that is only in connection with supply traffic, which is now passing through Ancona, I do not know. I think it possible too that he is bringing in a new Brazilian or Greek division. In any case it is still doubtful what is happening there ...

(G.M.D.S. - 61437/6, Tenth Army, W D. 8, Appx 395, tel cons 18 Aug 44). (Photostat 981A10.(D205))

During the morning a meeting had been arranged for the next day between v. Vietinghoff and Kesselring. In a telephone conversation at 1050 hrs C. of S, Group "C" informed C. of

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<sup>21</sup> The fact that the significant matter of the bridging equipment was not mentioned in the conversations of Tenth Army may point to an "unsatisfactory condition in the dissemination of information. Tenth Army's Intelligence file for August 1944 is barren of information; the records of 76 Pz Corps are not available; the monthly Intelligence Summary of the Army looks as if it had been prepared hurriedly at a later date. On the basis of the available material it cannot be ascertained whether the Army's intelligence personnel had lost face over the previous fiasco, whether it continued to supply erroneous conclusions, or was unable to obtain any at all; at any rate the telephone conversations for the period do not contain the once familiar phrase: "My Intelligence Officer tells me".

S. Tenth Army for the benefit of the Army commander that the question of the transfer of 5 Mtn Div would be broached by Kesselring at the forthcoming meeting (ibid).

19 Aug

19. The tactical build-up of Eighth Army on the Adriatic was now in full swing, and the Poles increased pressure on the coast to the point where penetrations at various points brought home to the Germans the necessity of replacing weary 278 Inf Div by stronger formations or risk a breakthrough to the Green Line. Even without being aware of the massive forces being concentrated in the area by the opponent, Tenth Army and 76 Pz Corps judged themselves to be in an awkward position due to the certainty that the fully manned and well led 5th Mountain Division would have to leave the Army area. 90 Pz Gren Div would of course have been effective in the Genoa area, but was unsuited for operations in the Western Alps, and it could be expected that in the absence of unduly alarming developments on the Adriatic coast 5 Mtn Div would be transferred to the Italo-French border. The upshot of the day's prolonged consultations was an order from Tenth Army for the regrouping of 76 Pz Corps. A photostatic reproduction and a translation of the order appear as Appendix "B" to this report.<sup>22, 23</sup> (Photostat 981A10.(D214)) (G.M.D.S. – 61437/6, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 17-19 Aug, Appx 418, 19 Aug 44)

20. This order provided for the transfer, by the morning of 23 Aug, of 1 Para Div to the Green Line - forefield position (along the north bank of the Metauro river), followed by the withdrawal of 278 Inf Div through 1 Para Div and thence laterally to the sector of 5 Mtn Div, whereupon the latter would withdraw and move off to a destination to be indicated by O.B.S.W. The "Red Line" of 5 Mtn Div, referred to in para 2, section b, of the regrouping order, was the divisional portion of an intermediate defence line forward of the Green Line - forefield position; it extended from the Corps boundary at 4 km north-east of Mercatello - 4 km south-west of Lunano - Monte Nuovo - S. Apollinare (1.5 km south-south-west of Pieve di Cognà) - Pallino (5 km north-north-east of Urbino). A picture of the original positions of 76 Pz Corps and 51 Mtn Corps, as they were on 19 Aug before the beginning of the withdrawals and regroupings is being retained for purposes of reference in the form of photostatic copies of the following well-prepared situation maps:

981A10.(D215) 76 Pz Corps, sit map 19 Aug 44

981A10.(D216) 76 Pz Corps, artillery positions 19 Aug 44

981A10.(D217) 51 Mtn Corps, sit map 19 Aug 44

981A10.(D218) 51 Mtn Corps, artillery positions, 19 Aug 44

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<sup>22</sup> Notes on the personal meeting of that day between Kesselring and v. Vietinghoff are not available; much relevant detail appears however in the records of the day's telephone conversations between the various Chiefs of Staff.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/6, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 17-19 Aug, Appx 417, 19 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D205))

<sup>23</sup> At 2310 hrs Wentzell said to Hauser:

... The enemy picture is that 8 Ind Div and 6 Brit Armd Div (sic) are on our inter-army boundary. Then 4 Ind Div is in our vicinity in the Saltino area. With us, there seems to be one division missing – 4 Brit Div. He seems to be putting more and more in reserve. Now one must see what he is going to do with all these reserves ... On our east wing there is some trouble; Hoppe's infantry are no longer any good and we must put Heidrich in there ... (ibid)

(G.M.D.S. - 61437/18, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 14-19 Aug 44)

21. Partly in order to conform with the developments in the area of 76 Pz Corps, and partly to expedite the urgently desired extrication of the last elements of 15 Pz Gran Div from the front (particularly the Reconnaissance Battalion), during the day Tenth Army requested and obtained the consent of Army Group for the gradual withdrawal of 51 Mtn Corps to the "Red-Blue Line", one of the intermediate defence lines forward of the Green Line-forefield position. (G.M.D.S. - 61437/6, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Appx 17-19 Aug, Appx 420, 19 Aug 44)

#### 20 Aug

22. In the early hours of the day Tenth Army received a directive from O.B.SW authorizing a withdrawal to the Green Line forefield position in the area of 76 Pz Corps and announcing the immediate return of 4 Para Regt to the Division. A photostatic copy and a translation of the document appear as Appendix "C" to this report (G.M.D.S. - 61437/7, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 437a, 20 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10(D219))

23. When during the day considerable pressure developed on the elements of 278 Inf Div at Cerasa, 76 Pz Corps decided to carry out the withdrawal to the north bank of the Metauro in two quick bounds, For the night 20/21 Aug a move to an intermediate line still forward of the Green Line-forefield position was ordered<sup>24</sup> (*ibid*, Appx 437b, 20 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D220)). The Metauro would then be crossed during the night 21/22 Aug (*ibids* Appx 438, issued 20 Aug, dated 21 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D221)).

24. Tenth Army's "Enemy Situation Map" for 20 Aug appears in photostatic form as Appendix "D" to this report; it will be noted that 1 Cdn Corps was shown complete in Eighth Army Reserve (*ibid*, Appx 491a, 22 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D196c), repeated from H.S. Report No. 24, Appx "E").

25. Composition and strength of Tenth Army on 20 Aug were reflected in the "Weekly Report" issued on that day (*ibid*, Appx 447, 20 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D222)). Some of the information contained in that report has been extracted and rearranged for the purpose of supplying a rough picture of the Army's strength at that time:

#### Tenth Army 20 Aug 44

Battalions	51 Mtn Corps	76 Pz Corps	Corps Witthoefft	Total
Strong (over 400)	4	8	11	23
Medium (below 400)	13	8	2	23
Average (below 300)	13	11	2	26

<sup>24</sup> This intermediate line extended inland from Mandonna del Ponte (on the coast) – Palombara – Piagge – south of Cavallara – road junction south-east of Villadelmonte – Isola di Fano – S. Martino dei Muri – Monte Scatto – Molleone – Secchiano (3 km west of Cagli) – Fonte di Cerreto (7.5 km west of Cagli) – Apecchio – north of Fontana Parnacciano (9 km south-south-west of Mercatello). (Decoded from Appx 437b, *ibid*)

<b>Weak</b>	<b>(below 200)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Exhausted</b>	<b>(below 100)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>81</b>

<b>Guns (with Inf Divs)</b>	<b>51 Mtn Corps</b>	<b>76 Pz Corps</b>	<b>Corps Witthoeft</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>A.-Tk guns medium</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>A.-Tk guns heavy</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Guns light</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>287</b>
<b>Guns heavy</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Assault guns</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Propaganda projectors</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>570</b>

**21 Aug**

**26. In the absence of any pronounced pressure on the right wing of 76 Pz Corps O.B.SW may now have felt that a mere authorization to fall back (para 22 above) might fail to bring immediate results, and at 0015 hrs 21 Aug he issued an order for the withdrawal of the Army to the Red Line:**

**The development of the situation requires the early commitment of 5 Mtn Div on the Italian French border. To accelerate the taking, out of' this division the Army withdraws to the Red Line ...**

**(G.M.D.S. - 61437/7, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 20-25 Aug, Appx 464a, 21 Aug) (Photostat 98La10.(D223))**

**27. Following a withdrawal during the night, 51 Mtn Corps remained undisturbed during the day, but in the area of 76 Pz Corps fighting developed in all divisional sectors, and in the coastal sector reached such proportions that 278 Inf Div was forced to cross the Metauro in the afternoon, and not during the night 21/22 Aug as had been planned originally. (G.M.D.S. 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 21 Aug 44). In the meantime 1 Para Div was moving southwards to the north bank of' the Metauro and on the following day assumed command of the sector of 278 Inf Div (ibid 22 Aug). On Tenth Army's situation map for 21 Aug the north bank of the Metauro was shown as being held by the units of 278 Inf Div; on that of 22 Aug by those of 1 Para Div (G.M.D.S. - 61437/9, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 20-29 Aug 44).**

**28. During, the day it had been mentioned in telephone conversations that 334 Inf Div too might now have to be moved to another theatre of war (G.M.D.S. - 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 21 Aug). Although there were then no signs of major action in the Adriatic sector, General v. Vietinghoff expressed concern over the depletion of his forces in a memorandum to O.B.SW, in which he requested a mobile division as an Army reserve by 1 Sep at, the latest, possibly from Fourteenth Army and in exchange for 98 Inf Div**



(G.M.D.S. - 61437/7, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 20-25 Aug, Appx 465, 21 Aug) (Photostat and Translation 981A10.(D224))

### 22 Aug

29. The situation map of Tenth Army for 22 and 23 Aug is being retained in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. - 61437/19, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 20-29 Aug 44 (Photostat 981A10.(D225)) According to this map and as shown in the War Diary of Tenth Army (G.M.D.S. - 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 22 and 23 Aug) the front line of 76 Pz Corps on these two days was as follows:

Ospizio (on the coast, 2 km NW Fano) - Bignano Zacchini (5 km SW Fano - due north Carrara - C.S. Anna (4 km SE Mombaroccio) - S. Francesco (1.2 km SE Serrungarina) - Parra di Gaifa (5 km W. Fossombrone) - Point 696 (7 km SSE Fermignano, on the north bank of the Candigliane river) - due north of Acqualagna - south end of the railway tunnel 7 km SSW Furmignano; due south of the 'a' in Frontino-di Naro) - S. Vincenza di Candigliani (7 km SW Urbania) - Cemetery Pieve dei Gratticoli (5 km SE Morcatollo) - Ripa dell Ato - M. Morricie (8 km SSW Mercatello) - il Montaccio (7.5 km SW Morcatello).

30. The day's telephone conversations were carried out by officers of lesser rank than usual. They revealed a mood of satisfied well-being. Nineteenth Army was roundly criticized for its poor performance, routine business was discussed, the enemy situation in the Adriatic sector was not mentioned at all and the atmosphere seemed to be free from any sense of urgency. At the same time a few miles further south the Eighth Army was slipping into assembly positions for its drive through the Gothie Line. (G.M.D.S. - 61437/7 Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 20-25 Aug, Appx 482, tel cons 22 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D205))

31. How far in the meantime the constant fight against the partisans in the rear areas had degenerated into a series of murderous German marauding expeditions can be gathered from a warning issued in this connection by Marshal Kesselring on 22 Aug. A photostatic copy and a translation of the document appear as Appendix "E" to this report, (Ibid, Appx 489a) (981A10.(D226))

### 23 Aug

32. In the area of 51 Mtn Corps the gradual withdrawal to the Red Line was continued; in that of 76 Pz Corps 5 Mtn Div reported that the enemy had observed the withdrawals and occupied Acqualagna. 71 Inf Div reported some increase in the harassing fire on its sector; 1 Para Div reported that the opponent had crossed the Metauro river and was digging in on both banks<sup>25</sup> (G.M.D.S. - 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 23 Aug).

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<sup>25</sup> According to Tenth Army's situation map for 22 and 23 Aug (see para 29 above) this crossing would seem to have taken place near the coast in the vicinity of Madonna del Ponte.

33. Regarding Allied air activity the Main War Diary of Tenth Army carried the following notation:

Strikingly intensive activity of bombers and fighter-bombers, particularly attacks on the railroad stations along the Via Emilia (presumably for the purpose of disturbing the recognized movements of 5 Mtn and 15 Pz Gren Divs) and on the coastal defence zone of 98 Inf Div. An attack by 94 four-motored bombers on the industrial section and the railway station of Ferrara caused heavy damage.

(Ibid, 23 Aug)

34. The records of the telephone conversations for this day and for many days thereafter were filled with recitals of endless difficulties due to air attacks in the dispatch of 5 Mtn Div to the West. (Photostat 981A10.(D205)). A fleeting reference to the enemy situation was made during the day by Wentzell, who said to Runkel:<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately the enemy situation is very obscure. The Army has received a report on 1 large naval units at Pola but this report was later withdrawn. In spite of that, such reports are somewhat disturbing and nothing must be taken away from Corps Witthoeft.

(G.M.D.S. - 61437/7, Tenth Army W.D.8., Appx 502., tel cons 23 Aug 44 (Photostat 981A10.(D205))1

24 Aug

35. On the whole the day was uneventful on the front of Tenth Army. The Armoured Reconnaissance Battalion of 15 Pz Gren Div finally left the area of 51 Mtn Corps to join the mass of the Division now waiting to move off via the Brenner Pass. Of 5 Mtn Divm the Field Replacement Battalion was entrained near Forli, 1 Bn 85 Mtn Jg Regt was ready for loading near Bologna, and after darkness had set in 3 Bn 85 Mtn Jg Regt moved off in vehicles towards Mantua with the intention of entraining when and where possible. In comparison with the preceding day Allied air activity had lessened; the main subject of the day's telephone conversation was the plan to create an Army reserve by withdrawing 334 Inf Div from the front. In the afternoon.51 Mtn Corps received orders to extricate one half of the division by 30 Aug, and to make arrangements permitting a removal of the other half on short notice. (G.M.D.S. - 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 24 Aug 44)

36. Instructions for the withdrawal of 334 Inf Div from the front and the corresponding widening of the sectors of the remaining divisions were laid down in a Corps Order issued on the same day. (G.M.D.S. - 62296/4, 51 Mtn Corps, W.D.3, vol 'C' of Appx, Appx C 386, 24 Aug 44). (Photostat 981A10.(D227)). Possibly due to his careful training in the old Austrian General Staff, General Feurstein was ever ready to explain the reasons for his actions, and the Corps Order began with a description of the enemy situation on the Corps front:

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<sup>26</sup> RUNKEL Henning Werner, (called "Fritz"), Col, C. of S. 76 Pz Corps

Very considerable enemy forces have been withdrawn from the Corps front for commitment in Southern Franco or seemingly also on the Adriatic coast. At the present time, on the right wing of the Corps 8 Ind Div has been confirmed with its right wing a Pontassieve. Eastwards of the Arno it is not known to what extent 6 Brit Armd Div has been withdrawn from the front and replaced by another division (4 Ind Div?). Now as before 10 Ind Div (with 9 Brit Army Tank Bde attached) can be assumed to be on both sides of the Tiber and with the right wing extending to the area west of San Sepolero. At the moment only irregular formations seem to be in the adjoining sector.

There are no indications of any kind pointing to the arrival of new enemy formations, and for the time being, therefore, no large-scale attacks are to be expected. For this reason Tenth Army has ordered the withdrawal of 334 Ind Div to form an Army reserve.

**(Ibid)**

**25 Aug**

37. As far as Tenth Army was concerned 25 Aug was a quiet day; the sun was shining brightly and it was very hot. (G.M.D.S, - 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 25 Aug 44).  
Generals, v. Vietinghoff and Heidrich were on leave (Tel cons 25, 26, 27, 28 Aug) (Photostat 981A10.(D205)). Wentzell and Kesselring were in telephonic communication at 1010 hrs:

**K: What's new with you?**

**W: Nothing special is happening here. So far the withdrawal towards the Red Line has proceeded according to plan.**

**K: What do you know about the enemy?**

**W: We still do not see very clearly. We got reports from one place and another. First there is a report from the Macerata area that something is happening there; then a new cavalry regiment is supposed to have appeared before 44 Inf Div. But just because the situation is so obscure we want to withdraw something into reserve. Our intention is to withdraw one half of 334 Inf Div by 30 Aug, and if all goes well we want to withdraw the whole Division.**

**K: That would be very desirable ...**

**K: Otherwise nothing of importance?**

**W: Otherwise nothing. We must now watch carefully what he is doing on the Adriatic. When he sees Heidrich's men there he may take his forces further inland.**

(G.M.D.S. - 61437/7, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 20-25 Aug, Appx 544, tel cons 25 Aug)  
(Photostat 981A10.(D205))

38. Apart from an unusual number of documents dealing with the dispatch of personnel to various training courses, the day's records include the details for a large conference called by Tenth Army for 30 Aug to deal with the problems that would arise in the event of a sudden rush of traffic across the River Po (*ibid*; Appx 553) (Photostat 981A10.(D228)) (see also para 73 below). The Allied air attacks on the Ravenna - Ferrara - Bologna triangle had now assumed serious proportions, and in addition to the constant stream of reports of minor destruction, word had been received that the big railroad bridge north of Ferrara had been destroyed. Tenth Army notified O.B.SW that the work, of repair was going on by day and night and that fourteen anti-aircraft batteries were now detailed for the protection of the bridge (*ibid*, Appx 555) (Photostat 981A10.(D229)).

### THE BATTLE OF RIMINI (25 AUG - 21 SEP)

#### Dispositions of Tenth and Fourteenth Armies on 25 Aug

39. According to Tenth Army's situation map for 24 and 25 Aug the divisions on the land front of the Army from left to right were then deployed in the following order; the location of headquarters is given in brackets:

#### TENTH ARMY (Pizzocalvo, 12 km east of Bologna)

##### 76 Pz Corps (Gradara)

1 Para Div (S. Pietro, near Calibano)

71 Inf Div (Monte Gridolfo, as of 25 Aug)

5 Mtn Div (Macerata Feltria)

(In process of being thinned out pending relief by 278 Inf Div.)

(HQ 278 Inf Div at Mercatino as of 25 Aug)

##### 51 Mtn Corps (Bertinoro)

114 Mtn Jg Div (Badia Tedalda)

44 Inf Div (Balze)

305 Inf Div (Badia Prataglia)

334 Inf Div (Casalo)

(preparing for withdrawal to form an Army Reserve)

715 Inf Div (1 km east of inter-army boundary at S. Biagio, south of Vicchio)

(G.M.D.S. 61437/19, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 20-29 Aug, sit map 24 and 25 Aug 44)  
(Photostat 981A10.(D230a))

The section of the above map showing the dispositions of the left wing of 76 Pz Corps appears in photostatic form as Appendix "F" to this report (ibid) (Photostat 98IA10.(D230b)). In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, Corps Witthouft under direct command of Tenth Army with 162(Turc) Inf Div and 98 Inf Div is presumed unchanged in the coastal area from Cattolica to Ravenna; unchanged also is Venetian Coast Command (as shown in Appx "A" to this report).

40. The frontline divisions of Fourteenth Army from, the inter-army boundary to the Tyrrhanian Sea were disposed as follows:

1 Para Corps

356	Inf Div
4	Para Div
562	Inf Div

14 Pz Corps

26	Pz Div
65	Inf Div
16	S.S. Pz Gren Div <sup>27</sup>

(G.M.D.S. - 62241/3, Fourteenth Army, sit maps 1 Jul - 30 Sep, sit map 25 Aug 44)

In connection with the above line-up it must be noted that 26 Pz Div had been warned in the afternoon of 24 Aug, and during the morning, afternoon and early evening of 25 Aug had received progressively detailed orders for immediate withdrawal from the front and assembling near Imola as an Army Group Reserve. (G.M.D.S. - 62241/5, Fourteenth Army W.D.4, Appx 17 Jul - 30 Aug 44, folios 844a, 846, 846a) (Photostat 981A10.(D231))

Across the Metauro and to the Foglia River 25/26 - 29 Aug

26 Aug

41. In pursuance of the order from O.B.SW for Tenth to withdraw to the Red Line (para 26 above), during the night 25/26 Aug 76 Pz Corps was on the move from the positions along the Metauro river in the direction of this line, which in fact was the outpost area of the Green Line.

42. The crossing of the Metauro river by the advance elements of 1 Cdn Inf Div during the last ninety minutes of 25 Aug was therefore unopposed and the early

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<sup>27</sup> In the reserve of Fourteenth Army at the times were 29 Pz Gren Div and 20 G.A.F. Div, 3 Pz Gren Div was then being concentrated at Verona for transfer [to O.B.West] via the Brenner Pass. The Division completed loading on 27 Aug and from then on was unavailable for commitment by O.B.SW; it was still available in the evening of 25 Aug, when in response to the report of an Allied landing at Ravenna O.B.SW alerted 26 Pz Div and 3 Pz Gren Div for immediate transfer to Tenth Army. The report proved to be unfounded and the order was cancelled at 2315 hrs (G.M.D.S. - 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 24 and 25 Aug 44).

exploitation past the Via Flaninia to Serrungarina and Saltara did not result in fighting contact with 2 Bn 211 Gren Regt (71 Inf Div), then moving ahead of the Canadians in the general direction of Mombaroccico. The front line of 76 Pz Corps as at 1000 hrs 26 Aug was recorded by Tenth Army on a special map, which is being permanently retained by Hist Sec (G.S.) in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. - 61437/19, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 20-29 Aug, sit map 76 Pz Corps 1000 hrs 26 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(232)). A photostatic copy is also being retained of the situation map of 51 Mtn Corps for the same day (ibid) (Photostat 981A10.(D233)).

43. German opposition to the advance of the Canadian units on that day was not substantial and consisted mainly of sporadic rearguard actions. Considerable interest however attaches to the reactions at higher levels to the surprising developments in the Adriatic sector. The subject is dealt with below in some detail by the presentation of a series of excerpts from the record of the day's telephone conversations (G.M.D.S. - 61437/8, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 572, tel cons 26 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D205)):

0900 hrs      Wentzell - Runkel (German synopsis)

The enemy artillery has been very active. According to the computations of the artillery observation unit, 25,000 shells have been fired on the left wing of the Corps. There has been no infantry action so far, Heidrich's left wing is still in the old positions. Where the fireworks took place everybody had left. One can see from these fireworks that the enemy is concentrating more and more on the joint between the two divisions. That area must be made secure ... Something is happening on the front of 5 Mtn Div; the enemy picture there has changed. The Army thinks that 4 Ind Div is there.

According to the information now on hand at Corps headquarters the reconnaissance battalion of 4 Ind Div seems to be there. Whether the whole outfit is there we shall see during the next few days.

The paratroopers are now being strengthened; the Division has received 2,000 reinforcements. Heidrich does not intend to commit these before 15 Sep; situation permitting he may well do so. Seeing the paratroopers there, the enemy may turn inland, But C. of S. believes that within three to four days matters on the Corps front, will come to a head; he is worried about Hoppe's sector [the sector where 278 Inf Div was about to relieve 5 Mtn Div].

1025 hrs      Wentzell - Berlin<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> BERLIN, Hermann, G.S.C., then, C. of S. 51 Mtn Corps. (Appointed 25 Jul, relieved v. Klinckowstream and assumed functions on 14 Aug, appointed C. of S. 40 Pz Corps on 15 Sep, relinquished functions as C. of S. 51 Mtn Corps on 22 Sep, was succeeded in that appointment on the same day by GARTMAYR, George, Col, G.S.C., previously a section chief in Army General Staff, Branch.Q.M.G. Branch (G.M.D.S. - 62298/2, 51 Mtn Corps, Personnel Section, Report for August 1944, Appx 8, 14 Aug 44; G.M.D.S. - 63606, 51 Mtn Corps Personnel Section, Report for September 1944, fol 284, 15 Sep; Appx 17, 22 Sep 44).

**On the whole there is nothing special. In the sector of 1 Para Div a British major from 1 Brit Div has been taken prisoner. What that means is not clear. It is possible that 1 Brit Div has been moved there through 8 Ind Div...**

**On the coast a Pole has been taken prisoner, who states that they have been relieved by British formations<sup>29</sup>.**

**1345 hrs      Wentzell - Roettiger**

**W:      At Raapke's centre, near Montefelcino, they have taken a prisoner front 46 Brit Inf Div.**

**R:      Well, well.**

**W:      And so this Adriatic business becomes ever more serious.**

**...**

**W:      Yesterday, the Pole who was taken prisoner on the coast stated that British formations were arriving there too. That cannot be a reference to 46 Brit Inf Div.**

**R:      It must be another formation.**

**W:      Yes. Now we have been busy trying to figure out what forces he could bring into action; it will be ten or eleven divisions.**

**R:      To do that he would have to round up everything.**

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<sup>29</sup> The first recorded reference to the statements of the Polish prisoner was made at 1025 hrs 26 Aug. Thereafter this subject was repeatedly mentioned during the day. This prisoner may have been captured on 24 Aug as Pretzell says ("The Battle of Rimini", *op cit*, (para 9 above) page 11 of translation), or, as seems more probable, on 25 Aug but the information obtained from him was apparently not available at higher headquarters until the morning of 26 Aug. In this connection it might be noted that the Army's Intelligence Summary for August 1944 does not carry any reference to prisoners made or interrogated on 24 or 25 Aug, but for 26 Aug carries the following entries:

**From prisoners the first news has been received of the relief of 2 Pol Corps by British formations. ... In view of the fact that Canadians have been captured, commitment of 1 Cdn Corps must be reckoned with ...**

**(G.M.D.S. - 61439/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Int file August 1944) (981A10.(D235))**

**(Note: The above Intelligence Summary, though rather poor on the whole (para 18 above), in this particular case seems to support the weight of evidence pointing to the conclusion that this important information was not available prior to 26 Aug)**

**W:** That is what he does; he did the same at Cassino. The question now is whether he intends to execute a straight land operation or a combined one ...

**R:** How did you arrive at the figure of ten or eleven divisions?

**W:** At the present time the following are not committed: 1 Cdn Corps, 5 Brit Corps, 6 South African Armoured, 42, 46, 56 and 57 Divs...

**R:** In that case he would have to put in everything he has.

**W:** That is what he does.

**R:** Does he really do that?

**W:** If he could thereby collapse our eastern wing. That he will go for the eastern wing – which is what one certainly must expect – is after all exactly the manner in which an operation ought to be conducted in order to ...

**R:** The direction is the right one, all right ...

1650 hrs Wentzell – Major Schnell (Ops Offr 76 Pz Corps)

(German synopsis)

The enemy is attacking with 46 Brit Div in the boundary area between 71 Inf Div and 1 Para Div. It can be assumed that he believes our withdrawal to be to the Green Line, and that he is therefore in close pursuit so as to smash us before we reach that line. This also explains the strong bombing attacks on the Green Line, particularly west of Pesaro, in 15 – 20 waves of 6 – 12 aircraft each. C. of S. asks for the Corps' appreciation of the situation. The Corps still believes that the attack will be halted. It must not happen that the enemy reaches the Green Line before we do. Whether the Corps will fall back to the Red Line during the night Sch. Does not know.

1710 hrs Wentzell – Kesselring

**K:** How do things look with you?

**W:** I think that it is going to be quite an affair on the Adriatic coast. The British have appeared on Raapke's front, and now, at this very moment, comes the news that the Canadians are said to have appeared exactly at the joint between Heidrich



and Raapke. Prisoners have been brought in too. Heidrich's battalion commander swears by his head that they are Canadians. But that must first be definitely confirmed. – Also the bombing patterns which have been reported today show that something is going on there, and that the enemy has a definite project in view. And the immense air activity which has been going on the whole day in Raapke's and Hoidrich's sectors over the area forward of the Green Line and over the Line itself points to the same thing. One must assume that he has something being in view in order to smash us even before we reach the Green Line.

**K:** What is the situation at present and what do you make of it?

**W:** I feel that we have been lucky with our withdrawal since it preserved us from being caught in the artillery barrage. I expect that he will follow with strong forces.

**K:** Regarding transfer of anti-tank weapons [from 51 Mtn Corps to 76 Pz Corps] ... something must be done all right.

**W:** Yes, but unfortunately we have no air reconnaissance with which to find out what is happening in the areas. In this respect we are once more totally blind.

**K:** Are you in contact with the Army Commander? You must certainly discuss this with him.

**W:** I spoke to him this morning about it.

**K:** Has Hoidrich returned yet?

**W:** Yesterday he was not yet back.

1750 hrs      Wentzell - Schnell (German synopsis)

... And then C. of S, has heard that the Canadians are there, though this has not yet been confirmed by a second source. According to the troops they are supposed to be Canadians, Schnell will have to be particularly hot after this information, for if they are really Canadians C. of S. will have to adopt quite other measures. For then it will be a true major operation (eine ganz grosse Angelenheit).

1810 hrs      Wentzell - Gericke<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> GERICKE, Col, G.S.C., C. of S. Venetian Coast Command (para 5 above)

**Down there in the zone of 76 Pz Corps there seemss to be a lot going on. Apparently the enemy has committed himself there to a very large-scale affair. British formations are committed; possibly also Canadians. One must reckon with the possibility of a landing operation at Gericke's. G. should be on the alert; all the more as an intelligence report from Trieste says that something is brewing there ...**

**1820 hrs      Wentzell - Runkel**

**(Runkel reporting) ... From the left a Polish sergeant, has been brought in, who states that they have been relieved by Canadians ...**

**1910 hrs      Wentzell - Runkel**

**... Mombarocchio has been lost ...  
Heidrich will be back in about three or four days ...**

**2320 hrs      Wentzell - Berlin**

**... At the moment we are in difficulties on the left wing. In the sectors of Heidrich and Raapke there is fierce air activity. In that area he has simply cleared all the minefields before the Green Line from the air. Now they must be re-laid hurriedly during the night and in the next few days.**

**2330 hrs      Wentzell – Roettinger**

**...**

**R:      What about the Army commander? Did you talk with him?**

**W:      I was unable to reach him.**

**R:      The field Marshal thinks you ought to call him back [from leave].**

**W:      I will call him on the telephone tomorrow moring ...**

44.      The Main War Diary of Tenth Army for 26 Aug carried the following entry:

Time and again during the last weeks the Army command has pointed out that the next major operation of the enemy was to be expected on the Adriatic coast (e.g. tel cons 19 Jul, 24 Jul, 29 Jul, and particularly C. of S. tenth Army with Col Beelitz, Ops Offr

O.B.S.W on 9 Aug and 10 Aug). During the afternoon of 26 Aug the now clearly discernible enemy picture and the measures to be taken by 76 Pz Corps have been discussed with the Army Group without for the moment obtaining their full agreement with the Army's point of view.

(G.M.D.S. - 61437/1, Tenth, W.D. 8, 26 Aug 44)

The above statement in itself is true enough, but it must be taken into account that the early alarm and "wisdom" of Tenth Army was in part a result of Allied deception. When the original intelligence picture of an Allied build-up on the Adriatic finally collapsed (see H.S. Report No. 24, paras 63, 79), Marshal Kesselring turned his full attention to the events on the west coast and in turn suffered complete surprise on the east coast due to the cumulative effects of Allied astuteness and the dismal failure of his own Intelligence service.

45. Fourteenth Army knew from bitter experience what might happen when it had to transfer some of its formations to another part of the front. True to form (as well as true to fact), the Main War diary for 26 Aug carried items expressing concern regarding Allied intentions on the Army's front. And at 2345 hrs the Army telephoned to Army Group that agents were making the following statements:

(45) The enemy front is thinly held but 2.5 km further to the rear rather strongly.

(46) The insignia of the following divisions have been seen: New Zealand, South African, Canadian [sic] and 1 Greek.

(47) Considerable concentrations of tanks in the rear area; on the roads heavy motor traffic.

(48) Along the roads great stores of artillery ammunition.

(49) Allied soldiers have stated on 25 Aug that within five days they would be attacking in the direction of Empoli, Signa and Florence.

(G.M.D.S. - 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 26 Aug 44)

## 27 Aug

46. Tactically speaking the day was one of continued advances by the leading elements of Eighth Army in the direction of the Green Line. Once again the records of the telephone conversations are of particular interest because they reflect the views and opinions of the commanders and the reasons for the measures taken. In para 44 above it was shown that in the evening of 26 Aug Tenth Army and Army Group "C" did not see eye to eye in their appraisals of the situation. On the morning of 27 Aug, C. of S. Tenth Army received a further shock when after a few casual remarks Marshal Kesselring made the following statement:

0920 hrs      Wentzell – Kesselring

K:      A few moments ago I told my officers that this whole affair gives me the impression of a large-scale diversion arising from the enemy's fear of a German flanking attack in the West with three to four divisions in order to ruin the whole invasion of Southern France. All the attacks on the railways during the last few days, the attacks on the roads, the feint at Ravenna, and now the attack on the left wing; all these things give me the impression that this attack will not be proceeded with in strength, but that the attacks have the express object of tying up our forces so that nothing can go wrong in Southern France.

W:      We shall have to see what today brings forth, so as to find out also from prisoners what is happening.

K:      Have they taken any prisoners?

W:      Yes, Canadians and from 46 Brit Div.

K:      Which Canadians are they?

W:      We do not know yet. Unfortunately one of the prisoners is already dead. They tried to take him back during daylight and he was caught in a bombing attack and killed. Now I have given orders that the other Canadians<sup>31</sup> are under no circumstances to be taken back during the day. They will not be brought back till the evening. We do not know where they are because Corps headquarters are moving ...

K:      I am anxious to hear what the prisoners have to say and whether my assumption that it is a diversion will be confirmed.

1130 hrs      Wentzell – Runkel (German synopsis)

... Runkel unfortunately is unable to submit any information about the Canadians; they refuse to speak. Perhaps they belong to the armoured brigade. Efforts must be made to ascertain whether they belong to a large formation or to this brigade.

According to the telephone conversations the Germans employed very shrewd interrogators (Wentzell, 1010 hrs). The tenor of the latter conversation indicates that they did not find out much; for unspecified reasons, however, by 1810 hrs the Germans felt certain that the prisoners were from 1 Cdn Inf Div, and Wentzell told Roettiger that 5 Cdn Armd Div could not be far off,

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<sup>31</sup> According to conversations which were held later in the day, the prisoner who died in the bombing attack was from 46 Brit Div (*ibid*).

as it was unlikely that the Canadian corps would be split up (G.M.D.S. – 61437/8, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 594, tel cons 27 Aug) (Photostat 981A10.(D205)).

47. The conversation at 1810 hrs between Wentzell and Roettiger, while too long and involved to quote, was the most important one of the day and, in fact, constituted a temporary assumption of the leadership by Wentzell. With the consent of Marshal Kesselring (who was near the telephone and praised Wentzell for his ideas) it was decided during this conversation:

To drop the plans for taking 334 Inf Div into Army reserve;

To drop the plans for exchanging 98 Inf Div for 29 Pz Gren Div;

But instead of this:

To move 334 Inf Div to Fourteenth Army;

To move 29 Pz Gren Div to the Adriatic coast;

To move 26 Pz Div complete to Tenth Army for commitment under 76 Pz Corps (at a time to be determined by O.B.SW);

To let weary 71 Inf Div change places with 98 Inf Div.

(Ibid, 27 Aug 44)

48. During the day the inner wings of the two Corps reached the Red Line; H.Q. 715 and 305 Inf Divs assumed command in their respective portions of the front previously controlled by H.Q. 334 Inf Div; H.Q. 278 Inf Div assumed command in the areas previously controlled by H.Q. 5 Mtn Div (G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 27 Aug)<sup>32</sup>

49. A tabulation of the number and types of anti-tank weapons with the divisions of Tenth Army was prepared by the Army's Senior Armoured Officer on 27 Aug (G.M.D.S. – 61437/8, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 26-30 Aug, Appx 603, 27 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10(D234)). At that time, prior to the arrival of the formation dispatched to strengthen the left wing of the Army, 76 Pz Corps was in possession of the following:

76 Pz Corps (excl 5 Mtn Div; incl 278 Inf Div)	Total	Of these fit for use
Heavy anti-tank guns, self-propelled	43	27
Heavy anti-tank guns, tractor-drawn	7	6
Panther tanks (all with 1 Bn 4 Pz Regt)	33	20

<sup>32</sup> For the purpose of possible research at a later date, note should be taken of the following changes in map code:

1. as of 0001 hrs 27 Aug the number 'eleven' was added to the number of each large square on the map 1:100,000, then in force. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/7, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 506, 24 Aug 44)

(b) As of 0901 hrs 27 Aug reports to Army Group were coded on the basis of the map 1:200,000, then in force. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 27 Aug 44)

Heavy anti-tank guns on “Rhinceros”(tank chassis Mark IV)	5	5
Anti-tank gun 39 (?)	9	2
Panther turrets	9	4
Assault guns (Italian)	17	15
Assault guns (German)	14	7
Grand Total	137	86

28 Aug

50. The vigorous pressure exerted by the Canadians on the inner wings of 71 Inf and 1 Para Divs caused the infantry elements of 71 Inf Div to falter. It was then realized on all levels that the danger of an immediate break-through would be very great, should the Canadians reach the Green Line simultaneously with the retreating Germans and before substantial reserves could reach and man the critical portion of the line. The surprise achieved by the Eighth Army had created a most awkward situation for the enemy, and a great part of the day’s telephone conversations dealt with the problem of ascertaining which units, if any, could be moved up fast enough to serve as a stop gap.

51. According to Tenth Army’s situation map for 28 and 29 Aug, the German forces, then a few miles south of the Foglia river, and gradually falling back to the Green Line sector Montecchio – Osteria Nuova – Borgo S. Maria, were, from left to right:

- 1 Bn 4 Para Regt (1 Para Div)
- 2 Bn 211 Gren Regt (71 Inf Div)
- 1 Bn 194 Gren Regt (71 Inf Div)

On, and just across the boundary with 46 Brit Div was 171 Fd Repl Bn (71 Inf Div). (G.M.D.S. – 61437/19, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 20-29 Aug, sit map 28 and 29 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D236)). In a telephone conversation between Wentzell and Roettiger, at 2220 hrs, it was then reported that by the evening 76 Pz Corps had found it necessary to dispatch the two reserve battalions of 1 Para Div to the area east of S. Angelo, in order to bolster the weakening units of 71 Inf Div (G.M.D.S. – 61437/8, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 617, tel cons 28 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D205)).

52. By midday 28 Aug Marshal Kesselring had evidently changed his opinion regarding the nature of the attack (para 46 above); at 1235 hrs he said to Wentzell:

... Die Sache am linked Fluegel erscheint mir doch gefachrllich ...  
(Freely, but faithfully interpreted: “I now agree with you that the matter on the coast is dangerous”.)

(Ibid)

45. Somehow during the day a copy of Lt-Gen Sir Oliver Leese's message to the troops (C.M.H.Q. Report No. 187, para 56) had been captured by the Germans, and by the end of the day the German commanders were convinced of its authenticity, were discussing its text and implications, from its distribution list had gathered the composition of 1 Cdn and 5 Brit Corps, and had concluded that it would now be safe and appropriate to shift the main weight of the Army to the Adriatic (ibid). In the meantime General v. Viotinghoff had returned from leave, and on the occasion of his first conversation with General Herr, at 2235 hrs was told:

On the basis of the captured document it is now certain that the enemy intends to carry out a big push to the plains of the Po.

(Ibid)

54. The "Final Appreciation of the Day" in the Main War Diary of Tenth Army read as follows:

No fighting of consequence at the front of 51 Mtn Corps. The withdrawal movement with the objective of releasing additional formations of 334 Inf Div is proceeding according to plan.

At the front of 76 Pz Corps the direction of the thrust and the enemy's intention are becoming clearly discernible. By committing fresh formations (Canadians and British in place of the Poles), and by superior weight of armoured and air formations, he is seeking to destroy our formations forward of the Green Line, with the objective of then quickly passing through the Green Line in the direction of Rimini. In the sector of 71 Inf Div the enemy succeeds in breaking through as far as the line 3 km east of Molinello del Bosco – just east of S. Angelo, and in the sector of 1 Para Div he breaks through to a point west of Arzilla. As a continuation of the attacks is expected, approval is given for 76 Pz Corps to withdraw to the Green Line. One battalion from 26 Pz Div and one regimental group of 98 Inf Div to be moved up hurriedly to form a Corps reserve. Furthermore, three additional Flak battalions to be moved up to the Corps for defence against the constant air attacks.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 28 Aug 44)

55. The most important orders of the day are being retained in photostatic form:

981A10.(D237) O.B.SW to Tenth Army 2045 hrs  
Army authorized to withdraw 71 Inf Div and 1 Para Div to Green Line.

Accelerated concentration of 26 Pz Div near Cesena.

1 Bn 9 Pz Gren Regt, 1 Bn 67 Pz Gren Regt, 1 Bn 93 Arty Regt (all of 26 Pz Div) to be temporarily under command of 76 Pz Corps for commitment at front.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/8, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 26-31 Aug, Appx 618, 28 Aug 44)

981A10.(D238) Tenth Army to 76 Pz Corps 2110 hrs

Withdrawal Order. Green Line to be defended to last man.

(Ibid, Appx 521)

981A10.(D239) Tenth Army to 76 Pz Corps and Corps Whitthoeft 1350 hrs

Reinforced 290 Gren Regt (98 Inf Div) to reach positions in Green Line during night 29/30 Aug.

(Ibid, Appx 597)

981A10.(D240) Tenth Army to 76 Pz Corps 2030 hrs

Employment of elements 26 Pz Div temporarily under command.

(Ibid, Appx 620)

56. On 28 Aug the commander of Fourteenth Army advised Kesselring of the increasing enemy preparations for an attack on both sides of Florence. He pointed out that none of the divisions at the front were mechanized, and that a withdrawal movement in order to be successful would therefore have to be carried out before enemy pressure developed. In view of this, and of the situation on the Adriatic coast, Army Group now gave orders for Fourteenth Army to fall back to the Green Line in several planned movements. Fourteenth Army decided to fall back to the Hansi (intermediate) Line during the night 30/31 Aug (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 28 Aug 44). Kesselring's formal order to both Armies for the gradual withdrawal to the Green Line was issued at 0030 hrs 29 Aug. A photostatic copy and a translation of the document appear as Appendix "G" to this report (G.M.D.S. – 62241/5, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 4, Appx 17-30 Aug, Folio 848b, 29 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D241)).

#### 29 Aug

57. On this day the retreating divisions of 76 Pz Corps crossed the Foglia River. In connection with the developments in this area, the "Final Appreciation of the Days" in the Main War Diary of Tenth Army contained the following remark:

The withdrawal of 76 Pz Corps to the Green Line has been carried out. Despite sharp engagements with the hotly pursuing enemy it was possible to save all heavy weapons. The coming day will be an exceptionally grave one for the reason that in spite of all acceleration the approaching reserves cannot become effective before 30 Aug. During the last few days our minefields forward of the Green Line – no doubt betrayed by agents –



have been systematically and effectively destroyed by successive waves of enemy bombers.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 29 Aug 44)

58. Tenth Army's final situation report for the day was issued at about midnight 29/30 Aug. At that time the approaching reserves were reported in the following areas:

26 Pz Div

1 Bn 9 Pz Gren Regt	east of S.M. del Monte
1 Bn 67 Pz Gren Regt	
1 Bn 93 Pz Arty Regt	3 km north-west of S.M. del Monte
2 Bn 67 Pz Gren Regt	on march to S.M. del Monte
Elements of Tk Bn	
3 Coy Engr Bn	south-east of Cesena
Div H.Q.	Roncofreddo

Balance of Division to reach the area of Cesena during night 29/30 Aug

98 Inf Div

Battle Group 290 Gren Regt between Poggio Berni and Vericchio (on march to Saludeccio)

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/8, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 26-31 Aug, Appx 641, Tagesmeldung 29 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D209))

59. Time and space of course were elements which could not be overcome by mere orders and commands, and during the whole day General Wentzell had misgivings and feared that too little would come too late. Time and again in long telephone conversations he sought to entice Army Group to move more forces to the critical sector and to take a chance further up the coast where probably nothing was going to happen. But the experience at the Garigliano front with the subsequent embarrassment at Anzio had not been forgotten (Hist Sec Report No. 20, para 21); the Army Group was unwilling to gamble, and no further measures were taken on that day. The stage was set; soon the opposing forces would meet head-on, and the outcome of the battle might well decide the further course of the campaign in Italy.

The Gothic Line (Green Line I)

60. The general location and the military significance of the Gothic Line have been amply described in Allied narratives and need not be reviewed in this report. In Allied literature the

term Gothic Line has frequently been used in a dual sense, firstly to describe one specific line of the whole system of German defences on the height of the Apennines and, secondly, for the whole complex of these defences. The specific line was the Gothic Line proper, the German Main Defence Line extending from Posaro along the heights of the north bank of the Foglia River and thence across the peninsula to the Tyrrhenian Sea at a point 4 km south-east of Marina di Carrara. The German name of this particular line at the time of the breaching was: Green Line I. (For Green Line II and Rimini position see paras 90 and 119 below.)

61. To the Germans the Gothic defences were known by a succession of names. Prior to 25 Apr 44 they were known as the “Apennine Position”, from 25 Apr to 15 Jun as the “Gothic Position”, after 16 Jun as the “Green Line” (see Hist Sec Report No. 20, para 62f). As work on the defence positions progressed, the original abstraction of a line as a last barrier against penetration of the Lombard Plain from the South was replaced by the reality of a system of defences in depth, and the individual major positions were then given the names referred to in para 60 above.

62. The first order to authorities below the highest planning levels in connection with the creation of a defence line in the Apennino regions was apparently dispatched by the German High Command to Army Group “B” on 27 Jul 43 in a list of tasks which included the item:

... Reconnoitring and preparations for the development and occupation of the Apennine position.

(981SOM.(D79F), “The Italian Campaign”, *op cit*, Chap 4, p. 14)

According to the same source this work at that time was being carried out by H.Q. 51 Mtn Corps (*ibid*).

63. When Army Group “B” (Rommel’s Headquarters) was moved to France late in November 1943, Marshal Kesselring, on 21 Nov 43, assumed control of the whole German sphere in the Italian theatre of war (H.S. Report No. 18, para 105) and thereby became responsible for the further development of the Apennine defences. Not a great deal was done in this respect until after the landing at Anzio, when Fourteenth Army was moved to the front, and Armeegruppe v. Zangen was created for the purpose of guarding the Italian coast north of the line Cecina – Porto Recanati. On 24 Jan 44 Kesselring directed Armeegruppe v. Zangen:

To carry on with the utmost energy the construction work on the Apennine position and on the coastal fronts.

(H.S. Report No. 20, para 25)

64. Retarded by difficulties of procurement and handicapped by other factors, construction work proceeded in somewhat leisurely fashion until 2 Jun 44, when the breaching of the Caesar Line and the imminent fall of Rome impelled the German High Command to issue a comprehensive order for the accelerated development of the Gothic Line (H.S. Report No. 24, paras 27 – 30). In German records this order was frequently referred to as “The Gothic Order”. A

photostatic copy and a translation of this document have appeared as Appendix “E” to H.S. Report No. 24.

65. Kesselring’s order for the reconnoitring and preparation of a second line (Green Line II) about 15 – 20 km behind Green Line I, was issued on 3 Jul 44 (G.M.D.S. – 61438/6, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx vol 28e, Green Line, Misc Docs) (Photostat 981A10.(D242)). The last general order of O.B.SW in connection with work on the Gothic defences was issued on 11 Aug 44:

Work on the Green Line – including the depth of the position – must be furthered in such a manner as to make the position fully ready for occupancy as of 1 Sep 44. Whether the line will be occupied before or after 1 Sep depends on the situation. O.B.SW.

(Ibid, Ops 5593/94, 11 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D243))

66. The scope of the work done by 28 Aug 44 in Tenth Army’s portion of the Gothic defences was shown in a report to O.B.SW on 3 Sep 44 (G.M.D.S. – 61438/6, Tenth Army, W.D.8, vol 28f of Appx, Green Line, Misc Docs, item dated 3 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D248)). According to this document the situation in this respect was as follows:

Type of Installation	Completed	Under Constr	Projected
Nests of Resistance	10	2	-
Machine Gun Positions	2,375	272	89
Circular Emplacements for M.G.	73	3	-
Armoured Machine Gun Nests	16	-	-
Tank Gun Turrets (1 & 2 cm guns)	18	15	13
Panther Turrets	4	18	7
Italian Tanks in Fixed Positions	8	-	-
Atk Gun, Mortar & Aslt Gun Positions	479	131	45
Shelters	2,267	706	167
Shelters, Mined	90	26	2

Type of Installation	Completed	Under Constr	Projected
Caves	27	21	-
“O.T.” Steel Shelters	-	22	-
Infantry Observation Posts	153	40	8
Small Dugouts and Shelters	1,201	115	31
Connecting Trenches (metres)	1,253	-	-
Artillery Observation Posts with Shelter	166	12	4
Artillery Positions	119	5	-
Shelters for Crews or Ammunition in above	119	20	-
Attack Ditches (metres)	8,944	-	-
Attack Wall (metres)	160	-	-
Number of “T” Mines laid	72,517	-	-
Miscellaneous Obstacles	2	-	-
Prepared Positions for Bazookas	2	-	-
Number of “S” Mines laid	23,172	-	-
Wire Obstacles (metres)	114,170	13,570	27,200
Trip Wire Enganglements (metres)	3,200	-	-
Riflemen’s Positions (Trees & Branches)	16,006	-	-
Defensive Flame-throwers	-	9	-
Roads Constructed (metres)			

Type of Installation	Completed	Under Constr	Projected
	53,209	2,500	-

(Ibid)

67. In connection with the Green Line, photostatic copies of the following German documents are being retained:

- 981AZ.(D37) (Introduced in H.S. Report No. 24, para 27)  
 Armeegruppe v. Zangen Construction Sectors of Gothic Line from Adriatic to Tyrrhenian Sea 7 May 44  
 (G.M.D.S. – 64839/8, W.D. Armeegruppe v. Zangen)
- 981A10.(D244) Tenth Army August 1944  
 Final Course of Green Lines I and II in area of Tenth Army (traced on British map 1:100,000 by Cartographic Sub-Section DHS)  
 (G.M.D.S. – 61438/5, Tenth Army, W.D.8, vol 28e of Appx, Green Line, Misc Docs)
- 981A10.(D245) Fourteenth Army August 1944  
 Successive Defence Lines from Heinrich (Arno) Line to Green Line in area of Fourteenth Army  
 (G.M.D.S. – 62241/3, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 4, sit maps, trace from German master map)
- 981A10.(D246) Tenth Army 2 Jul 44  
 Green Line I – Adriatic Sector (Trace 1:250,000) Anti-tank Installations, Tank Gun Turrets and Armoured Machine Gun Nests (completed, under construction and projected) as at 2 Jul 44  
 (G.M.D.S. – 61438/5, Tenth Army, W.D.8, vol 28e of Appx, Green Line, Misc Docs, item 17)
- 981A10.(D247) Headquarters Gen of Engr Bessel 4 Aug 44  
 Location of Panther Turrets, Tank Gun (2 cm) Turrets and Circular Machine Gun Emplacements in area of Tenth

Army (Trace 1:100,000)

(G.M.D.S. – 61438/6, Tenth Army, W.D.8, vol 28 of Appx, Green Line, Misc Docs, 4 Aug 44)

68. At the time of the actual fighting there, the Green Line on the north shore of the Foglia river proved to be less formidable than had been anticipated. Apart from and in addition to the fruits derived from the bravery and superior morale of the men of Eighth Army, this situation was a product of the tactical surprise achieved and of the devastating bombardments of the minefields and prepared defences from the air. To the fighting troops the relatively easy beaching of the German Main Defence Line however meant merely that what had been expected to be an attack on a bitterly defended line, would now turn into an equally bitter creeping battle over an area twenty kilometres in depth, in a series of operations which in the aggregate might well be called the “Battle of Rimini”.

#### The Breakthrough (30 Aug – 1 Sep)

30 Aug

69. The location of the approaching German reserves at midnight 29/30 Aug was shown in para 58 above. By the morning of 30 Aug the battalions which had been earmarked for immediate commitment had reached the front. In succession from the right, 1 Bn 9 Pz Gren Regt was at Belvedere, next was 2 Bn 67 Pz Gren Regt<sup>33</sup>, then 1 Bn 67 Pz Gren Regt astride Montecchio and to the divisional boundary a few hundred yards east of that locality. From the divisional boundary to Osteria Nuovo and at Borgo S. Maria the Canadian units faced 1 and 2 Bns 4 Para Regt. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/20, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 30 Aug – 8 Sep, sit map 30 and 31 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D249)). The section of this map showing the dispositions of 76 Pz Corps appears in photostatic form as Appendix “H” to this report.

70. On the occasion of the morning report Wentzell told Roettinger that 26 Pz Div was now in command of the sector adjoining 1 Para Div (G.M.D.S. – 61437/8, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 26-31 Aug, Appx 663, tel cons 30 Aug 44) (Photostat 081A10.(D205)). During the morning nothing alarming had occurred at the front, and the Chiefs of Staff expressed satisfaction over this gain of time. It was hoped that a breakthrough might be prevented just as had been done in the initial defence operations at Cassino. Wentzell nevertheless felt increasingly certain that a general offensive in the direction of Rimini was impending, and he continued his telephonic campaign for more reserves at the cost of accepting a risk further up the coast. He argued that the current developments in the Adriatic sector would, during the next two weeks, have a decisive influence on the whole course of the Italian campaign, and that forces here, there and everywhere constituted a dispersion at a time when concentration of forces was indicated. He was not very successful in this quest however, and Roettiger stated repeatedly that the Army Group was unable to accept the risk suggested (*ibid*).

71. During the latter part of the day it was learned that 2 Pol Corps, 1 Cdn Corps and 5 Brit Corps were nibbling at the Main Defence Line and were obviously in a mood to push ahead. At

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<sup>33</sup> This battalion participated in the defence of Montecchio on 31 Aug (see para 74 below).

2305 hrs Wentzell told Roettiger that it did not yet look like a set-piece attack; but just as the Germans would do under similar circumstances, the orders given were apparently to follow up or get set for an attack according to the resistance encountered. Roettiger in reply could only say that he hoped 29 Pz Gren Div would be available in the rear area of 76 Pz Corps by 4 Sep (ibid).

72. In connection with the developments on the Adriatic wing of the Army Group, Fourteenth Army on 30 Aug received orders to speed up the disengagement of 29 Pz Gren Div irrespective of the belated arrival of 334 Inf Div, and to transfer 20 G.A.F. Div to the Adriatic coastal zone as an Army Group reserve, the advance elements to depart in the evening of 31 Aug irrespective of the time of arrival of the relieving formations of 42 Jg Div from the area of the Ligurian Army. (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 30 Aug 44)

73. On 30 Aug the big planning conference (para 38 above) in connection with a possible withdrawal behind the River Po was held at the headquarters of Tenth Army. All bridges across the Po had been destroyed by Allied air attacks, and the crossing of the river with large forces under worsening circumstances would require careful planning. The basic plan for a timed programme for this operation, aptly called “Autumn Fog” (Herbstnebel), was preserved by Tenth Army and is being retained in photostatic form (981A10.(d310)). (G.M.D.S. – 61437/8, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 26-31 Aug, Appx 662, 30 Aug 44).

### 31 Aug

74. The successful penetration of the Gothic Line (Green Line I) on this day by the divisions of the Eighth Army created a highly critical situation; caused alarm and consternation amongst the ranking German officers, and forced Army Group to a belated revision of its reserved attitude regarding the bringing up of all possible reserves within its grasp. The description of the day’s tactical developments is being quoted below from the Main War Diary of Tenth Army:

#### 31 Aug 44 Tactical Situation:

##### 51 Mtn Corps:

Following the planned withdrawals only artillery and patrol activity. Own artillery harasses enemy tank and vehicle traffic.

##### 76 Pz Corps:

After carrying out an extremely strong concentration of his forces at the front of 71 Inf Div, 26 Pz Div and 1 Para Div, the enemy undertakes a new large-scale attack. Despite the massed commitment by the enemy of tank, fighter-bomber and bomber formations, our own division succeed in preventing the breakthrough to Riccione.

In detail: In the sector of 278 Inf Div an attempted enemy breakthrough is halted 1 km south of Pieve di Cagna by the fire of our own artillery and heavy infantry weapons.

71 Inf Div, which has been engaged in heavy fighting for the last ten days, succeeds in halting the attack of an enemy division. After repulsing several, for the enemy very costly attacks on Monte Calvo, with air, artillery and tank support, the locality is given up and the enemy, who is advancing to the East, is stopped in the depth of the main battle line. Apart from the penetration area of the previous day at Belvedere, the enemy also advances northwards at the joint between 26 Pz Div and 1 Para Div. One battalion was encircled at Belvedere after fighting off several attacks. After having expended all their ammunition, elements of this battalion succeeded in making their way back to our own lines. The enemy, who temporarily penetrated Mondaino, was forced back by an immediate counter-attack.

26 Pz Div: This division too, which was rushed to the area only a few days ago, standing today at the focal point of the fighting, and succeeds in hard fighting in stemming the enemy advance on both its wings. After several night attacks the enemy succeeds in advancing to height 231 (2.5 km E Mondaino). The height is retaken in a counter-attack but lost again in the morning hours after fierce fighting. On the other hand it was possible to seal off the penetration on the left neighbour's front and thus prevent the necessity of a withdrawal there to the Northeast. An additional enemy attack shortly before 1600 hours at il Gereto (3 km ESE Mondaino) is halted by artillery fire. Also at Montecchio the enemy attacks in the afternoon with strong armoured formations. 2 Bn 67 Pz Gren Regt at first makes good progress in a counter-attack, but later is forced back to the North by superior force.

1 Para Div: The enemy, who has made a break-in at Montecchio with about 100 tanks, is lunging into the deep flank of 4 Para Regt. After some single tanks, which have advanced farther north, have been disabled by our fire, the enemy veers off in a south-easterly direction. At the same time the enemy is attacking with about 40 tanks at Borgo S. Maria. He obtains a penetration of 1 km depth. The fighting in the eastern part of Pesaro continues during the whole day. The main battle line is under fire from 10 enemy naval units on the height of Pesaro.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 31 Aug 44)

75. The true significance of the dry words in the tactical report was of course that the Canadian Corps had penetrated deeply into the German main defence line. The synopsis of the day's telephone conversations in Tenth Army's Main War Diary opened with the statement:

Discussion of the situation on the left wing of the Army (the enemy is in the Green Line). Time and again the situation is being described as very grave, as immediate commitment of reserves which have just arrived makes it barely possible to seal off the enemy



penetrations. All reserves (elements of 98 Inf and 26 Pz Div) are brought forward, and the artillery is sharply concentrated. In the afternoon the Army requests from Army Group the retention and concentration in the area of Cesena of 100 Mtn Jg Regt (the regiment of 5 Mtn Div still in the Army area). The Army Group consents.<sup>34</sup>...

(Ibid)

76. The retention of 100 Mtn Jg Regt in the Cesena area made it possible to cancel the exchange of 71 Inf Div for 98 Inf Div. 71 Inf Div (less 211 Gren Regt, which had already been relieved) remained at the front. During the day 98 Inf Div was placed under the command of 76 Pz Corps, and in its place Corps Witthoeft was assigned 100 Mtn Jg Regt and 211 Gren Regt (ibid). According to the daily situation report of the Army, 290 Gren Regt was placed under command of 71 Inf Div on arrival at the front; 9 Pz Gren Regt (less 1 Bn already committed), 26 Pz Recce Bn, 2 and 3 Bn 93 Pz Arty Regt, and the mass of 93 Engr Bn reached their Division during the day. (At 1550 hrs Wentzell told Kesselring that 26 Pz Div was complete: *op cit*, tel cons). Also during this day 1 Bn 4 Pz Regt (previously in Corps reserve) was placed under command of 1 Para Div (G.M.D.S. – 61437/8, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 26-31 Aug, Appx 683, sit rep 31 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D209)).

46. Fourteenth Army, which during the night 30/31 Aug had withdrawn to the Hansi Line, received orders to continue its withdrawal during the following night. The Main War Diary of the Army bears the following entry:

During night 31 Aug/1 Sep the Army withdraws to the Green Line forefield – Emma Line. This movement to be carried out even in the absence of enemy pressure in order to disengage 29 Pz Gren Div.

At 1200 hrs 31 Aug Roettiger had telephoned Fourteenth Army to accelerate the disengagement of 29 Pz Gren Div in view of the threatening situation arising at the front of the neighbouring Army (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 31 Aug 44).

47. General v. Vietinghoff spent most of the day at the headquarters of 76 Pz Corps, 71 Inf Div, 26 Pz Div and 1 Para Div. According to his notes the Corps Commander had stated the reasons for the quick enemy penetrations in the following order:

- (50) 26 Pz Div not yet acquainted with its positions.
- (51) Numerical weakness of 71 Inf Div.
- (52) Great enemy superiority in artillery and aircraft.
- (53) Strength of enemy armoured forces.
- (54) Partial destruction of minefields by enemy bombers.
- (55) Alleged failure of mines to detonate.

A note regarding the Panther turrets in the sector of 1 Para Div indicates that some received their first supply of ammunition during night 30/31 Aug, and that others had not been completed at

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<sup>34</sup> A good deal of interesting detail regarding the day's events and decisions appear in the record of telephone conversations (28 pages). (G.M.D.S. – 61437/8, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 26-31 Aug, Appx 686, tel cons 31 Aug 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D205)). On this day, for instance, Heidrich, who had been vainly sought by Army Group, was reached on the telephone in Dresden by Wentzell and apparently condescended to promise his immediate return to his troops.

that time. The Army Commander's notes on this visit are being retained in photostatic form (ibid, Appx 685) (Photostat 981A10.(D250)).

1 Sep

79. During the night 31 Aug/1Sep, and all day on 1 Sep, the Canadian units worked and fought their way forward and finally emerged at the far side of the Gothic Line (Green Line I). In contrast to the bland and polished terminology of the Main War Diary, the day's telephone conversations were studded with expressions of dismay and better disappointment over the quick loss of the prepared line; the next best thing now would be to withdraw quickly and to organize the divisions and new reserves for a more effective stand in a shorter line further north (G.M.D.S. – 61437/9, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 1-3 Sep, Appx 706, tel cons 1 Sep 44). Marshal Kesselring spent part of the day at the headquarters of Tenth Army. Apparently he admitted having reacted too slowly to the developing threat (see para 81 below) and was most anxious to take every possible step to halt the Eighth Army at the next line suitable for defence.

80. The tactical developments of the focal points of the fighting were reflected in the Main War Diary of Tenth Army by the following entries:

26 Pz Div: At 1300 hrs the enemy begins his attack, with the focal points on both sides of the road fork 3 km east of M. Gridolfo and on M. Marrone. With very strong artillery support, and committing ground-attack aircraft, at about 1400 hrs he succeeds in penetrating the main line of resistance at the road junction referred to, with about 50 tanks. But the advance is brought to a halt, with eight enemy tanks put out of action. At the same time, however, the enemy succeeds in surrounding M. Marrone by an enveloping attack from the Northeast, and in wiping out the defenders after several hours of fighting.

At approximately 1500 hrs the enemy advances afresh from the penetration area east of M. Gridolfo. By strong defensive action, effectively supported by our artillery, the attack is again brought to a halt, and by a local withdrawal, the enemy's plans for envelopment are defeated. Further pressure against the left divisional flank is successfully countered by our artillery.

1 Para Div: During the early morning the enemy continues his attacks from the penetration area, supported by tanks and air formations combined with artillery fire, the focal point being at Tavullio<sup>35</sup>, and Pieve (3 km northeast thereof). Heavy fighting develops for Tavullio in particular. After fierce fighting and almost complete annihilation of the garrison, the height 1.5 km to the East had to be abandoned. The fierceness of the fighting is shown by the fact that in the sector of 4 Para Regt alone, 30 tanks were destroyed and five more put out of action by gunfire.

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<sup>35</sup> Tavullio and Tomba di Posaro are one and the same locality. Allied maps show Tomba di Posaro, German maps Tavullio, a name which is locally used at the present time (903.003(D2), Italy, Topo Notes, p. 21). German records show misspellings in the form of Tavullo and Tavollo.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 11 Sep 44)

48. The “Final Appreciation of the Day” began with the words:

The Army continues to be concerned about the development on the Adriatic (The Field Marshal admits that he recognized the “centre of gravity” developing here too late). The enemy has not achieved any major breakthrough, but a moderate withdrawal movement on the Army’s left wing cannot be avoided. Losses in men and anti-tank weapons are making themselves felt. ...

(Ibid)

From a telephone conversation between Wentzell and Roettiger at 1325 hrs it appears that in the morning, when he was at the headquarters of Tenth Army, Marshal Kesselring had changed his mind regarding the employment of 100 Mtn Jg Regt (5 Mtn Div), and instead of leaving it with Corps Whitthoeft had decided to commit the three battalions as quickly as possible. At the same time it was also decided to move 85 Recce Bn (5 Mtn Div) and 1 Bn 95 Arty Regt (5 Mtn Div) from the Cesena area to the South for commitment under the command of 76 Pz Corps. Wentzell remarked that all the Army’s transport was engaged in bringing forward to Green Line II the two last regiments of 98 Inf Div, and that the elements from 5 Mtn Div would come too late for intervention in the current fighting (op cit, tel cons). During the day Fourteenth Army received orders to rush one battalion (15 cm smoke-shell mortars) of 56 Proj Regt to Tenth Army; and Forli was not designated as the concentration area for 29 Pz Gren Div. (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 1 Sep 44)

#### Exploitation to the Conca River (2 Sep)

2 Sep

82. Authority to withdraw the left wing of Tenth Army – if unavoidable – to the line: Foglia River 3 km west-south-west of Auditore – Calfabbro (700 m north-north-east of Tavoletto) – west of Monte Maggiore – east of Morciano – 2 km west of Cattolica, had been given by O.B.SW in an operation order dispatched at 0350 hrs 2 Sep (G.M.D.S. – 61437/9, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 1-3 Sep, Appx 723, 2 Sep 44) (Photostat and Translation 981A10.(D253)). The advance during the day of the Canadian spearheads to Gradara, Fanano and San Giovanni forced 1 Para Div to withdraw quickly from the coastal area between the Foglia and Conca rivers. According to the Main War diary of Tenth Army the left wing of 26 Pz Div at 1700 hrs obtained a defensive success against one battalion and 30 tanks at about 1.5 km south-west of S. Maria Pietrafitta. But the entry continues:

**1 Para Div: Since early morning the enemy continues his armoured attacks with great impetus on the general axis of Cattolica. As a result of the self-sacrificing defence of the strongpoints S.M. Pietrafitta, S. Giovanni, Tavollo<sup>36</sup> and Gradara, the**

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<sup>36</sup> See footnote to para 80 above.

enemy breakthrough is at first prevented. Defensive operations are continued until 3 and 1 Para Regts (less H.Q. 1 Bn 1 Para Regt and elements of one company from this regiment) have made good their withdrawal to the North. The mass of the artillery and of the mortar battalion succeeds in reaching the new sector, but due to their immobility, a number of anti-tank guns and heavy anti-aircraft guns were lost.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, 2 Sep 44)

The “Final appreciation of the Day” in the same source reads:

On the third day of the great offensive, British Eighth Army tries to force a quick breakthrough to Cattolica with a strong spearhead, and to cut off 76 Pz Corps’ left wing. Despite heavy commitment of manpower and materiel the enemy is foiled in this respect by the stubborn resistance of the strongpoint garrisons, above all in the sector of 1 Para Div and by the excellent cooperation of all arms. The enemy suffers heavy losses, and today, according to reports received up to now, has lost 55 tanks, of which many were destroyed by artillery. After 1 Para Div has succeeded in extricating itself from the threatened envelopment, and in forming a new defence front at Riccione, O.B.SW orders expressly that there is to be no further withdrawal, but defence at all costs, above all in order to gain time for the reinforcements to arrive. On the strength of an intercepted radio conversation, which permits the assumption of an overtaking landing, and of reports of vessels seen off the coast, during the night O.B.SW orders Alarm Stage II for the coastal sector.

(Ibid)

83. The new line ran from immediately north of Tavoletto – Saleduccio – west of Cattolica. According to the record of telephone conversations the exact situation in the sector of 1 Para Div was not known at higher headquarters during the day, but: “In the evening the report was received of their arrival to form a new defence line at Riccione” (ibid, German synopsis of tel cons). 4 Para Regt was not mentioned for the reason that it had virtually ceased to exist. Of various references in this respect, the following is cited.

Casualties of 1 Para Div not yet ascertained; in case of 4 Para Regt over 70%.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/9, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 1-3 Sep, Appx 720, Daily sit rep Tenth Army, 2 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D252))<sup>37, 38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Much additional information on the day’s operations appears in the records of telephone conversations (G.M.D.S. – 61437/9, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 722, tel cons 2 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D251)). A study of these conversations requires the use of Tenth Army’s situation map for 1 and 2 Sep 44 (G.M.D.S. – 61437/20, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit map 1 and 2 Sep) (Photostat Adriatic sector: 981A10.(D254)). Particular attention must be paid to the fact that the discussions with Army Group were based on the code then in force for map 1:200,000 (squares and reference points entered by hand in blue on this map), whereas for the discussions with Corps the original printed numbers for squares and reference points on this map were used. In addition to this the numbers of the large squares had been changed recently, and old or new numbers were being used indiscriminately by the various speakers.

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<sup>38</sup> As the different formations were usually identified by stating the name of the commanding officer, the perusal of the records of telephone conversations requires knowledge of the following additional personal names:

**CRASEMANN**, Eduard Peter, Maj-Gen, Comd 26 Pz Div (Experienced divisional commander; commanded 15 Pz Div in Africa for some months)

**CRISOLLY**, Comd 20 G.A.F. Div

**v. HEYGENDORFE**, Ralph Karl, Maj-Gen, Comd 162 (Turc) Inf Div (Russian speaker, linguist, previously with German Embassy at Moscow; irreplaceable as commander of this particular division; fair soldier)

**DOSTLER**, Anton, General, Comd Venetian Coast  
(Not a top flight officer)

**POLACK**, Dr. Fritz, Maj-Gen, Comd 29 Pz Gren Div (High decoration for work in Sicily as commander of a battle group from 29 Pz Gren Div)

**REINHARDT**, Alfred, Lt-Gen, Comd 98 Inf Div (A brigade commander at Russian front earlier in the war)

Note: "Fries" or "old Fries" refers to 29 Pz Gren Div, previously commanded by Lt-Gen Walter Fries; "Luettwitz" or "old Luettwitz" refers to 26 Pz Div, previously commanded by Lt-Gen Freiherr Smilo v. Luettwitz)

84. According to the same situation report, at the end of the day headquarters 26 Pz Div were located at Ospedaletto (3 km north-west of Coriano), and headquarters 1 Para Div in the area between S. Lorenzo and S. Fortunato. Regarding the build-up of the defending forces the following locations were reported (as at midnight 2/3 Sep):

**76 Pz Corps**

**100 Mtn Jg Regt (loss 3 Bn) near Torre la Tomba (between S. Martino dei Molini and Corpolo, on road to Rimini)**

**3 Bn 100 Mtn Jg Regt SW Montaletto (near Cesenatico)**

**85 Recce Bn committed on right wing 71 Inf Div**

**98 Inf Div:**

**289 Gren Regt in area 4 km NW Saludeccio**

**98 (Div) Fus Bn committed on left wing 71 Inf Div**

**117 Gren Regt:**

**1 Bn in area 4 km NW Clemente**

**2 Bn near Bordonchio (on coastal road)**

**Corps Witthoeft**

**Blocking Group 162 (Turc) Inf Div in Riccione – Misano area.**

**29 Pz Gren Div:**

**Reinforced 71 (mech) Gren Regt near Imola**

**Elements 129 Tk Bn near Bologna**

**2 Bn 15 (mech) Gren Regt – 10 km south of Bologna 313 GHQ Anti-Aircraft Bn with two batteries between Bologna and Imola**

**One engineer company – 10 km south of Bologna**

**(Ibid)**

**From the Conca to the Marano (Coriano Ridge)**

**(3-14 Sep)**

**3 Sep**

85. With the weather still favourable, and the German lines not yet fully reinforced and stabilized, 1 Cdn Corps made important gains in bitter fighting, without however achieving the hoped-for breakthrough to Rimini. In German eyes the day was a critical one. It was felt that the storm had to be weathered for this day and that the situation would then be eased during the night by the arrival of 71 Pz Gren Regt at the important Coriano feature behind the joint of 26 Pz Div and 1 Para Div. The German senior commanders were then of the opinion that the advance of the Eighth Army could be brought to a halt and that a

stalemate might ensue. In keeping with the importance which the day's developments had assumed in their minds, and no doubt with an eye to their own stature in the eyes of history, the highest ranking commanders couched their talks in meticulously chosen words, which were recorded with unusual care (G.M.D.S. – 61437/9, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 1-3 Sep, Appx 745, tel cons 3 Sep 44; 39 pages). Of particular interest is the conversation at 2335 hrs between Wentzell and Roettiger, in which Wentzell reported in great detail on the situation he had encountered on the occasion of his several inspection and morale-building trips during the day to the headquarters of 76 Pz Corps, 1 Para Div, 26 Pz Div and 98 Inf Div. The uninspired performance of 1 Para Div, where the regiments had lost contact with one another and had committed various tactical blunders, was blamed on the absence of Heidrich; Colonel Schulz (the commander of 1 Para Regt, and at that time the division's deputy commander) was described as a brave man, incapable however of equalling Heidrich's performance. Crasemann was described as lacking in the firm will to stand to the last, and his division was admonished to live up to its past traditions; 98 Inf Div on the other hand seemed to be surprisingly effective and well led. The main hope of salvation at the moment rested on 29 Pz Gren Div and its able commander, who "under no circumstances was to be subordinated even temporarily to either one of its neighbouring divisions"<sup>39</sup>. 29 Pz Gren Div upon arrival was to be completely and unconditionally at the disposal of Tenth Army. Asking where he was going to commit reinforced 71 (mech) Gren Regt, Wentzell said: "Exactly in the sector 50 – 51 [Coriano Ridge]". The regiment was to be commanded directly and in person by the divisional commander and his own headquarters staff.<sup>40</sup> Reinforced 100 Mtn Jg Regt was ordered to occupy positions astride Gemmano in the sector adjoining the right flank of 26 Pz Div (ibid).

86. In view of the substantial changes which had taken place in the composition of Tenth Army since the launching of Eighth Army's offensive, a new "Schematic Order of Battle" was issued by the Army on 3 Sep. A photostatic copy of a translation of the document appear as Appendix "J" to this report (G.M.D.S. – 61437/9, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 1-3 Sep, Appx 752a, 3 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D255)). As set forth in preceding paragraphs, and as shown on the above-mentioned document, on 3 Sep 76 Pz Corps was composed of the following formations:

- 1 Para Div
- 26 Pz Div
- 29 Pz Gren Div (en route to the front)
- 71 Inf Div
- 98 Inf Div
- 278 Inf Div
- Reinforced 100 Mtn Jg Regt

In connection with the situation on 3 Sep, the following additional documents are being retained in photostatic form:

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<sup>39</sup> It will be noted that Pretzell in "The Battle of Rimini" (op cit) erroneously given 3 Sep as the date of 29 Pz Gren Div's intervention. According to all available evidence this event occurred on 4 Sep 44.

<sup>40</sup> The regimental commander was a new man; Polack on the other hand was an experienced artilleryman, had commanded 29 Pz Arty Regt in the early phases of the Italian campaign, and could be relied on in any situation requiring the expert use of the artillery.

981A10.(D256) 22 Flak Bde Sit map 3 Sep 44 (ibid)

981A10.(D257) Tenth Army. Notes of C. of S. on visits to Corps and divisional headquarters on 3 Sep 44 (ibid)

4 Sep

49. From Riccione Marina at the coast to the western slope of M. Gallero, on 4 Sep 1 Cdn Corps faced the following forces:

4 Para Regt (remnants)  
Blocking Group from 162 (Turc) Inf Div  
3 Para Regt  
117 Gren Regt (98 Inf Div)  
1 Para Regt

This aggregation was under the command of General Heidrich, who had rejoined his division during the day. Behind 4 Para Regt, astride Route No. 16, was one company of tiger tanks; astride Coriano was 71 Gren Regt 29 Pz Gren Div. The location of the various formations was recorded on Tenth Army's situation map for 3 and 4 Sep 44. The Adriatic section of this map appears in photostatic form as Appendix "K" to this report. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/20, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 30 Aug – 8 Sep, sit map 3 and 4 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D258))

**88. Apparently believing in the imminent stabilization of the situation, Marshal Kesselring spent the day at the newly opened tactical headquarters of Fourteenth Army at Vignola (25 km west –north-west of Bologna). On the front of Fourteenth Army the day was completely uneventful (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 4 Sep 44). In the evening however, when he returned to his own headquarters, Kesselring learned that the armoured spearheads of 1 Cdn and 5 Brit Corps were threatening to envelop the Coriano Ridge. In the Main War Diary of Tenth Army the day's fighting was summarized as follows:**

**26 Pz Div: ... Following heavy artillery preparation renewed enemy attacks in the afternoon in northwesterly direction resulted in an enemy penetration 1 km southeast of Passano. From there the enemy attempts to advance to Coriano; heavy fighting is still in progress.**

**1 Para Div: Following a concentric attack, M. Gallera has been lost. The enemy advances to 1.5 km east of Coriano. Immediate counter-attacks collapse in the fire of artillery and ground-attack aircraft. Indeed, the enemy succeeds in driving our badly depleted formations farther back to the road-forks 1.5 km ENE Coriano and 1 km WSW C. Serra. The enemy also penetrates S.M. di Scacciano where house-to-house fighting takes place. Bitter fighting goes on all day for the road-fork 1 km north of S.M. di Scacciano.**



(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 4 Sep 44)

89. The reports submitted to the Marshal in his return were confused and contradictory; nobody seemed to be able to give any definite information, and in addition General Herr now appeared to entertain thoughts of further withdrawal. The Marshal seemed to sense that all that had been done would be of no avail; his mounting exasperation culminated in a towering rage in which he threatened to replace corps and divisional commanders unable to envisage operations other than those of withdrawal. To make matters worse, during the day General Warlimont<sup>41</sup> had appeared at the headquarters of the Army Group and asked Roettiger whether the enemy could be driven back in a counter-attack. Roettiger replied that the Army Group would be happy indeed if it succeeded in stemming the enemy's advance. How much this episode contributed to the Marshal's vexation cannot be ascertained; tactical developments had certainly not come up to expectations; in part at least the scene however is sure to have been a bit of showmanship for the purpose of squeezing a maximum performance from all concerned. Prolonged "plain-talking" was carried on over the wires till far past midnight, when the even-tempered but ever subtle Army commander managed to calm down his disappointed chief by referring to the casualties borne by the troops; by stating that he knew of no man who could better Herr's performance, and by deftly introducing the name of Lemelsen into the conversation.<sup>42</sup> This was bound to remind the Marshal of the time when after a similar scene he had found himself confronted with the necessity of calling General Lemelsen to act as a temporary substitute for v. Vietinghoff.<sup>43</sup> (G.M.D.S. – 61437/10, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 4-7 Sep, Appx 768, tel cons 4 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D251))

90. In the Adriatic sector the assault formations of the Eighth Army were now operating in or had overrun the area, which on German maps was designated as Green Line II<sup>44</sup>. Unless the situation was stabilized without delay the loss of Rimini within the next few days was almost certain. On 5 Sep the full weight and density of the German reserves became effective and the Allied advance was blunted and its momentum lost.

5 Sep

91. According to the German records 98 Inf Div, 26 Pz Div, 29 Pz Gren Div, and 1 Para Div with the attached formations, all decisively assisted by the now very considerable artillery concentrations under the command of Colonel Bornscheuer (Arty Comd 76 Pz Corps) and Colonel Andreae (Comd 5 Proj Bde), obtained a hard-fought success by blocking the advance of Eighth Army at all critical points. During the day 44 Recce Bn (44 Inf Div) began moving to the Cesena area as the nucleus of a new Army reserve; 114 Recce Bn, which had been borrowed from 114 Jg Div, was moving to a blocking position extending inland from Abissinia (2 km south-west of Rimini); the rear elements of 29 Pz

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<sup>41</sup> WARLIMONT, Walter, Gen of Arty, Deputy Chief Armed Forces Operations Staff

<sup>42</sup> LEMELSEN, Joachim, Col-Gen, Comd Fourteenth Army, (see Hist Sec Report No. 24, para 8, et al)

<sup>43</sup> Hist Sec report No. 18, paras 89 and 90

<sup>44</sup> Course of Green Line II in area of Tenth Army:

Abissinia – S. Clemente – Gemmano – Sasso Feltrio – Monte Copiolo – 2 km N Mercatino – 2 km NE Sorbano – 2 km N S. Sofia – SW Portico – Marradi – M. Coloreta (5 km NE Firenzuola). (See para 67 above)

Gren Div, which had just reached the Cesena area, were ordered to the front; the efforts of 4 Para Regt astride the coastal road were overshadowed by the presence there of 1 Bn G.H.Q. Tk Regt and one company of Tiger Tanks (of 508 G.H.Q. Hy Tank Bn). For the time being the situation had now been stabilized (G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 5 Sep 44; 61437/10, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 4-7 Sep, Appx 789, sit rep 5 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D252)).

92. Reference has been made in Canadian accounts to the gallant fight put up by the Canadians at the coast on 5 Sep (Hist Sec Report No. 187, paras 167 and 168). Enemy opinions corroborate this evaluation. At 0920 hrs 6 Sep Generals Herr and v. Vietinghoff discussed the previous day's fighting near the coast:

v.V: 1 Para Div has Tigers and Panthers and reinforcements from 162 (Turc) Inf Div. No further withdrawal must take place.

H: The attack at the coast was stronger than it seemed (at first). Another division would not have survived the last heavy attack. ...

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/10, Tenth Army, W.D.8, APPX 4-7 Sep, Appx 816, tel cons 6 Sep 44)

6 Sep

93. Renewed Allied attacks in the Adriatic sector continued to meet with stiff resistance and the situation assumed the character of a stalemate. 29 Pz Gren Div and 1 Para Div made full use of their artillery components by harassing the leading elements of 1 Cdn Corps with fire concentrations from all weapons. According to 1 Para Div these tactics were particularly effective in the Riccione and Riccione Marina area, where fire was directed against armoured units in assembly positions. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 6 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D251)).

94. Abatement of the pressure now made it possible for the German commanders to examine measures for coping with the problems bound to arise from the certain resumption of the Allied offensive. During the past emergency, commanders at all levels had been unable to maintain a reasonable balance between fighting troops and reserves, and nothing, therefore, at the moment was more urgent than the formation of local reserves in order to ensure a return to sound operational practice. Marshal Kesselring was most insistent in this respect. His wishes were passed down the chain of command, and soon units and formations everywhere were occupied with the task of thinning out the front. Action was all the quicker for the reason that the great density of troops demanded deployment in greater depth in order to lessen the number of casualties from Allied bombardment. The numerous minor changes in dispositions which now ensued cannot be described in detail here. (Ibid)

95. Regarding the formation of an Army Group reserve the situation was far from satisfactory. This was due to the constant delays in the dispatch of 20 G.A.F. Div in consequence of the tardy arrival in small parties of the relieving 42<sup>nd</sup> Jaeger Division from Army Liguria. The first transport from 20 G.A.F. Div reached the concentration area of

Forlimpopoli on 6 Sep; subsequent transports however left the area of Fourteenth Army at irregular intervals, and the last substantial elements of the Division were sent on their way to O.B.SW as late as 16 Sep (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 6-16 Sep 44). An improvement in this respect within the reasonably near future was foreseen when it became known that 90 Pz Gren Div would be transferred to the area Ostiglia – Ponteno – Lentinara; one reinforced regimental group to be quartered south of the river Po, the balance north of it. (G.M.D.S. 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 6 Sep 44)

96. After several consultations with the Army commander (tel cons, op cit), Marshal Kesselring decided to abandon earlier plans for moving 44 Inf Div from 51 Mtn Corps to 76 Pz Corps, but instead at 1900 hrs told Fourteenth Army on the telephone that 356 Inf Div would have to move to the Adriatic sector<sup>45</sup>. He added that 16 S.S. Pz Gren Div might have to follow in due course. General Lemelsen did not fail to point to the dangers resulting from such a drain on his forces, and Kesselring in turn promised immediate help in the case of Fourteenth Army meeting with unexpected difficulties. (Plans for the transfer of 16 S.S. Pz Gren Div were dropped following the attack of Fifth Army at the centre of the Army Group) (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 6 Sep 44)).

#### 7 Sep

97. Activity in the sectors of the two German divisions nearest the coast was confined in the main to artillery duels. Keen fighting took place at the front of 71 Inf Div and 98 Inf Div; the latter reported the average strength of its battalions as having fallen below 100. 44 Recce Bn, which was moved in for the purpose of forming an Army reserve, now received orders to speed to the assistance of hard-pressed 98 Inf Div. During the day the Army commander called at the headquarters of the fighting divisions. All reported very heavy casualties; 1 Para Div, after throwing all its fresh and only partially trained reserves into the fray reported the following strengths:

1 Para Regt	862
3 Para Regt	370
4 Para Regt	153
Recce Coy	28

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/10, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 3-7 Sep, Appx 852, Notes on inspection tour by Army commander on 7 Sep 44) (981A10.(D259))

98. How to separate reserves from already badly depleted forces was the main subject of the day's discussions. In a telephone conversation with Kesselring at 2210 hrs, the Army commander described the situation in great detail. Several references to Canadian formations were made on this occasion:

v.V: ... The two old assault divisions are still up there [the Canadians at the coast]. According to uniform reports from 1 Para Div they must have suffered heavy casualties. But I am told that 5 Cdn Armd Div was excellent. They are both

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<sup>45</sup> Comd 356 Inf Div: FAULENBACH, Karl, Lt-Gen, (rated: "Average")

still up there, massed at the front of 1 Para Div and the left wing of 29 Pz Gren Div. ...

...

**K:** But 56 Brit Div and the Canadians are not fresh either.

**v.V:** That is true, but fundamentally, though not strong in numbers, the Canadians are right good soldiers. ...

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/10, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 4-7 Sep, Appx 853, tel cons 7 Sep, pages 8 and 11) (Photostat 981A10.(D251))

99. Situation maps showing the positions of 76 Pz Corps and 51 Mtn Corps on 9 Sep are being retained in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. – 61437/21, Tenth Army, sit maps 9-20 Sep 44) (Photostats 981A10.(D260) and (D261))

8 Sep

100. By the evening all six divisions of 76 Pz Corps had reported one battalion in reserve:

278 Inf Div	278 Fus Bn
71 Inf Div	85 Recce Bn
98 Inf Div	44 Recce Bn
26 Pz Div	26 Recce Bn
29 Pz Gren Div	1 Bn 15 (mech) Gren Regt
1 Para Div	3 Para Regt

The area immediately adjacent to the coast between the paratroopers and Rimini had still the additional protection of Blocking Group 162 (Turc) Inf Div (at Miramare) and 114 Recce Bn (at Abissinia, 2 km south-west of Rimini). Severe but inconclusive fighting took place at the front of 71 Inf Div and 98 Inf Div. Depleted 98 Inf Div had been strengthened in the meantime by the arrival of 117 Gren Regt, which had been withdrawn from 1 Para Div to rejoin its own division. In the absence of pressure Fourteenth Army (Main War Diary, op cit) and 51 Mtn Corps continued their gradual withdrawal. (G.M.D.S. 61437/11, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 8-10 Sep, Appx 877, sitrep Tenth Army for 8 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D252)).

9 Sep

101. On the right wing of 76 Pz Corps intensive fighting continued all day. 100 Mtn Jg Regt was placed under the command of 71 Inf Div; 114 Recce Bn was ordered from its blocking position at the coast to the support of 98 Inf Div; the unit reached the area of M. Calombo on 10 Sep. In the Main War diary of Tenth Army the situation was summarized as follows:

The first phase of the defensive battle is over. By shifting the point of main effort to the right the enemy is obviously trying to discover a weak spot and to force a breakthrough there. In spite of dwindling reserves the Army hopes to hold until the arrival of 356 Inf Div. Casualties on both sides are considerable. The situation must still be regarded as serious.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 9 Sep 44)

10 Sep

102. Apart from the steady pressure exerted by 5 Brit Corps on the centre of 76 Pz Corps the day was comparatively uneventful. Various signs now pointed to an early resumption of the full-scale attack. In the Main War Diary of Tenth Army the situation was described in the following words:

On 10 Sep too the enemy continues his attacks in the middle sector of the Corps, which is obstinately defended, heavy losses being inflicted on the enemy and local penetrations being cleaned up by prompt counter-attacks.

On the left wing the enemy is testing the front with strong assault detachments. Heavy enemy artillery fire with systematic surprise concentrations, sometimes directed by artillery ground observation aircraft, indicate that the enemy has finished moving up his artillery, preparatory to continuing the great offensive. Continuation of the heavy fighting for the heights of Gemmano must be expected.

As the stretch of railway line from Rimini – Bologna is being bombarded steadily and systematically by the enemy air force, entrainment of 356 Inf Div formations cannot take place on the section Imola – Forlimpopoli, and the Division is entirely dependent on marching.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 10 Sep 44)

103. On 10 Sep 76 Pz Corps was notified of the imminent arrival and placement under its command of 504 (G.H.Q.) Tank Bn and 590 (G.H.Q.) A.Tk Bn (recently equipped with new 8.8-cm A.Tk guns). Such increment was urgently required in view of the fact that during the recent fighting in the sector of 1 Para Div 1 Coy 525 (G.H.Q.) A.Tk Bn had been reduced to 2 Nashorns (Mark IV tanks with 8.8-cm A.Tk gun) and 2 assault guns (G.M.D.S. – 61437/11, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 8-10 Sep, Appx 946, 949, 953). In addition 3 Bn 56 Proj Regt was reported as being en route to 76 Pz Corps from Fourteenth Army (*ibid*, Appx 950). On 9 Sep, 2 Bn 242 Aslt Gun Bde, which had been operating in the sector of 1 Para Div, had reported itself as being in possession of only two serviceable assault guns, and on 10 Sep the unit was reported “withdrawn”. (*Ibid*, Appx 953)

104. Telephone conversations between Army Group and Fourteenth Army revealed an increasing reluctance on the part of Fourteenth Army regarding the transfer of additional forces to Tenth Army. The first sign of renewed Allied interest in the dormant sector was

noted on 10 Sep when strong Allied bomber formations carried out attacks in the Futa Pass area (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 10 Sep 44).

11 Sep

105. German forces in the coastal sector had now settled down in the positions in which they would meet the next attack. The divisional boundary between 26 Pz Div and 29 Pz Gren Div still ran through the western outskirts of the town of Coriano. Coriano and the front immediately west thereof was held by 15 (mech) Gren Regt (29 Pz Gren Div); the adjoining sector was held by 71 (mech) Gren Regt (29 Pz Gren Div); thence 1 Para div (with units under command) to the coast. West of Coriano was 67 Pz Gren Regt (26 Pz Div); to the right thereof 9 Pz Gren Regt (26 Pz Div). (G.M.D.S. – 61437/21, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 9-20 Sep, Sit map 11 and 12 Sep 44)

106. An approximate picture of the armoured and artillery strength of the two divisions nearest the coast is obtained from two documents prepared on 11 Sep:

Number of serviceable tanks and guns	29 Pz Gren Div	1 Para Div and units under comd
Mark IV	32	-
Tiger	-	11
Command	1	1
Nashorns (A.Tk)	-	2
Guns	12	7
Assault	-	4
Light	16	29
Heavy	5	2
		plus 3-15 cm Proj

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/12, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 11 – 14 Sep, Appx 971, Weekly Report of Tenth Army, 11 Sep for 10 Sep 44) Photostat 981A10.(D262), and Appx 972, Report of Senior Tank Officer Tenth Army for 11 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D263))

107. Apart from harassing fire on the main battle line and artillery positions, the two divisions on the extreme left did not report any developments of consequence. 278 Inf Div and 71 Inf Div repulsed local attacks. Headquarters 76 Pz Corps were moved to a point 1 km west of Pte Matatardo (halfway between Cesena and Gambettola). Progress was made in the concentration of 356 Inf Div in the area between Forlimpopoli and Gambettola. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/12, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 11-14 Sep, Appx 963, sit rep 11 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D252)). A Greek soldier was captured on the railway embankment at Riccione (*ibid*, Appx 961). 20 Fus Bn (20 G.A.F. Div) at Abissinia took over the blocking position previously occupied by 114 Recce Bn. Advance elements of 90 Pz Gren Div continued to arrive in the concentration area (*ibid*, Appx 962). In the day's telephone conversations Marshal Kesselring stressed the urgency of relieving 100 Mtn Jg Regt for

transfer to the Western Alps; with the commitment of 356 Inf Div the now pointless protuberance to the South at the inner wings of the two Corps would be given up in favour of shorter lines. Preparations of jumping-off positions during the night on the left wing were read as signs of an early resumption of the attack (ibid, Appx 967, tel cons 11 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D251)).

#### 12 Sep

108. Pressure now also developed on the right wing of 51 Mtn Corps. The centre and left wing of 76 Pz Corps were lying under a blanket of harassing fire from ground, sea and air. While this softening-up process was in progress, infantry activity near the coast remained confined to minor engagements (G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 12 Sep 44). In the telephone conversations reference was made to the Geek Brigade, which was said to operate between Canadian units. On the same day General Crisolly lost his life in an air attack and was replaced in the command of 20 G.A.F. Div by Maj-Gen Erich Frohnhoefer (G.M.D.S. – 61437/12, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 11-14 Sep, Appx 990, tel cons 12 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D251)). Fourteenth Army reported greatly increased Allied reconnaissance activity and the moving up to the front of enemy infantry, armour and artillery formations. Preparations were most intensive in the general area of the Futa Pass; less intensive near Pistoia (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 12 Sep 44). At Army Group it was felt that the Fifth American Army was on the move to join the general offensive (tel cons, op cit).

#### 13 Sep

109. Not altogether unexpectedly, but sooner than expected by the Germans, a new phase of the Battle of Rimini now opened with devastating bombardments, followed by violent assaults on the commanding features. S. Savino, Passano and Coriano were the focal points of the fighting, which led to dangerous penetrations, though not to a collapse of the front. Of the fighting in the sector of 29 Pz Gren Div, where Canadians fought for Coriano, the daily situation report of Tenth Army recorded the following:

29 Pz Gren Div: After hours of drumfire the enemy begins his attack at 0200 hrs. Four attacks on Coriano, each in at least battalion strength, and supported by from 5 – 10 tanks, are repulsed in heavy fighting for the time being. During the morning the enemy is continuously bringing up new forces and adds 130 tanks. In the early afternoon local penetrations north of Coriano are eliminated in a counter-attack in spite of violent artillery fire and continuous attack from the air. In a renewed attack supported by 30 tanks, the enemy again succeeds in breaking in. Enemy attacks from the penetration area at Coriano in a northerly direction. Fighting continues. 1.5 km east of 13439 (past Melo creek, NNW Coriano) an enemy infantry cum tank attack collapsed and three of five tanks, which had broken through are destroyed<sup>46</sup>. Since 1500 hrs renewed attacks at this point. In the evening a strong

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<sup>46</sup> Tenth Army's situation map for 13 and 14 Sep 44 is being retained in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. – 61437/21, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 9-20 Sep, sit map 13 and 14 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D264)).

**enemy attack, supported by tanks, on the left wing of the division. Heavy fighting still in progress. Considerable losses in men and materiel on our side; particularly heavy casualties on enemy side. Some prisoners were taken.**

**(G.M.D.S. – 61437/12, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 11 – 14 Sep, Appx 1010, sit rep Tenth Army, 13 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D252))**

50. In the day's telephone conversations an equal interest was shown in the developments at all pressure points. In view of the dearth of details from German sources on the fighting at Coriano, some pertinent remarks are being quoted below to show how the battle looked from the enemy's side:

1055 hrs      Wentzell – Roettiger

R:              So, it has started again.

W:              Yes, and it is Coriano apparently which he wants at all costs.

...

R:              What is your appreciation of the situation at the front of 76 Pz Corps?

W:              It remains to be seen; this is only the beginning. If he commits only one additional division we might master the situation. Including the tigers we have now about 100 tanks in the area.

...

1255 hrs      Wentzell - Roettiger

W:              The battle for Coriano seems to be going rather well. The whole of 29 Pz Gren Div has been committed, and our counter-measures are slowly making progress.

1820 hrs      Wentzell - Roettiger

W:              According to the latest report from Corps to Army the situation of 76 Pz Corps is not very good. North of the Croce the enemy has advanced to the North; S. Savino has been taken, and the nests of resistance there destroyed. It was an impossible concentration of artillery fire. Then he committed 90 tanks and not much could be done about it because he covered the whole area with a smoke-screen. Fighting continues at Passano, but unfortunately there is a small penetration again north of Coriano. Coriano is more or less surrounded by tanks on the North, East and South. We have tried to carry out a tank attack, but owing to the air



attacks it is impracticable. 29 Pz Gren Div alone lost 19 tanks, which were moving up to the front.

...

W: 1 Bn 15 Pz Gren Div is helping at Coriano. 1 Para Div has spread itself to the right as far as Ghetto.

...

... The artillery is being hindered by the enemy's air superiority, and when the artillery is silenced fighting becomes a murderous mess (Murkserei).

...

W: I thought there would be a greater pause; that he would come so soon one could not know. ...

2005 hrs Wentzell - Roettiger

W: ... Coriano is under attack from North, East and South. In the North the number of tanks has increased considerably during the afternoon. 150 have been reported, and they have advanced up to the Melo. That is the situation. ... Casualties are considerable; 15 Gren Regt has lost seven company commanders.

2035 and 2045 hrs v. Vietinghoff - Kosselring

K: I have just returned and heard the terrible news. Will you please inform me of the situation.

v.V: The depth of the penetrations cannot be ascertained with accuracy as yet. ... According to Herr two difficulties made themselves felt today. Firstly, the smoke-screens which prevented aimed fire; secondly, the enemy's policy of destroying all daylight counter-attacks from the air, so that reserves suffered great casualties. If the reserves are kept near the front they are decimated by the preparatory fire; if held further back they are dispersed by attacks from the air.

...

K: Roettiger tells me that in consequence of severe casualties the front has become very weak.

v.V: The front has been greatly weakened.

...

K: We must realize that tomorrow will be a day of great crisis.

v.V: We are certain of this; all day we have been racking our brains about how to help, but we have nothing left. ...

2305 hrs Wentzell - Roettiger

W: General Herr reports that the attack north of Coriano has been spreading out to the boundary of 1 Para Div.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/12, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 11-14 Sep, Appx 1015, tel cons 13 Sep 44)  
(Photostat 981A10.(D251))

111. From the German point of view the situation was particularly serious in view of the absence of immediately available reserves at a moment when some divisions had to be withdrawn lest they be bled beyond recovery. The concentration of 356 Inf Div, 20 G.A.F. Div and 90 Pz Gren Div had not reached a stage permitting effective commitment, nor was there certainty as to the point of greatest future Allied pressure. And the situation had now been further complicated by the launching of fifth Army's attack at the Futa Pass, where 1 Para Corps was engaged in heavy fighting. (tel cons, op cit)

112. On 13 Sep, at the request of Army Group, Tenth Army submitted an analysis of the tactical principles followed by the enemy in the recent fighting on the coast. This memorandum was based on a report received from Colonel Runkel, C. of S. 76 Pz Corps. Both documents are being retained in photostatic and translated form (G.M.D.S. – 61437/13, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 11-14 Sep, Appx 1022 and 1023, 13 Sep 44) (Photostats 981A10.(D265 and 266)). Though even in defeat the Germans were ever ready to criticize the tactics of the enemy, adverse comment was noticeably lacking in Runkel's remarks. Some of the more significant observations were:

... During the first days of the attack no hesitancy, but smart following-through after initial successes.

... Attacks launched at divisional boundaries.

... Enemy armoured formations, particularly Canadian tanks, no longer sensitive to artillery fire, but carry on even under heaviest fire concentrations.

(Ibid)

14 Sep

113. There was no let-up in the battle of attrition on this day, and the Germans lost further ground. During the day Marshal Kesselring insisted time and again on the disengagement of weakened formations; he said that the Army Group was responsible for a front of 1200 kms and could not invest its whole capital in a sector of 30 kms. Vietinghoff mentioned the importance of

the 30 kilometres involved; the difficulties of withdrawing troops at the height of battle, and the danger of losing the battle for want of men and materiel. The two commanders appreciated one another's point of view, but the cupboard was bare. The logical conclusion to be drawn from this remained unexpressed. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/12, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 11-14 Sep, Appx 1041, tel cons 14 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D251))

51. The views and decisions of the Army were recorded on this day with unusual care:

Today, with ceaseless commitment of aircraft, and of artillery, with an expenditure or ammunition far greater than ours (the enemy fired in all about 60,000 shells), the enemy continues his great offensive. Under the influence of the completely one-sided material superiority, and most of all the feeling of defencelessness against the enemy air force, the morale of the troops is deteriorating rapidly. Losses in men and materiel are considerable. Under these circumstances the enemy is able to force penetrations, which can be sealed off only by the utmost straining of our available forces.

Army Group is again pressing energetically for the relief of those formations which have been hardest hit (98 Inf and 71 Inf Divs and 100 Mtn Jg Regt, the latter for commitment at the Alpine front).

Making this possible and creating reserves at all costs is still the main problem of the Army. Orders for the following measures have been issued:

52. Relief of 98 Inf Div by 356 Inf Div.

53. Accelerated moving up of 20 G.A.F. Div to Santarcangelo. (Once it has reached that locality it will be decided whether to commit the division at the left wing or the centre)

54. 114 Jg Div's sector will again be extended and only strongpoints are to remain occupied. (O.B.SW refuses to accede to the Army's request for a thorough thinning out of the front and a change in the battle assignment of 51 Mtn Corps from defence to delaying action. Mobile reserves were to have been formed in the rear, which would have meant the freeing of one complete division)

55. Straightening of the front on the right wing of the Corps, and widening of the sector of 278 Inf Div to permit the disengagement of 71 Inf Div.

56. Moving up of battalions from 162 (Turc) Inf Div to the left wing.

In view of the extremely tense situation, at about midnight, O.B.SW orders the transfer of 90 Pz Gren Div to Forli as an Army reserve. The relief movements and the redistribution at the front mean fresh, though not numerically stronger forces at the front. The other measures can only take effect after some days. The situation on the morrow must therefore be regarded as definitely serious.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D., 8, 14 Sep 44)

Most alarming to the Germans was the situation east of Coriano, where Canadian spearheads had crossed the Marano River (tel cons, op cit). The daily situation report of Tenth Army mentioned bitter fighting in that area, but due to interrupted communications and continued fighting precise locations were not given. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/12, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 11-14 Sep, Appx 1037, sit rep Tenth Army, 14 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D252))

Fighting for S. Lorenzo in Correggiano and S. Martino (15 – 18 Sep)

15 Sep

115. Marshal Kesselring informed Tenth Army of the penetrations obtained by Fifth Army along the inter-army boundary in the sector of 4 Para Div. According to Lemelsen the situation was difficult. General v. Vietinghoff in turn described the in-roads on morale from the stunning bombardments. Kesselring said: “We have to consider withdrawal to the prepared positions of 162 (Turc) Inf Div. We cannot permit the troops to reach the point where moral resistance collapses. The whole wing may have to be taken back. The situation has developed unfavourably”. Wentzell told Roettiger that clearly discernible pressure in the direction of Rimini was causing concern. An improvement in the situation was hoped for from the impending arrival behind 1 Para Div of elements from 162 (Turc) Inf Div and 356 Inf Div. Again tomorrow the area S. Lorenzo – S. Martino would be the focal point. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/13, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 15-18 Sep, Appx 1069, tel cons 15 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D267))

116. In the daily situation report of Tenth Army for 15 Sep the events in the sectors of 29 Pz Gren Div and 1 Para Div were reflected by the following entries:

29 Pz Gren Div: Heavy fighting on the left wing of the Division continued all day. Penetrations obtained by the enemy (supported by 30 tanks) on the previous day in the area of S. Lorenzo were eliminated. In renewed attacks at 1200 hrs the enemy advanced to the church. After prolonged, bitter and fluctuating fighting, in which 71 Pz Gren Regt and 129 Recce Bn offered heroic resistance, the enemy, with 25 tanks and mounted infantry, captured the locality from the East. Further attacks from there towards the West and Northwest were repulsed in counter-attacks, which were very costly to our own troops. From the area east of S. Lorenzo the enemy advanced further on S. Martino and was stopped immediately north of S. Martino. Our garrison in the locality is carrying out all-around defence from positions near the church.

1 Para Div: Despite the enemy breakthrough on the road from Southeast to S. Martino, it was possible to remain in possession of the localities on both sides of the road 1.5 km SW S. Martino. Further strong attacks with tanks and infantry on southern tip of airfield (3 km ESE S. Martino) were repulsed. Renewed attacks are under way. Own artillery and mortars repeatedly dispersed the enemy in assembly positions 1.5 km south of C. Cicchetti.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/13, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 15-18 Sep, Appx 1063, sit rep Tenth Army, 15 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D252))

117. Tenth Army's records for 15 Sep included a series of casualty tabulations. For the period 26 Aug – 15 Sep 44 the divisions of 76 Pz Corps had reported a total of 14,604 casualties; 7,000 of these were listed as missing (presumably captured). The greatest number of casualties had been experienced by 98 Inf Div (4,338); next came 1 Para Div with 3,294 casualties. Since the beginning of September 1943 Tenth Army had reported a grand total of nearly 150,000 casualties. This total did not include the figures of Navy, Air Force, G.H.Q. troops, nor those of wounded or sick who remained with their units. For what they are worth, the tabulations are being retained in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. – 61437/13, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 15-18 Sep, Appx 1075, 1076, 1079, 15 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D268)).

#### 16 Sep

118. Fighting in the critical area of S. Lorenzo – S. Martino was intensive on 16 Sep, but inconclusive, and no substantial gains were made on this day and during the night 16/17 Sep by the Canadians there:

1 Para Div: In the afternoon the enemy continued his strong attacks in the direction of S. Martino, each time in battalion strength and supported by from 60 –70 tanks. Attacks carried out in successive waves were repelled with heavy casualties to the enemy. Local penetrations were eliminated in counter-attacks. Enemy reconnaissance operations in company strength along the Via Adriatica were stopped by combat outposts.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/13, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 15-18 Sep, Appx 1093, sit rep Tenth Army, 16 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D252))

119. Positions of 76 Pz Corps on 16 Sep were shown on a situation map, which is being retained in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. – 61437/21, Tenth Army, W.D.8, sit maps 9-20 Sep, 16 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D270a)). This map is of particular interest in that it shows the exact course of the Rimini Line, the third line of resistance in the Gothic system near the Adriatic coast. The main part of this map appears in photostatic form as Appendix "L" to this report (ibid: 981A10.(D270b)). A photostatic copy is also being retained of the situation map for 16 Sep of 51 Mtn Corps (ibid; (Photostat 981A10.(D271))).

120. As arranged on the previous day, Marshal Kesselring and his Chief of Staff spent part of the day at the headquarters of Tenth Army. The views expressed and the decisions made on this occasion were recorded by the Army in a memorandum. In essence the Marshal said that he anticipated considerable pressure from the enemy forces in the Florence region, but that the threat was of a minor nature in comparison with that from the strong forces on the Adriatic wing, where the enemy had committed his best formations and all of his air force in Italy for the breakthrough to the Plains of Lombardy. With all known enemy divisions committed, a strategical landing on the coast was not now to be expected, but tactical landings at Ravenna remained a possibility. At the request of Tenth Army its battle assignment was changed from defence to mobile warfare. This would permit the elimination of a wide and increasingly dangerous salient and in

consequence the early disengagement of 44 Inf Div for employment at future pressure points. A photostatic copy of this document is being retained. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/13, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 15-18 Sep, Appx 1097, 17 Sep for 16 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A01.(D269))

17 Sep

121. On the right wing and centre of the Army the day was characterized by relatively minor fighting; on the left wing however ceaseless attacks by 1 Cdn Corps and 5 Brit Corps failed to break the prevailing stalemate. The defence potential of 1 Para Div had been materially augmented by the commitment of 17 heavy anti-tank guns (8.8 cm) from 590 Hy G.H.Q. A.Tk Bn (ibid, Appx 1125, 17 Sep). On the other hand the defence had been hampered by the use of smoke pots, which had been dropped from Allied aircraft on that day for the first time in the Italian campaign (G.M.D.S. – 61437/2, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Intelligence Summary September, 17 Sep 44). From the sector of 29 Pz Gren Div the daily situation report of Tenth Army reported a series of defensive successes; events in the sector of 1 Para Div were summarized as follows:

A large concentration of enemy tanks in assembly positions southeast of the divisional boundary were dispersed by fire from artillery and mortars. Constant and heavy harassing fire fell on the left wing of 1 Para Div. In the afternoon too, the enemy persisted with great tenacity in his infantry cum tank attacks on S. Martino. Fighting lasted till 1900 hrs. The enemy was held off and nine of his tanks were destroyed. Casualties on both sides are high. Attacks farther east were also beaten off. At the moment a fresh attack is under way on the height about 1 km east of S. Martino. Lesser attacks in battalion strength astride the Via Adriatica and the coastal road have also been repulsed. Defence has been made more difficult by dense smoke screens in the fighting area. (Ibid, appx 1119, 17 Sep) (Photostat 981A10.(D252))

122. Although the attack of Fifth Army at the left wing of Fourteenth Army was obviously gaining momentum, Marshal Kesselring found it necessary to insist on the transfer to Tenth Army of the infantry Training Brigade, which had barely reached 1 Para Corps from the front of 14 Pz Corps. The Brigade was to move without delay to the area of Cesena for absorption by depleted 98 Inf Div (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, 17 Sep 44).<sup>47</sup> From the inter-army boundary 5 km south of Firenzuola to Sarzano (north-east of La Spezia) the following divisions were on the Army's front:

4 Para Div  
334 Inf Div  
362 Inf Div  
65 Inf Div  
42 Inf Div  
16 S.S. Pz Gren Div

A situation trace of the Army's positions on 17 Sep appears in photostatic form as Appendix "M" to this report. (G.M.D.S. – 62241/6, Fourteenth Army, W.D.4, Appx 30 Aug – 30 Sep, Appx 939, 17 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D272))

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<sup>47</sup> Due to changes in the situation this movement was not carried out (see para 131 below).

18 Sep

123. Due to sharp attacks on the inter-army boundary, the extreme left wing of fourteenth Army was forced back, while on the extreme right wing of Tenth Army the leading elements of 13 Brit Corps captured M. Altuccio and from there made further local gains. On the left wing of Tenth Army the battle was raging furiously and reached new proportions. In particular the advance on the right wing of 5 Brit Corps filled German commanders with forebodings of the imminent loss of Rimini, and the Canadian advance to the Ausa river north-west of the S. Lorenzo – S. Martino feature confirmed these views. At 1100 hrs C. of S. 76 Pz Corps believed that by evening the Corps would have been forced back to Rimini, and similar views were expressed in higher quarters, with Kesselring mentioning in self-consolation the proven prowess of 1 Para Div in house-to-house fighting. (G.M.D.S. —61437/13, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 15-18 Sep, tel cons 18 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D267)). Greatly helped by the concentration of heavy weapons in the sector, the German troops however managed once more to stave off a decisive breakthrough, and the Main War Diary of Tenth Army recorded the day as a success for the defence:

The enemy continues his offensive on both wings of the Army, with increased commitment of materiel. Despite bitter defensive fighting, the enemy, by exploiting his successes in the M. Altuccio region, is able to make local gains. On the left wing of the Army he extends his large-scale attacks, but after the fiercest fighting and with heavy losses on both sides, a breakthrough is averted. Penetrations were either intercepted by local reserves or thrown back in counter-attacks. Again the enemy throws heavily massed infantry forces and an increased number of tanks into the battle, the attacks being supported by artillery with an extremely heavy expenditure of ammunition, by fire from naval guns, and by increased commitment of aircraft formations. According to reports which are still incomplete, 30 tanks have been destroyed and several prisoners brought in. Our artillery and projector brigade has made a decisive contribution to today's defence success.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 18 Sep 44)

Through the Rimini Position to the Marecchia River (S. Fortunato Feature) (19-21 Sep)

19 Sep

57. On the front of 51 Mtn Corps the day was relatively uneventful. The same situation prevailed in the sector of 278 Inf Div, on the extreme right wing of 76 Pz Corps. At the centre and left wing of the Corps, however, the battle reached a new height of intensity. A well-rounded picture of the scope, effects and strategical implications of the all-out attack on 76 Pz Corps is conveyed by a series of entries for the day in the Main War Diary of Tenth Army:

“Final Appreciation of the Day”:

On this day, in the sector of 76 Pz Corps, a battle of materiel of the greatest magnitude rages from earliest morning until well into the night. Today too,

despite fierce fighting and heavy casualties on both sides, the strived-for breakthrough is denied to the enemy. By committing the reserves set aside for this purpose, penetrations are sealed off, or the enemy is thrown back by counter-attacks. Towards evening the enemy brings up strong forces, especially tanks, opposite the sectors of 90 Pz Gren Div, 26 Pz Div and 29 Pz Gren Div, so that another attempt to break through with massed forces in the direction of Santarcangelo must be expected for tomorrow.

At night, since 18 Sep, the enemy has been illuminating our part of the battle area with searchlights installed out of range of our artillery, whereby transfer and relief movements, as well as supply operations, which on the field of battle can hardly be carried out except at night, are seriously handicapped. The psychological effect produced on the troops by the battle of materiel itself is heightened by the feeling of helplessness against this new technical weapon.

On the Army's right wing too the fighting has increased in severity, and the enemy succeeds, in the roadless mountain terrain, in gaining ground, without our scanty forces committed in that area being able to prevent it.

As in consequence of this situation the two wings of the Army are pressed back, while the Army centre is nearly 40 km further forward, the whole Army front thus forming a half-moon, since morning the Army command has been requesting anew that a definite decision be reached to withdraw the right wing and the centre of the Army front to the Green Line II, in order that additional forces, which are urgently needed on the wings, may be released. After the crisis has become still more acute owing to the development of the situation, in the afternoon Army Group agrees in principle to issue an order to this effect on the following day.

As 356 Inf Div has not succeeded, in spite of the best will to fight, in halting the strong armoured spearheads of the enemy, 90 Pz Gren Div takes over its sector, even though of its own divisional formations only one regimental group is available, and the mass of the Division is but just under way. Platoon by platoon they relieve the exhausted units of 356 Inf Div.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 19 Sep 44)

#### “Telephone Conversations of the Day”

In conversations at 1045 hrs, 2300 hrs and 2350 hrs the Army requests O.B.SW's consent to a withdrawal of the Army's centre to Green Line II. This in order to reach a sound line of departure for all further and more extensive withdrawals which might become necessary, possibly in the immediate future. During the last conversation, in which the Army Group explained its difficulties with the High Command, the issuing of an order in the desired sense is predicted for the



following morning.<sup>48</sup> In addition to the facts which have become evident from the tactical developments, the critical aspect of the day is further illustrated by the statement at 2300 hrs that no reserves worth mentioning are available tonight. Reserves previously available have been committed and cannot now be disengaged owing to the heavy casualties. (Ibid)

“Tactical Situation”

...

29 Pz Gren Div: After strong artillery fire, in the morning the enemy attacks the right wing and centre of the Division. Except for a penetration 500 metres south of Covignano the enemy is being blocked. During the morning the attacks are expanding and are increasing in violence. A renewed attack in battalion strength and supported by tanks is repelled on the right wing. At S. Fortunato the enemy is thrown back in a counterattack. After the penetration on the left wing has been eliminated the main battle line is back in our hands again.

1 Para Div: Apart from reconnaissance activity no infantry action. Enemy tank concentrations at the centre of the divisional front are being fired on by our artillery. (Ibid)

According to the situation map of Tenth Army for 19 and 20 Sep the Fortunato feature (from east to west) was defended by the following units:

1 Bn 1 Para Regt (north of Covignano)  
1 and 2 Bns 71 Gren Regt (29 Pz Gren Div)  
1 and 2 Bns 314 Gren Regt (162(Turc) Inf Div)  
1 and 2 Bns 15 Gren Regt (29 Pz Gren Div)  
20 Fus Bn (20 G.A.F. Div)

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/23, Tenth Army, W.D.8, SIT MAPS 9-20 Sep, sit map 19 and 20 Sep 44)  
(Photostat 981A10.(D273))

20 Sep

125. Four weeks of hard and costly fighting reached a successful conclusion on 20 Sep when 2 and 3 Cdn Inf Bdes (flanked by the no less fiercely fighting British units) drove the Germans from the area of S. Fortunato and thus forced 76 Pz Corps to fall back behind the river Marecchia. The attack had been launched in the evening of 19 Sep and was making good progress. Possibly due to tardy reporting, the gravity of the situation was not recognized at German higher headquarters until late in the morning. At 0915 hrs the Army commander told Kesselring that no important advances had been reported; but by 1100 hrs the picture had changed.

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<sup>48</sup> For more detailed information on the subject of the relations existing at the time between Army Group and High Command see record of conversation between Wentzell and Roettiger at 0015 hrs 20 Sep (included in records for 19 Sep) (G.M.D.S. – 61437/14, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 19-22 Sep, tel cons 19 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D267))

The reactions of the enemy commanders are shown here by means of excerpts from the record of telephone conversations:

1105 hrs 20 Sep v. Vietinghoff – Kesselring

v.V: ... Further north something unpleasant has happened. In the sector of 26 Pz Div the situation is satisfactory, but in the sector of 29 Pz Gren Div the enemy succeeded in breaking through the Turcoman battalion, and tanks have already reached the area of S. Lorenzo in Monte. The Turcoman battalion is said to have been battered to pieces. Polack is sealing off the locality with his last remaining forces. In addition small groups from 1 Para Div – their last reserves – are being sent there, so that it is hoped that no major crisis will develop there.

But on the other hand Herr now appreciates the situation in the sense that he will definitely have to take his artillery behind the Marecchia, as in their present positions they are at least partially under direct fire from enemy machine guns. But consequently his artillery will no longer be fully effective forward of the battle lines and, therefore, he wants to withdraw behind the river. That is of course a very grave decision.

K: It is very serious; I can say that.

...

K: I cannot give my final decision at the moment; I want to discuss the matter with my staff. That is not so easy. It was wrong of 29 Pz Gren Div to commit a Turcoman battalion at the front.

v.V: They had something further back; but their strength has been reduced to the point where they can no longer cope with the situation.

1115 hrs Wentzell – Roettiger

W: I have become somewhat suspicious. If he gets the quite correct idea of moving to Imola instead of Bologna, we will be trapped in this pocket here.

...

1320 hrs Wentzell – Roettiger

W: The situation at the front of 76 Pz Corps is very strained. 29 Pz Gren Div has practically nothing left; 71 Gren Regt now has 200 men; 15 Gren Regt 100 men. The Turcomans have practically disintegrated and so have the Air Force people who also were committed there (20 Fus Bn). The enemy has reached the Spadarolo area, and is bringing up tanks. The paratroopers are having a hard struggle on their right flank. ... I think it will be necessary to withdraw behind the river.

R: Yes, there is really nothing else to do.

...

One moment, please; I will go and ask the Field Marshal. ...  
The Marshal AGREES.

1930 hrs v. Vietinghoff - Kesselring

K: But I presume that Rimini will be held for the moment, so that the paratroopers may do their house-to-house fighting.

v.V: They will be leaving rearguards there.

...

K: I do not like this wholesale folding back.

v.V: Of course not. I have discussed the matter thoroughly with Herr, as I too fear that the whole thing may begin to slide. He replies – and this is the only argument which counts – “If the front is pierced at one point, the enemy cannot be stopped, because we have no more reserves.”

...

K: I have the terrible feeling that the thing is beginning to slide.

v.V: I spoke with Herr about this, and told him to remain on the hills, but he repeats that then there will be nothing in the rear.

K: He forgets that he is reaching open country.

v.V: He feels – which remains to be seen – that the plain is no less favourable, as our positions there cannot be seen so well as now, where they are spread out before the eyes of the enemy on the hills.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/14, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 19-22 Sep, Appx 1187, tel cons 20 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D267))

126. The “Final Analysis of the Day” in the Main War Diary of Tenth Army concluded with the following remarks:

In accordance with the request of the Corps, Tenth Army obtains the consent of O.B.SW for withdrawal of the left wing during the coming night of the “Adelheid Position” (i.e. north of Verucchio on the far side of the River Marecchia), thereby breaking off the Battle of Rimini before their own formations south of the Marecchia have become exhausted and incapable of preventing a breakthrough to the plains.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 20 Sep 44)

A description of the events in the sector of 29 Pz Gren Div appeared in the daily situation report of the Army:

... 29 Pz Gren Div: Beginning with the noon hours the Division carried out a fighting withdrawal while warding off all enemy attacks. Sometimes under particularly difficult conditions and in face of sharp enemy pressure, the individual battle groups, in some cases led by non-commissioned officers, fought their way back. Time and again they had to fight off attacks by the pursuing enemy; then fall back another few hundred yards. During the day, the small garrison of S. Lorenzo held its positions against four enemy attacks in battalion strength and with tank support. Compressed into a small area, they stood fast until evening. In the late afternoon they repelled a fifth attack from the Southeast. A further attack in battalion strength by infantry carried on vehicles and with tank support was also repulsed, thanks to the support of our own artillery. By committing trains, alarm units and hastily formed battle groups composed of stragglers from all units, it was possible by 1700 hrs to create a thin blocking line around S. Lorenzo, and thus to eliminate the danger which existed in the morning of a breakthrough to the North. According to present reports, four enemy tanks have been destroyed in today's fighting. 1 Para Div: Due to interrupted communications, no reports received.<sup>49</sup>

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/14, Tenth Army, W.D.8, Appx 19-22 Sep, Appx 1185, Daily Sit Rep Tenth Army, 20 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D252))

58. The formal order for the general withdrawal of 51 Mtn Corps to Green Line II was issued by Tenth Army at 1510 hrs 20 Sep. It began with the statement:

The continued enemy pressure on the wings of the Army necessitates the withdrawal of the projecting centre section of the Army front in order to free additional forces for the wings.

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<sup>49</sup> (Note: Communications may of course have been interrupted, but if the much harder pressed 29 Pz Gren Div found ways and means of communicating with Corps headquarters, 1 Para div might have found it possible to do the same. In view of the mendacity notoriously rampant at the headquarters of this division, the cause of history may have suffered little by this lack of detailed reports. (See also Report No. 20, para 39))

A photostatic copy of the full text is being retained. (Ibid, Appx 1188, 20 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D274))

21 Sep

128. Large-scale fighting in the coastal sector had now ceased for the moment. The period of continued good weather had come to an end, and intermittent showers were softening the ground. Immediately west of Rimini, on 21 Sep, 1 Cdn Inf Div established several bridgeheads on the far bank of the Marecchia in face of harassing fire from the machine guns of German rearguards. 114 Jg Div, which was at full strength and which had not suffered in the recent fighting, received orders for a lateral move to the right wing of 76 Pz Corps. This would permit the relief of hard-hit 26 Pz Div and 356 Inf Div. 29 Pz Gren Div would be the next formation to be rested and brought back to strength. A definite aggravation of the situation had occurred on the right wing of 51 Mtn corps, where the retreating forces of 715 Inf Div had come under sharp pressure. The Corps commander was insistently asking for reinforcements. The Army commander was thinking of moving 44 Inf Div from Cesena to the danger point, but reserved his decision pending further clarification of the situation. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D.8, 21 Sep 44)

129. Shortly after the fall of Rome Marshal Kesselring and General Warlimont had been of the opinion that a quick withdrawal to the Apennine positions was unavoidable (H.S. Report No. 24, para 17). But soon thereafter, thanks to exceptionally brilliant staff work and to feats performed by the remnants of elite divisions, the Army Group had managed to achieve temporary stabilization on the height of Lake Trasimene. The German High Command then sensed the possibility of delaying the Allied advance to the point where the advent of unfavourable weather would find the German troops ensconced in a line from which they could effectively block all roads to the northern plains. This had been the real reason for the stream of exhortations to stand fast, which had been reaching Kesselring daily and almost hourly from highest levels during the early weeks of June. At first merely because he had no other choice, and then beginning to believe himself that it could be done, despite miscalculations and misreadings, the commander of the Army Group had virtually reached this goal. During the last days of the battle of Rimini the Germans had been vainly hoping for a decisive break in the weather; but only intermittent rains had fallen on the field of battle. On 18 Sep Kesselring had said to Vietinghoff:

... and there is no promise of a change in weather. The rainy season this year is late by two weeks; this is two weeks above the European mean.

(Tel cons 2105 hrs, 18 Sep, op cit)

But if the rains had not come in time to help the Germans in their last stand in the Gothic system on the coast, nevertheless come they did a few days later, thus robbing the Allied push of its momentum.

FROM THE MARECCHIA TO THE RONCO  
(22 SEP – 26 OCT)

From Rimini to Cesena (22 Sep – 20 Oct)

22 Sep

130. With the situation on the Adriatic for the moment well in hand, Tenth Army was able to pay some attention to the developments at the inter-army boundary, where the acceptance of a calculated risk had now led to a situation demanding immediate remedial action. During the morning the Army commander called at the headquarters of 715 Inf Div and found the formation weakened by many casualties. The wastage of manpower had not been solely due to enemy action. As the personnel of the Division had not been trained for operations in high mountain country, the number of men falling down some precipice at night had been so great as to constitute a palpable factor. The Division reported the following strengths:

725 Gren Regt	720
735 Gren Regt	120
1028 Gren Regt	970
Fd Repl Bn	150
<u>132 Gren Regt</u>	<u>576</u> (under command; from 44 Inf Div)
<u>Total</u>	<u>2,536</u> <sup>50</sup>

131. In the afternoon the two Army commanders conferred with Marshal Kesselring at the Tactical Headquarters of the Army Group. The views expressed on this occasion by the Army commanders, as well as Kesselring's decisions, were recorded in a memorandum appearing in photostatic and translated form as Appendix "N" to this report (G.M.D.S. – 61437/14, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Appx 19-22 Sep, appx 1226, 22 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D275)). It was decided that the Infantry Training Brigade was now after all to remain with Fourteenth Army (see para 122); Tenth Army would move another regimental group from 44 Inf Div to the Army's right wing (balance to follow), and 94 Inf Div would be brought up to the left wing to carry out the relieving tasks originally planned for 44 Inf Div. Fourteenth Army was given a free hand regarding complete withdrawal to Green Line II, and the prevention of a breakthrough at the inner wings of the two Armies was classed as being of equal importance with the carrying out of the identical task at the Adriatic front. (Ibid)

23 Sep

132. By 0700 hrs 23 Sep the leading elements of 134 Gren Regt (44 Inf Div), moving up the Santerno valley on the road from Imola to Firenzuola, had reached the area between Fontanelice and Castel del Rio. They were to take up positions on the extreme right wing of 51 Mtn Corps. Just across the inter-army boundary was the Infantry Training Brigade (G.M.D.S. – 61437/22, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, SIT MAPS 21-30 Sep, sit map 51 Mtn Corps, 23 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D276)). At 2030 hrs 44 Inf Div assumed command in the area 1 km south-west of M.

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<sup>50</sup> (G.M.D.S. – 61437/14, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Appx 19-22 Sep, Appx 1275, 24 Sep 44)

Taggiola – M. Macchia di Cano (G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, 23 Sep 44). To ensure unified command in the threatened area, 44 Inf Div was placed under command of Fourteenth Army, effective 0700 hrs 24 Sep (G.M.D.S. – 61437/15, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Appx 23-26 Sep, Appx 1249, 23 Sep 44). Simultaneously the inter-army boundary was moved eastwards. Previously the boundary had passed through M. Altuzzoli – M. Coloreta – Piancaldo – Monterenzio – Ozzano; as of 0700 hrs 24 Sep it would pass through M. Carolano – 10 km south-east of Firenzuola – immediately north-west of Faggiola – M. Bataglia – eastern rim of Imola (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 4, 23 Sep 44). In order to free further forces for the critical area at the inter-army boundary, Fourteenth Army would accelerate limited withdrawals. In addition, a reinforced regimental group from 232 Inf Div (1043 Gren Regt) was being rushed from the zone of the Ligurian Army to that of Fourteenth Army. (*Ibid*)

133. On the Adriatic side the elements of 20 G.A.F. Div at Santarcangelo had failed to hold their positions. This formation was a division on paper only, and it was felt that dispersal was well justified. Presuming however that the High Command would fail to countenance the dissolution, Marshal Kesselring allowed Tenth Army to disperse its forces by sending the individual companies “on command” to various units of 76 Pz Corps, particularly 26 Pz Div (G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, 23 Sep 44; 61437/15, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Appx 23-26 Sep, Appx 1248, tel cons 23 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D267)). On the same day 29 Pz Gren Div and 1 Para Div succeeded in repulsing several reconnaissance thrusts in battalion strength (G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, 23 Sep 44). A well-prepared situation may of 76 Pz Corps on 23 Sep is being retained in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. – 61437/22, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, SIT MAPS 21-30 Sep. 23 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D277)).

134. The forces of 44 Inf Div had arrived too late to prevent the occupation of M. la Fine and M. Sasso. But soon the front would be mended and resistance stiffened. The hard-headed Bavarian Army Group Commander, whose mind worked best under pressure and when exhilarated by dramatic danger, was now fully aroused. In addition he had received orders ruling out a strategic withdrawal to positions north of the River Po. No doubt at the time he would have preferred to carry out operation “Herbstnebel” (Autumn Fog) (see para 73); but was prevented from doing so by direct orders from Hitler. In the absence of evidence from original documents, a pertinent passage is being quoted here from the narrative prepared by Major Ritter Percy v. Schramm, War Diarist of the German High Command, on the basis of day to day top level documents:

On 23 Sep General Roettiger arrived at the Fuehrer’s Headquarters and submitted the intentions of O.B.SW to the Fuehrer. Thereupon on the same day O.B.SW received the message that the basic intentions to defend the Apennines and the Western Alps were to be adhered to. O.B.SW however retained local freedom of action. Strategic withdrawal movements remained subject to Hitler’s approval, but O.B.SW could begin preparations for disengagement at once, thus making possible a withdrawal at short notice. ... Hereby, and against the recommendation of O.B.SW the movement Autumn fog was postponed. Instead he was promised men and materiel to enable him to carry out his mission. The fulfilment of this promise however proved difficult. Nevertheless, O.B.SW, who had requested 23,000 men, was advised on 26 Sep that he would receive 20,000 men by 1 Oct.

... At noon on 27 Sep O.B.SW again requested authority to initiate the movement. He based his plea on the fact that the two big attacks on his southern front were continuing and that the enemy air force was reinforcing its attacks against the front and the rear area. Indications of a push over the Alps against Turin were becoming more numerous and the possibility of landings on the Riviera and in the rear of Tenth Army had to be reckoned with. The vacancies resulting from casualties could no longer be filled by replacements. The danger of a breakthrough in the direction of Imola – Bologna, putting Tenth Army in a most difficult situation and threatening to make the extensive movement of the Army of Liguria in the Alps impossible was growing constantly. Therefore, if the enemy advance could not be checked within the next few days, the initiation of the movement was necessary ...

On 5 Oct O.B.SW was informed that the Fuehrer, for political, military and administrative reasons, had decided to defend the Apennine front and to hold upper Italy not only until late fall, but indefinitely. With this in view, O.B.SW was enjoined ... to bring the front of 1 Para corps to a final state of stabilization.

(v. Schramm, op cit, Photostat 981A10.(D11A)), paras 136 – 138)

24 Sep

135. While Fourteenth Army was already engaged in extensive preparations for pumping fresh blood to the danger spot, due to mounting pressure on its right wing Tenth Army now decided on further measures in support of its western sector. 305 Inf Div would have to spread itself to the right, and 98 Inf Div (to some extent rested and reinforced by now) would have to move up for early commitment. In the main War Diary of Tenth Army the following was recorded:

In the sector of 715 Inf Div, which since Fourteenth Army has taken over 44 Inf Div is now on the extreme right wing of Tenth Army, the enemy, nourished by steady streams of reinforcements, attacks during the whole day, and is able to make penetrations in the middle sector, where he is opposed by our badly exhausted troops. In view of the still tense situation, the Army decides to commit 98 Inf Div on the right wing after its reorganization has been complete. The departure of the first regimental group is ordered for the following evening. On the Army's left wing too, the enemy carries out numerous attacks with tank support, the point of main effort being on the coast in the sectors of 29 Pz Gren Div and 1 Para Div. These attacks cannot yet be regarded as the beginning of the third phase of the great offensive, but are reconnaissances in force. In the evening large tank concentrations are observed in this area.

As the moving into position of the enemy's artillery too can now be regarded as ended, it is expected that in the course of the next few days he will renew his attempts at breaking through.



Included in the measures for strengthening the front, Army Group is moving up 94 Inf Div and compensating the Adriatic Coast Command with one grenadier regiment from 162 (Turc) Inf Div.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, 24 Sep 44)

136. In the Adriatic sector 4 Brit Div had established a bridgehead across the river Uso; 90 Pz Gren Div had been forced to fall back in consequence of flanking attacks from Santarcangelo, and by the end of the day 1 Para Div had reported no less than 27 attacks in battalion strength on its positions during the last 36 hours. (Ibid) Through relatively small, the new withdrawals in the sector had a disconcerting effect on Marshal Kesselring: 15<sup>th</sup> Army Group as punching with both fists; the Army Group had been forbidden to move behind the Po, and the strategical implications were frightening to contemplate. In prolonged telephone conversations with his Army commanders Kesselring stressed the incalculable consequences of a breakthrough to Imola, and demanded increased hardness on the part of all commanders. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/15, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Appx 23-26 Sep, Appx 1272, tel cons 24 Sep 44, (Photostat 981A10.(D267)), and 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 4, 24 Sep 44)

25 Sep

137. While on this day Fifth Army was not making any significant gains, Eighth Army showed unmistakable signs of being ready for a new advance. In the Main War Diary of Tenth Army the following was recorded:

On the right wing the enemy continues his attacks throughout the day, extending them to the Southeast, and is everywhere repulsed by our stubborn defence.

In the area of 76 Pz Corps the enemy's point of main effort lies between the via Emilia and the coast, where in bitter fighting, and at the cost of heavy casualties, the enemy gains ground on the left wing. The arrival of enemy formations in the front line, either brought up from the rear areas or reinforced in the vicinity of the front, the very actively conducted reconnaissance activities of the last few days, combined with methodical artillery ranging and the systematic demolition of communications in the rear areas from the air, indicate that a new major offensive by Eighth Army's right wing is directly imminent. In connection herewith, the enemy will continue his attacks in the mountains with the object of breaking through along the Via Emilia in the direction of Bologna – Faenza.

In the area of 76 Pz Corps 72 enemy tanks were put out of action between 22 and 25 Sep.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, 25 Sep 44)

138. Telephonic reports by the Army commander regarding the reappearance of rested and replenished 5 Cdn Armd Div, as well as the general picture of three enemy armoured divisions and four armoured brigades spoiling for a breakthrough, induced the Army Group commander to countenance in advance a “rolling with the punch” and to demand extensive deployment in

depth. Such tactical elasticity would keep the troops from being decimated by artillery fire, and would at least save the front from being pierced. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/15, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Appx 23-26 Sep, Appx 1288, 25 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D267))

26 Sep

59. On the left wing of Fourteenth Army 44 Inf Div had failed to come up to expectations and had lost M. Pratolungo and M. Acuto. Immediately east of these mountains the Division was forced back to a thinly held blocking line from Castel del Rio to Budrio. Contact with Tenth Army was not established. (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 4, 26 Sep 44). The situation of Tenth Army's front was summarized as follows:

As on the previous day, the fighting on the Army's extreme right wing is dependent on the development of the situation in the sector of its neighbour on the right. Severe fighting develops east of M. Croce. The enemy now extends his attacks as far as the road Marradi – Faenza. Enemy armoured reconnaissance is already on the mountain pass road at Bagno di Romagna too. With the arrival of 290 Gren Regt (98 Inf Div) in the battle area on the Army's right wing the front is now more densely occupied. But in spite of many attempts on the part of 51 Mtn Corps, contact with its western neighbour across the Army boundary cannot be established. Thus the danger of a further enemy penetration remains.

On the Adriatic the fighting between Via Emilia and the coast increases in severity, but up to now the enemy has gained but little ground. In expectation of a renewed major attack preceded by drumfire and massed bombs, the front is echeloned far to the rear, with the object of minimizing the otherwise unavoidable casualties.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, 26 Sep 44)

140. In the day's telephone conversations the potential danger in the situation on the right wing was not being minimized, but nevertheless the centre of gravity was definitely recognized as continuing to be located on the Adriatic side. The Eighth Army seemed to be changing its method though, and the commander of 76 Pz Corps reported that the opponent seemed to deviate from the recent pattern of large-scale attacks and would maintain constant pressure with somewhat smaller forces. (*Ibid*). During the day the first transports from 94 Inf Div left Istria for Ferrara, where the Division was to be concentrated with all possible speed as an Army Group reserve. The first formation to be dispatched was 276 Gren Regt. (G.M.D.S. – 61437/15, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Appx 23-26 Sep, Appx 1311, 1312 and 1313).

141. In a special message to all Corps and Divisional Commanders, General v. Vietinghoff on this day set forth the economic and military reasons which made it imperative to hold upper Italy as long as possible and to exact a heavy price for every foot of ground. He added that this task could not be carried out by mere routine procedure, but required sustained top performance in the art of command. A photostatic copy and a translation of the document appear as Appendix "O" to

this report (G.M.D.S. – 61437/15, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Appx 23-26 Sep, Appx 1310, 26 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D278)).

142. The infantry strength of Tenth Army at that time was roughly indicated in the Army's condition report for the week ending 25 Sep. Exclusive of 44 Inf Div, (now with Fourteenth Army) the Army comprised 92 battalions of varying strength:

Classification	Number of Battalions
Strong (over 400)	10
Fairly strong (below 400)	16
Average (below 300)	26
Weak (below 200)	21
Exhausted (below 100)	16
Dissolved	1
Unreported	2
Total	92

Using statistical averages this would indicate a strength of approximately 21,500 men. It would be a reasonably safe estimate to say that the infantry strength of the Army at that time was definitely less than 25,000 men, and probably nearer to 20,000. A photostatic copy of this weekly report is being retained. Additional interest attaches to the document for the reason that it contains the names of the divisional commanders and their First Operations Officers at the time. (Ibid, Appx 1319, 25 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D279))

143. Contrary to expectations the inner wings of the two German Armies had hitherto been unable to heal the festering sore at the front. Any further deterioration would lead to the early interdiction of the vital Via Emilia. The War Diary of fourteenth Army leaves no doubt that the situation on this day assumed the character of a grave crisis. 1 Para Corps was virtually exhausted. The designations of some of the reserves now being drummed up for dispatch to the front clearly betrayed their prospective ineffectiveness. M. Battaglia, Castel del Rio and M. Carnevale had been lost; only the advent of very bad weather or a change in plans by the enemy could mitigate the situation. Both of these eventualities did occur.

144. In the Adriatic sector steady pressure by 1 Cdn Corps forced 29 Pz Gren Div and 1 Para Div to begin wheeling back towards the Fiumicino (G.M.D.S. – 61437/16, W.D. 8, Appx 27-30 Sep, Appx 1337, tel cons 27 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D267)). 26 Pz Div reported heavy fighting and penetrations at S. Mauro. Very determined pressure was being exerted by 5 Brit Corps northwest of Poggio Berni. (Ibid, Appx 1333, sit rep Tenth Army, 27 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D252))

28 Sep

145. A prognosis of the role to be played by the weather in the months to come was seen in the copious rains which were drenching the front on this day. At the height of the difficult situation in the Santerno valley Kesselring had asked his Army commanders to attend a conference at his tactical headquarters. When the meeting began, at 1300 hrs on 28 Sep, pessimism had somewhat

receded. The substance of the various declarations made on this occasion was recorded by Tenth Army in a memorandum. The document appears in photostatic and translated form as Appendix "P" to this report (G.M.D.S. – 61437/16, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Appx 27-30 Sep, Appx 1349, 28 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D280)). On the whole the document represents a summation by an authoritative source of subject matter set forth in greater detail in preceding paragraphs. It corroborates v. Schramm's statements regarding the directives received by Kesselring at that time (see para 134).

146. On the eastern wing of Fourteenth Army further reverses were suffered to the right and left of Castel del rio; in addition now the rear units of the formations there were engaged in heavy fighting with organized guerillas, but on the whole Fifth Army's attacks seemed to be lessening in intensity. (G.M.D.S. – 62241/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 4, 28 Sep 44). In the area of Tenth Army the day was characterized by the beginning of a series of futile and costly attempts to regain possession of the summit of M. Battaglia. Near the coast the fighting was fiercest in the sector of 90 Pz Gren Div in and at Savignano. Despite heavy rains 1 Cdn Corps maintained strong pressure. From Savignano to the coast the Germans were now deployed along the Fiumicino. 76 Pz Corps considered the day as a successful one for the defenders:

... In obstinate and sullen fighting ... our troops obtained a full defensive success. By the personal efforts of commanders the troops were carried forward time and again; enemy penetrations rolled back in counter-thrusts and counter-attacks, and the main line of resistance kept intact at the cost of high casualties on both sides. In several penetration areas fighting is still in progress.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, W.D. 8, Tenth Army, 28 Sep 44)

Tenth Army's situation map for 28 and 29 Sep is being retained in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. – 61437/22, Tenth Army, sit maps 21-30 Sep, sit map 28 and 29 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D281)).

## 29 Sep

147. Fourteenth Army reported no engagements of consequence. Tenth Army moved its tactical headquarters from Pizzocalvo to Sabbioncello san Vittore (8 km south of Copparo). In the Main War Diary of the Army the day's events were summarized as follows:

Today the focal point of the fighting on the right wing is M. Battaglia, the possession of which is of decisive importance for the development of the defensive front in the present line. The defender, whose freedom of action is hampered from three sides, still occupies the castle ruins on the summit, which with the assistance of guerillas has been developed into a fortified stronghold.

Contact with the neighbouring Army has been established.

On the Adriatic front the ground is still very muddy and can be traversed by vehicles only with great difficulty. In spite of occasional fine intervals, the enemy air force remains

inactive, presumably on account of soft runways. While additional enemy concentrations have been observed, the only fighting of any importance is taking place in the sector of 90 Pz Gren Div, where Savignano has been lost.

In view of the difficult terrain, even if the weather should clear up, the resumption of heavy fighting is not expected before 1 Oct.

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, 29 Sep 44)

30 Sep

148. Renewed attempts to retake the summit of M. Battaglia failed. Bad weather in the Adriatic sector prevented major operations. The German withdrawal across the lower Fiumicino had been carried out in the nick of time. At 1040 hrs Runkel said to Wentzell:

The crossing of the Rubicon<sup>51</sup> yesterday is said to have been something indescribable. Men drowned and some guns were literally washed away. ...

(G.M.D.S. – 61437/16, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Appx 1387, tel cons 30 Sep 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D267))

Well-prepared situation maps of 51 Mtn corps and 76 Pz Corps on 30 Sep are being retained in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. – 61437/22, Tenth Army, sit maps 21-30 Sep, sit maps 30 Sep, 51 Mtn Corps (Photostat 981A10.(D282)) and 76 Pz Corps (Photostat 981A10.(D283)).

149. A picture of the psychological-warfare methods employed by Tenth Army at the time is found in the detailed report for the month of September by the Propaganda Liaison Officer at the Headquarters of Tenth Army (G.M.D.S. – 62439/2, Tenth Army, W.D. 8, Int Reps Sep 44, Report Propaganda Liaison Offr) (Photostat 981A10.(D284)). A tabulation in this document shows that a total of 2,945,000 leaflets, pamphlets and “newspapers” were dropped at the front during the month. 500,000 copies were made of the report on a fictitious interrogation of a Colonel Larionoff, who was said to have been a departmental head in the Soviet Ministry of War, to have repeatedly conversed with Stalin and Timoshenko, and to have revealed Soviet ambitions for the future. To this the Army commander, or his chief of Staff, had added the following marginal note: “Did he at least exist? Please inform at once”. Custom-tailored material was prepared for the Canadians:

For the Canadian troops a short “Tony and Jenny” was written and 250,000 copies printed. It tells how at home the girl friend of a volunteer, who is fighting in Europe, is taken over by a war profiteer (ibid).

The Canadian born and raised wife of Interpreter Burmester (305 Inf Div) prepared a “Letter from Ontario”, which excelled in local colour. (250,000 copies) (ibid)

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<sup>51</sup> On the available maps the name Uso is followed by the word “Rubicone”. Runkel however was in possession of a map on which the Fiumicino was given as Rubicon, and following his telephonic suggestion references to the Rubicon were references to the Fiumicino (ibid, tel cons 29 Sep 44)

Nearly two million leaflets were distributed among the civilian population:

To show the conditions prevailing in the Allied occupied part of Italy, 500,000 facsimiles were made of a fictitious letter from a Canadian soldier hospitalized at Trentola (ibid).

1 – 10 Oct

150. On 1 Oct the attempts to retain Monte Battaglia were given up. But cohesion between the two Armies had been established again and the Germans were hopeful of preventing Fifth Army from reaching the Via Emilia. In the Adriatic sector the rains had softened the ground, thereby ensuring a breathing spell for 76 Pz Corps. On 1 Oct Tenth Army had the following formations under its command, from West to East:

51 Mtn Corps with	715 Inf Div	
	98 Inf Div	(one regiment committed with 715 Inf Div; two still recuperating)
	305 Inf Div	
	356 Inf Div	
76 Pz Corps with	114 Jg Div	
	278 Inf Div	
	90 Pz Gren Div	
	26 Pz Div	
	29 Pz Gren Div	
	1 Para Div	

Commander Venetian Coast with 162 (Turc) Inf Div and Commander Defence Area Venice (Maj-Gen Gall)

(G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 1 Oct 44)

Fourteenth Army at that time comprised the following major formations:

1 Para Corps with	334 Inf Div	(nearest to boundary)
	44 Inf Div	
	362 Inf Div	
	4 Par Div	
	16 S.S. Pz Gren Div	
	94 Inf Div	(en route to Army)
	Infantry Training Brigade	
14 Pz Corps with	65 Inf div	
	42 Jg Div	
	135 Fortress Brigade	

1043 Gren Regt (from 232 Inf Div)

Army Reserve: Battle Group composed of elements from 100 Mtn Regt (5 Mtn Div)

A schematic order of battle of the large formations of the Army was issued on 1 Oct. A photostatic copy of the document appears as Appendix "Q" to this report. (G.M.D.S. – 65922/2, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, Appx 998, 1 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D287)). A tabulation of the G.H.Q. troops then with Fourteenth Army was issued on the same day (*ibid*, Appx 999, 1 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D288)).

151. Contrary to earlier intentions it was now decided to move 94 Inf Div immediately to the left wing of Fourteenth Army to relieve 44 Inf Div (*op cit*, W.D. Tenth Army, 1 Oct 44). C. of S. 51 Mtn Corps told Wentzell on the telephone that Canadians had been seen near Marradi, and that attention would have to be given to this fact. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/2, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 1-6 Oct, Appx 10, tel cons 1 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285)). (Note: The Canadians that had been seen might have been either from 11 Cdn Armd Regt, then operating in support of 1 Brit Div, or from 14 Cdn Armd Regt, then operating in support of 8 Ind Div. See H.S. Report No. 175.)

152. On 3 Oct it became necessary for Tenth Army to lend further assistance to the hard-pressed eastern wing of the neighbouring Army. Due to rain and raging waters the Adriatic sector was quiet; there was moderate pressure on the centre and right wing of 51 Mtn Corps, but the two still uncommitted regiments from 98 Inf Div had to be dispatched to the sector across the inter-army boundary, where 334 Inf Div had replaced faltering 44 Inf Div and was now in difficulties itself. In addition to this the boundary was temporarily shifted, and 715 Inf Div took over the responsibility for one regimental sector of 334 Inf Div. In connection with all these movements the War Diary of Tenth Army carried the following notation:

3 Oct ... In so doing Tenth Army relinquished the last reserves which could have been made available to meet any situation arising in the mountains or at the coast. The resumption of large-scale fighting on the Adriatic however may now be looked forward to with confidence. Thanks to the weather the divisions have some time for recuperation and for the improvement of their deeply echeloned positions.

(G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 3 Oct 44)

153. On 4 Oct the Fifth Army exerted very strong pressure on both sides of the Futa Pass. Tenth Army pointed out that, due to the deflection of potential reserves, an Allied attack on The Adriatic would have to be met with tactics of "mobile warfare". 76 Pz Corps received orders to reconnoitre a defence line between Imola and the Valli di Comacchio (*ibid*, 4 Oct 44).

60. On 5 Oct, after losing more ground along the Futa road, 4 Para Div and 362 Inf Div succeeded in halting the enemy for the time being. – The "Final Appreciation of the Day" in the Main War Diary of Tenth Army read:

Today the enemy attacks again at the centre of the Army's front and at the inner wings of the two Corps (Sogliano al rubicone). On the Army's left wing increased enemy artillery fire. As, due to the weather, the enemy is unable to attack at the coast, a shift of the "centre of gravity" to the area east of the Savio valley is within the realms of possibility. The attack on Sogliano indicates that from there he intends to break through in the direction of Cesena. In consequence the Army issues orders to 76 Pz Corps to make immediate arrangements permitting the commitment of 29 Pz Gren Div at the corps boundary on short notice. ...

In addition to this, one regimental group from 90 Pz Gren Div is to be assembled during the night 5/6 Oct as a mobile Corps Reserve.

(Ibid, 5 Oct 44)

On this day Tenth Army issued a comprehensive Schematic Order of Battle. A photostatic copy and a translation of the document appear as Appendix "R" to this report. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/2, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 1-6 Oct, Appx 93, 5 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D289))

155. On 6 Oct the offensive of Fifth Army was stalled by bad weather. Moderate pressure continued on the front of 51 Mtn Corps; on the front of 76 Pz Corps the day was uneventful. During the morning report Kesselring told v. Vietinghoff of an order which had been received from highest source:

0925 hrs 6 Oct v. Vietinghoff - Kesselring

...

K: My high superior has sent me a message. He points out that Schlemm (1 Para Corps) must definitely be brought to a halt.

v.V: It is about time. Otherwise certain consequences become inevitable.

K: These he declines. He says that each man must be convinced of the necessity. We must help ourselves. Help yourself and God helps you.

(G.M.D.S. – 63426/2, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 1-6 Oct, Appx 106, tel cons 6 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285))

The text of this message was passed on to the commander of 1 Para Corps for verbal communication to his divisional commanders. A photostatic copy and a translation of the latter document appear as Appendix "S" to this report. (G.M.D.S. – 65922/2, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, Appx 1014b, 6 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D290))

156. Better weather on 7 Oct led to a resumption of Fifth Army's attacks. On the whole, 1 Para Corps was able to hold its positions on that day (G.M.D.S. – 65922/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, 7 Oct 44). On the left wing of 51 Mtn Corps British forces made further gains and advanced from Sogliano to the area of M. Farneto. In the Adriatic sector 76 Pz Corps was



harassed by heavy artillery fire. At 1705 hrs the Army commander told Kesselring that a further thinning out of the front near the coast was dangerous and would entail an immediate withdrawal in case of a serious attack (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 7 Oct 44).

157. On 8 Oct, determined attacks by Fifth Army with large forces forced 1 Para Corps to yield further ground. Once more the situation was critical and a major breakthrough was prevented by a narrow margin only. (*op cit*, W.D. Fourteenth Army, 8 Oct 44) In the area of Tenth Army the pressure on 51 Mtn Corps and the right wing of 76 Pz Corps continued throughout the day. In order to have unified command over the forces defending the approach to Cesena from the mountains, at 1200 hrs 356 Inf Div was placed under the command of 76 Pz Corps. At 1930 hrs Marshal Kesselring called at the headquarters of Tenth Army, and shortly thereafter 29 Pz Gren Div received orders for immediate intervention at the junction of 356 Inf Div and 114 Jg Div in the area between Savio and Sogliano. Despite the threat to Cesena by 5 Brit Corps, General Herr remained of the opinion that the outflanking movements at the Army's centre were of a more or less diversionary nature, and that the main blow would fall near the coast. Earlier in the day Marshal Kesselring had announced the forthcoming arrival of 18,000 reinforcements from the convalescent hospitals in northern Italy and of 3,000 replacements from Germany. Since the Army Group had suffered 30,000 casualties during the month of September, this was not sufficient to restore previous strength, but enough to constitute a substantial alleviation of the manpower situation. (G.M.D.S. –63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 8 Oct 44)

158. On 9 Oct heavy fighting continued at and east of the Futa Pass road (sector 65 Inf Div) and in the area west-north-west of Fontanelico (98 Inf Div and 334 Inf Div). On the whole the German formations held their lines, and individual penetrations were brought to a halt in the depth of the main defence line. (*op cit*, W.D. Fourteenth Army, 9 Oct 44). In the area of Tenth Army 51 Mtn Corps succeeded in retaining M. Cece and in clinging to its positions in the Portico valley. 76 Pz Corps was under particular pressure at M. Farnetto and Montigallo. Counter-attacks were discontinued in view of the precarious situation of 1 Para Corps, which seemed to make advisable the concentration of one division from Tenth Army near Cesena as an operational reserve. It was therefore decided to make preparations for the defence of the Savio sector south and southwest of Cesena, and to withdraw 278 Inf Div from the front for this purpose. Orders were also given for the accumulation of fuel for the ferries and other means of traversing the River Po. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 9 Oct 44)

159. In the early days of September both Armies head received letters from Army Group requesting information for the Japanese Military Attaché on experiences with large formations in counter-attacks on established enemy beachheads. The reports submitted in this connection by the two Armies appear in photostatic and translated form as Appendix "T" to this report. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/3, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 7-11 Oct, appx 179/180, 10 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D291)) and G.M.D.S. – 65922/2, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, Appx 1028b, 9 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D292))

160. On 10 Oct, in sharply concentrated local attacks, Fifth Army endeavoured to exploit previous gains. Apart from 262 Inf Div, which was driven further back in the area east of the Futa Pass road, 1 Para Corps managed to hold its positions in hard fighting (*op cit*, W.D., Fourteenth Army, 10 Oct 44). In the area of Tenth Army the main pressure rested on 29 Pz Gren

Div and 90 Pz Gren Div. The latter formation was forced to withdraw, leaving rear guards in the line Longiano – 2.5 km south-east of Gambettola. In the Adriatic sector the day was quiet. In the afternoon the weather began to clear up. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 10 Oct 44)

#### 11 Oct

161. On 11 Oct Fourteenth Army succeeded in holding its positions against formidable attacks on the centre of 1 Para Corps during the night and throughout the day (op cit, W.D. Fourteenth Army, 11 Oct). During the day however, Marshal Kesselring decided to place 98 Inf Div, 334 Inf Div and 44 Inf Div under the command of Tenth Army (51 Mtn Corps) as of 0800 hrs 12 Oct. The three divisions were to remain in present positions; the inter-army boundary was to be moved correspondingly further west; the G.H.Q. troops to remain in present attachments, and Inf Trg Bde to be absorbed by 44 Inf Div. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/3, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 7-11 Oct, Appx 214, 215, 216 and 217) According to the telephone conversation of 12 Oct it was strongly felt that this step would bring about a decidedly more adroit and economical handling of the forces concerned. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/4, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 235, tel cons 12 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285))

162. With 5 Cdn Armd Div in Corps Reserve, and flanked by 2 N.Z. Div on the right and 46 Brit Div on the left, on 11 Oct 1 Cdn Inf Div began moving forward towards Cesena and the Savio. During the first phase of the advance, resistance from the forces of 90 Pz Gren Div and 26 Pz Div was light; these divisions, and particularly 1 Para Div nearer to the coast, were not disinclined to fall back to the bridgehead position at Cesena and the western bank of the swollen Savio, where defence action would be practicable and profitable once more. As expressed in various telephone conversations between 7 and 11 Oct, Corps, Army and Army Group were again having much trouble with Heidrich, who was holding 7,000 fresh reinforcements in an area between the Rivers Po and Adige, was planning intensive training for these forces, and had visions of fortifying and defending Ravenna. Reminded by Kesselring – on the telephone and during a personal visit of the Marshal to divisional headquarters – of the fact that such considerable forces could not be kept out of the fighting at the moment, Heidrich claimed to have received direct orders from Hitler and Goering to rebuild his Divisin forthwith “for Fuehrer and Reich”. The plans for the Ravenna area, already countenanced by herr, were disallowed by Kesselring; but on the whole the affair developed in the customary manner, and as described by Roettige at 2035 hrs 10 Oct in the following words:

Heidrich has prevailed again. O.B.SW wants to talk to Hermann [Goering] about this; but they already have enough other troubles up there.

(G.M.D.S. – 63426/3, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 197, tel cons 11 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285))

#### 12 Oct

163. With the situation at 1 Para Corps showing signs of further deterioration, at 1545 hrs Marshal Kesselring ordered the immediate transfer of 29 Pz Gren Div to Fourteenth Army to

relieve 362 Inf Div (1 Para Corps). A breakthrough to Bologna and Lake Comacchio would mean the bottling up of 76 Pz Corps. The greatest danger to Tenth Army rested therefore in the attacks on the via Emilia from the foothills, and 76 Pz Corps began thinking in terms of a quick general withdrawal in case of need. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 12 Oct 44). At, and north of the via Emilia 90 Pz Gren Div was withdrawing under some pressure; 26 Pz Div reported the presence of enemy forces at the main defence line, and 1 Para Div was harassing traffic across the Fiumicino. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/4, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 12-15 Oct, Appx 232, sit rep Tenth Army, 12 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D286))

164. During the day v. Vietinghoff had visited the three divisions just taken over from 1 Para Corps. Though noted for an exceptionally even temper, the Army commander returned to his headquarters blazing with anger. Confirming earlier remarks on the telephone, he wrote to Kesselring (who knew it already) that the divisions had been badly handled by Schlemm (General of the Air Force Alfred Schlemm, Comd 1 Para Corps); that he was unapproachable, inelastic and ruthless; and that he was conducting purely linear warfare and demanding immediate and ill-prepared counter-attacks, thus ruining even good divisions in disproportionately quick time (*ibid*, Appx 238).

13 Oct

165. The front of 1 Para Corps and 51 Mtn Corps continued to crumble bit by bit at all pressure points. Increased preparations for further advances were clearly discernible. 90 Pz Gren Div astride the Via Emilia, and 26 Pz Div at Gambettola and on the west bank of the Scolo Rigosa reported defensive successes for the day. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/4, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 12-15 Oct; Appx 256, sit rep Tenth Army, 13 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D286)) Just south of the Via Emilia was 2 Bn 200 Pz Gren Regt (90 Pz Gren Div); between the highway and Bulgario was 3 Bn 200 Pz Gren Regt. At Bulgaria were 1 and 3 Bns 361 Pz Gren Regt (26 Pz Div), flanked by 1 Bn 9 Pz Gren Regt (26 Pz Div) and 26 Pz Recce Bn – all on the west bank of the Scolo Rigossa. Further on was 1 Bn 67 Pz Gren Regt (26 Pz Div); then, as far as Pte Rigossa, 2 Bn 39 Inf regt and 2 Bn 40 Inf Regt (remnants of 20 G.A.F. Div under command 26 Pz Div). North-east of Pte Rigossa to the sea was 1 Para Div, with 4 Para Regt at the divisional boundary. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/10, Tenth Army, sit maps 11-20 Oct, sit map 13 and 14 Oct 44)

166. In the Main War diary of Tenth Army note was taken of the fact that 4 Ind Div, 4 Brit Div and 56 Brit Div had vanished from the Adriatic sector, “which might indicate the enemy’s intention of increasing pressure in the direction of Bologna, and eastwards of the Savio Valley on Cesena” (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 13 Oct 44). Despite the order for immediate transfer, the mass of 29 Pz Gren Div was still engaged in fighting in the old sector; at the same time the first advance signs of a coming transfer of 90 Pz Gren Div were seen in the fact that in the evening of 13 Oct, Tenth Army directed 76 Pz Corps to concentrate one regimental group from 90 Pz Gren Div by the morning of 15 Oct in the area west of Cesena. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/4, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 12-15 Oct, Appx 259, 13 Oct 44)

14 Oct

167. Bulgaria Army reported some lessening in intensity of the attacks on 1 Para Corps (*op cit*, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, 14 Oct 44). A further crumbling of the front at all pressure points was reported by Tenth Army. At the cost of high casualties, particularly officers, a breakthrough was prevented however. Concern was caused by the reappearance of 78 Brit Div west of the Santerno. Further orders were given for strengthening the defence in the Savio valley south of Cesena. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 14 Oct) 90 Pz Gren Div reported the loss of Gambettola:

After hours of artillery preparation the enemy, in battalion strength and supported by 20 tanks, attacked 1 km SW 12427 (Gambettola). After heavy fighting and severe casualties the locality [Gambettola] 600 metres west of 12427 was lost. Individual enemy tanks advanced north as far as the railway line. The penetration had been sealed off.

(G.M.D.S. – 63426/4, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 12-15 Oct, Appx 278, sit rep Tenth Army, 14 Oct 44) (Photosat 981A10.(D286))

A situation map of 76 Pz Corps, as of 0800 hrs 14 Oct, is being retained in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. – 63426/10, Tenth Army, sit maps 11-20 Oct, sit map 76 Pz corps, 14 Oct 44) (Photosat 981A10.(D293)). A part of this map showing German dispositions in the Cesena sector appears in photostatic form as Appendix ‘U’ to this report (*ibid*). (Photosat 981A10.(D294)). A photostatic copy is also being retained of the situation map of 51 Mtn Corps on 14 Oct 44 (*ibid*), (Photosat 981A10.(D295)).

15 Oct

168. By now the Germans had gained a fairly accurate picture of Allied regroupings. An “Enemy Situation Map” was issued on 15 Oct. A photostatic copy of the document appears as Appendix “V” to this report. (G.M.D.S. – 63427, Tenth Army, Int Repts Oct 44) (Photosat 981A10.(D296)) Fourteenth Army reported reconnaissance and holding attacks on 14 Pz Corps, and the continuation of heavy attacks with very strong artillery support on 1 Para Corps. Attacks were repulsed or penetrations sealed off after some loss of ground. In view of the interpolation of 1 U.S. Armd Div and the obvious readiness of several assault divisions for an all-out attack in the direction of Bologna, Fourteenth Army expected a major attack the next day, and ordered a ruthless denudation of the lines of 14 Pz Corps in favour of 1 Para Corps. Army Liguria had reported all units of 232 Inf Div en route to Fourteenth Army; all but 1045 Inf regt had arrived and were moving to the front of 14 Pz Corps to relieve units required by 1 Para Corps. Concern was felt over the delay in the arrival of 29 Pz Gren Div, which was engaged in heavy fighting on 14 Oct and was only now being relieved in the old sector by 278 Inf Div. (G.M.D.S. – 65922/1 Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, 15 Oct)

169. Most divisions of 51 Mtn Corps and 76 Pz Corps reported sharp pressure on their positions during the day. 98 Inf Div (in the Sillaro Valley) reported heavy artillery fire reaching as far as the Emilia. With Monterenzio lost, fighting centred on the area north-west of S. Clemente. 334 Inf Div reported heavy fighting for M. la Pieve since midnight. Repeated attacks (78 Brit Div and 12 Cdn Armd Regt) were repulsed. Severe pressure was felt by 90 Pz Gren Div; outposts and rear elements astride the via Emilia were forced back. Pressure by superior

opposing forces forced rear elements of 26 Pz Div to withdraw in a northerly direction in a heavy delaying action. "After two hours of artillery preparation, and after several fruitless initial attempts, the opponent succeeded in crossing the Scolo Rigossa at S. Angelo in Saline." (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 15 Oct 44)

16 Oct

170. Due to bad flying weather the attack of Fifth Army astride the Futa Pass on this day did not assume the expected dimensions; but nevertheless, a deep penetration was made 2 km west to the Futa Pass road. This in turn necessitated taking back the whole eastern wing of 1 Para Corps. In the afternoon 29 Pz Gren Div assumed command in the penetration area (1 km north-west of Querceto and the western slope of M. Della Vigna), where 71 Pz Gren Regt (with total strength of 280 men, and under command of 65 Inf Div) had been forced back. The Acting Army Commander (General Fridolin v. Senger und Etterlin, Comd 14 Pz Corps) asked Marshal Kesselring whether the delay in the arrival of the balance of 29 Pz Gren Div was unavoidable. A speed-up was promised. (Op cit, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, 16 Oct)

171. Major attacks on the right wing of Tenth Army did not materialize, but 98 Inf Div was hard pressed and lost Renco Britti and M. Delle Tombe. 334 Inf Div was holding fast in a new line 1-1/2 km north-east of M. la Pieve. In the Adriatic sector 90 Pz Gren Div, 26 Pz Div and 1 Para Div lost some ground under pressure:

90 Pz Gren Div: Outposts withdrew to main defence line under pressure from superior forces. After moving into assembly positions during the night (15/16 Oct), the enemy, supported by tanks, attacks on both sides of the Via Emilia. Attack is repulsed.

After obstinate fighting with assault detachments the combat outposts on the left wing are also forced back.

26 Pz Div: Superior enemy forces attack our rear elements on the right wing and force them back to the outpost area (of the main defence line). During the noon hours enemy with tank support attacks combat outposts 3 km NW Gambettola.

1 Para Div: The Division directs continuous harassing fire on enemy concentrations on the left wing of the Division and stops an enemy attack 3 km NNE Gambettola.

(G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 16 Oct 44)

172. In the course of the day's telephone conversation C. of S. Fourteenth Army praised the work of the Acting Army Commander (para 170 above). 1 and 4 Para Divs had received large drafts of reinforcements from the German Air Force, and the high staff officers of the Army Group and the two Armies were exploring the best method of approaching Heidrich and Trettner<sup>52</sup> with a view to obtaining a loan of 1,000 replacements from each Parachute Division until the arrival of the Army drafts. It was a difficult situation. Wentzell said to Roettiger: "With the paratroops it

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<sup>52</sup> **TRETTNER, Heinrich, Maj-Gen, Comd 4 Para Div**

is not so that O.B.SW can interfere with orders". Kesselring and v. Vietinghoff agreed that the loss of the areas east of the Savio was unpleasant but not tragic. The left wing of 76 Pz Corps (from Cesena to the coast) would have to make the difficult crossing of the river when there was a temporary lessening of pressure; rear elements were at the front, and only allowed themselves to be forced back slowly. With 1 Cdn inf Div in action, 5 Cdn Armd Div would not be far away; the "centre of gravity" however was of course on the right side of the active front. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/5, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 16-21 Oct, Appx 319, tel cons 16 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285))

17 Oct

173. In heavy fighting, 1 Para Corps succeeded in holding its positions with the exception of the area west of the Futa Pass road. 29 Pz Gren Div repulsed nine consecutive attacks and eliminated all penetrations by immediate counter-thrusts. (G.M.D.S. – 65922/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, 17 Oct 44). The gangrenous condition at the focal points was most pronounced at the inter-army boundary, where 98 Inf Div (now with a total fighting strength of 455 men) was unable to prevent a breakthrough. Calls for help to both Armies brought immediate assistance, and an order from Tenth Army for the immediate dispatch of 190 Pz Recce Bn (90 Pz Gren Div) to the sore spot, height 622, north of Ronco Britti. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 17 Oct 44)

174. In the Adriatic sector, British and Canadian forces worked their way closer to Cesena. 90 Pz Gren Div was attacked along the via Emilia and the railroad line. The Canadian advance along the railroad line was eventually stopped after heavy and costly fighting. 26 Pz Div lost ground north of Ruffio. 1 Para Div was under constant harassing fire, repulsed on attack 2 km west of Sala, and laid harassing fire on concentrations near Sala (*ibid*). In view of the possibility of a breakthrough to Bologna, and the necessity for thinning out 76 Pz Corps in favour of the Army's right wing, as well as in view of the British advance from the South and the Canadian advance along the axis of the Emilia on Cesena, 76 Pz Corps proposed a withdrawal in a northwesterly direction to avoid possible encirclement. Army Group refused consent, and demanded that Cesena be held (*ibid*). In the telephone conversations the consensus of opinion was that unless something drastic were done immediately, the via Emilia would be lost within the week. The balance of 29 Pz Gren Div and 90 Pz Gren Div would have to be withdrawn from 76 Pz Corps regardless of the consequences. Vietinghoff told Kesselring on the telephone that 1 Para Div might be able to stem the tide if it were moved to a critical sector. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/5, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 16-21 Oct, Appx 339, tel cons 17 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285))

61. Regarding 1 Cdn Armd Bde, the "Enemy Situation Bulletin" of 51 Mtn Corps carried the following notation on 15 Oct:

Unclearified in particular are the whereabouts of 1 Cdn Armd Bde, which, according to Allied reports, has given valuable support in the area between Florence and Bologna.

(G.M.D.S. – 63602, 51 Mtn corps, Int Repts Sep and Oct 44, 15 Oct 44)

In a telephone conversation at 1130 hrs 17 Oct, C. of S. 51 Mtn Corps told Wentzell that Canadian tanks had been seen in the area of M. Cece, where all three battalions of 66 Bde (1 Brit Armd Div) were committed (op cit, tel cons 17 Oct 44).

176. A schematic order of battle of Army Group "C" as of 10 Oct 44 appeared in the records of Tenth Army on 17 Oct. According to this document the Army Group was then composed as follows:

### ARMY GROUP "C"

#### 7 OF LIGURIA

75 Corps	34 Inf Div
	5 Mtn Div
	157 (Res) Mtn Div
	3 Regt Brandenburg (less 1 Bn)
	Regt Meeralpen
Corps Lombardia	148 Inf Div (upgraded from Res)
	232 Inf Div
	3 Ital Div (S. Marco)
	4 Ital Mtn Div (M. Rosa)

#### FOURTEENTH ARMY

14 Pz Corps	94 Inf Div
	42 Jg Div
	135 Fortress Bde
1 Para Corps	334 Inf Div
	98 Inf Div
	65 Inf Div
	44 Inf Div (H. & D.)
	4 Para Div
	362 Inf Div
	16 S.S. Pz Gren Div

#### TENTH ARMY

20 G.A.F. Fd Div (under direct command)

51 Mtn Corps	715 Inf Div
	305 Inf Div

76 Pz Corps

90 Pz Gren Div  
1 Para Div  
26 Pz Div  
114 Jg Div  
278 Inf Div  
356 Inf Div  
29 Pz Gren Div

Commander Venetian Coast

162 (Turc) Inf Div

OPERATIONS ZONE ADRIATIC COASTLAND (97 Corps H.Q.)

188 (Res) Mtn Div  
237 Inf Div  
71 Inf Div

A photostatic copy of the document appears as Appendix "W" to this report. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/5, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 16-21 Oct, Appx 242b, 17 Oct 44 for 10 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D297)) Apart from smaller formations and G.H.Q. troops, the Army Group accordingly comprised a total of 30 divisions, one of which was a panzer division, three were panzer grenadier divisions and 26 were infantry divisions. In strength and fighting value there were of course tremendous differences between these formations, which ranged from elite down to quite inferior aggregations. With the Via Emilia serving as a base line for lateral movements the Germans had little difficulty in shifting formations to sectors where assistance was needed most urgently at the moment. The elasticity of the German theatre command in the regrouping of forces no doubt was one of the main factors preventing the debouchment of the Allied forces in the second half of October from the hills and valleys to the Via Emilia.

177. A complete schematic order of battle of Tenth Army was issued on 18 Oct. A photostatic copy of the document appears as Appendix "X" to this report (G.M.D.S. – 63426/5, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 16-21 Oct, Appx 371, 18 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D298))

178. At the front of 1 Para Corps pressure continued unabated, and, as the day went on, the situation on the right wing of 51 Mtn Corps showed further deterioration, while the left wing reported holding attacks by the newly committed 2 Pol Corps. 200 Pz Gren Regt (90 Pz Gren Div), which was urgently needed in the sector of 98 Inf Div, was locked in fierce and costly fighting with Canadian units advancing along the Via Emilia and the railroad line. South of Cesena the situation was no less serious, and on the right flank of the Canadians the New Zealanders too were fighting at the Pisciatello river. In the meantime however Marshal Kesselring had received strict orders not to yield ground in any sector. This meant that in order to hold ground in a relatively unimportant sector the whole Army Group was being placed in jeopardy. In all telephone conversations the commanders and chiefs of staff harped ceaselessly on this point, and v. Vietinghoff wired to Kesselring time and again, and with mounting insistence,



that the sector east of the Savio should be given up. Kesselring had been of the same opinion for several days, and at 1400 hrs he finally decided to assume personal responsibility by countenancing a delaying withdrawal to the Savio.<sup>53</sup> (G.M.D.S. – 63426/5, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 16-21 Oct, Appx 362, tel cons 18 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285))

179. In the Main War Diary of Tenth Army the fighting in the sector of 90 Pz Gren Div was described as follows:

During the night 90 Pz Gren Div smashes an enemy attack on both sides of the Via Emilia. An enemy attack along the road embankment leads to a penetration north of the embankment. Another attack by combined arms on the left wing of the Division is beaten off. Only during the morning hours, in repeated counterthrusts and heavy fluctuating fighting, with heavy commitment of projectors and artillery, is it possible to seal off the penetration north of the road embankment (1.5 km west of Ponte della Pietra). Steadily gaining in strength, the enemy continues his attacks against a much weakened front. In the centre section the enemy, supported by tanks, penetrates, swings north, and rolls up two battalions, which fall back fighting to the new line.

(G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 18 Oct 44)

Tenth Army's situation map for 18 Oct is being retained in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. – 63426/10, Tenth Army, sit maps 11-20 Oct, sit map 17 and 18 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D299)).

#### 19 Oct

180. 1 Para Corps now reported a lessening of pressure; individual local attacks were repulsed (op cit, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, 19 Oct). At 0005 hrs Marshal Kesselring released the signal confirming his verbal authorization for the withdrawal on the left wing of Tenth Army. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/5, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 16-21 Oct, Appx 383, 19 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D300)). In the critical sector 98 Inf Div was again losing ground; 114 Jg Div and elements of 90 Pz Gren Div were under pressure at the outskirts of Cesena. In the evening the transfer of the battalions of 200 Pz Gren Regt to the inter-army boundary began. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 19 Oct) With 2 Pol Corps operating at the centre of the Army front the retention of 1 Para Div at the coast seemed unjustified; plans were made for the commitment of the formation at the main front. The disengagement of 200 Pz Gren Regt implied the loss of Cesena. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/5, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 16-21 Oct, Appx 382, tel cons 19 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285))

#### 20 Oct

181. General Lemelsen had returned to his headquarters and resumed command of the Fourteenth Army. Local attacks were scaled off after some loss of ground (op cit, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, 20 Oct). 98 Inf Div was being pushed back further. In the morning General Baade (Comd 90 Pz Gren Div) was at the headquarters of 51 Mtn Corps, just opened at Vedrana (5 km

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<sup>53</sup> Students of the phase in question will find the 31-page record of the day's telephone conversation a particularly interesting document.

north-west of Budrio); in the afternoon he was on reconnaissance; 90 Pz Gren Div was being organized behind the fighting line, and would take over command in the sector from 98 Inf Div in a day or two. Headquarters 5 Proj Bde and 71 Proj Regt (less one battalion) was en route from 76 Pz to 98 Inf Div. (vietinghoff told Kesselring: "We have to stick it out today; after that things will be easier".) 1 Para Div received orders to change places with 114 Jg Div; British, Canadian and New Zealand forces were at the Savio (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 20 Oct 44) In the sector of 26 Pz Div some rear elements were forced to fall back across the Savio to the West. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/5, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 16-21 Oct, Appx 401, sit rep Tenth Army, 20 Oct 44) (Photosat 981A10.(D286))

### The Forcing of the Savio (21 – 23 Oct)

21 Oct

182. 1 Para Corps reported no major attacks for the day, but continued enemy preparations for a large attack were observed in the Futa sector (op cit, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, 21 Oct 44). East of the inter-army boundary (98 Inf Div) the Monte Grande has been lost in heavy night fighting; Baade was sealing off about 500 metres further to the North. In the Cesena area pressure was maintained (g.m.d.s. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 21 Oct 44). Contrary to earlier arrangements 3 Bn 200 Pz Gren Regt (90 Pz Gren Div) had been retained at the Savio front and was fighting just north of the (destroyed) railroad bridge. Comd 51 Mtn Corps sent an angry signal requesting the immediate dispatch of the battalion. Apart from marginal notes of a sarcastic nature, the document bears the notation that the unit would be disengaged during the night 23/24 Oct. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/5, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 16-21 Oct, Appx 431, 21 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D301)). At the newly won small Canadian bridgehead west of Martarano was 2 Bn 9 Pz Gren Regt (26 Pz Div); further north as far as Pieve Sestina was 1 Bn 9 Pz Gren Regt.<sup>54, 55</sup> (Note: The crossing of the Savio by Canadians in force began in the evening and was reflected in the German reports for 22 Oct (para 189 below) A photostatic copy is being retained of the well-prepared situation map of 76 Pz Corps for 21 Oct 44 (G.M.D.S. – 63426/11, Tenth Army, sit maps 21-30 Oct 44, sit map 76 Pz Corps, 21 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D302)). A situation map of 51 Mtn Corps as of 0600 hrs 21 Oct is also being retained in photostatic form. (Ibid) (Photostat 981A10.(D303))

183. According to the day's telephone conversations Army Group was now considering the placing of three division of 1 Para Corps under the command of Tenth Army; Senger to command the right wing of Tenth Army; Schlemm to be given the western wing of Fourteenth Army. This would place the responsibility for Bologna squarely on the shoulders of Tenth Army. Unity of command in the critical area was desirable; unspoken but obvious was the wish to have the situation handled by the most capable commanders (see para 164 above). At the centre of Tenth Army's front 2 Pol Corps was nibbling hard in the area north of Galeata; a further denudation of the centre was out of the question. Heidrich had expressed willingness to grant the

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<sup>54</sup> South of the railroad (west of Cesena) now was 741 Gren Regt (278 Inf Div), flanked by 721 Gren Regt of the same division, and 114 Recce Bn (114 Jg Div).

<sup>55</sup> The Canadian crossing of the Savio in pouring rain was opposed by German elite troops; in his famous exploit at Pieve Sestina in the early morning of 22 Oct, Pte E.A. Smith, V.C., bested an enemy of no mean reputation (op cit, H.S. Report No. 25, para 138).

temporary loan of 1,000 replacements providing the necessary permission could be obtained from marshal Goering. Kesselring said: "This would be fine" (see para 172 above). (G.M.D.S. – 63426/5, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 16-21 Oct, Appx 432, tel cons 21 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D286))

22 Oct

184. There were only minor engagements in the area of 1 Para Corps, but a further aggravation of the situation was reported from the extreme right of Tenth Army, where contact with Fourteenth Army had again been lost. Army Group now decided to commit 42 Inf Div astride the inter-army boundary. From the Adriatic sector the forcing of the Savio by Canadians was reported. During the morning 76 Pz corps received permission to shorten its front by a withdrawal to the line Massarola – Bracciano – Diegaro (on via Emilia) – S. Andrea in Bagnolo (on west bank of Savio) – Mensa (on west bank of Savio).<sup>56</sup> In order to ensure that withdrawals would be carried

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<sup>56</sup> This decision was preceded by a telephone conversation which ran in part as follows:

0940 hrs    Wentzell – Roettige

**R:            This is quite a mess at Crasemann's [26 Pz Div].**

**W:            Yes. I have just been talking with Corps again. It was a fierce artillery shoot there during the night, and contrary to expectations, and in spite of being thrown back repeatedly, the enemy renewed his attacks with a will. He now has a bridgehead, but the thing has been stopped, due to his difficulties in crossing the water with tanks and heavy weapons. We are in difficulties too because in the counterattacks our tanks bogged down.**

**R:            How is the weather?**

**W:            Terrible. It is raining without a let-up. Militarily speaking it is therefore good for us.**

**R:            So he cannot use his Air Force.**

**W:            That he cannot do, and this is in our favour; but during the night he attacked time after time.**

**R:            Then it has to be broken up by the artillery.**

**W:            They are doing it, but they have trouble with ammunition too. 76 Pz Corps has now only 90 tons per day. There must be something wrong with the supply services.**

**R:            We are hoping for an improvement in the situation at the Brenner Pass.**

out only under pressure, lower echelons were not to be advised of this decision. Counter-attacks however were not to be made. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 22-25 Oct, Appx 412, tel cons 22 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285)) In the main War Diary of Tenth Army the forcing of the Savio was reflected by the following entry:

26 Pz Div: In the evening hours of 21 Oct the enemy covers the entire main line or resistance with heaviest drumfire, and thus even at that stage takes a heavy toll of the troops in the main line. After two hours the enemy shifts his drumfire to the artillery positions, and attacks at the Savio in the divisional sector. Several heavy attacks are beaten off after hard fighting. A renewed attack, accompanied by continuous drumfire, has its focal point 3 km north of Cesena. At several points the enemy succeeds, after severe fighting, in thrusting through the weakened forces still in position. Due to our heavy casualties and the impossibility of committing tanks over the muddy ground, promptly initiated counterthrusts fail to reach their objectives. In the penetratin area the enemy reinforces his position and, under cover of more heavy drumfire, forms a bridgehead from which in the morning he again attacks towards the West and Southwest. Subsequent enemy attacks from the bridgehead formed during the night are smashed.

(G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 22 Oct 44)

Shift in German Corps Commands. Marshal Kesselring in Traffic Accident; Consequent Shifts in Command. (23 Oct)

23 Oct

185. The gravity of the situation was undiminished; 94 Inf Div on the right wing of 1 Para Corps, and 29 Pz Gren Div on the left wing lost further ground in very heavy fighting. However, 1 Para Corps, with all its divisions and G.H.Q. troops, would be under the command of Tenth Army as of 1800 hrs 24 Oct; in addition the commanders and headquarters staffs of 51 Mtn Corps and 14 Pz Corps would be exchanged; Corps Lombardia (see para 176 above) would come under the command of Fourteenth Army, and Fourteenth Army and Army Liguria would be welded into a new “Army Group Graziani”. (G.M.D.S. – 65922/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, 23 Oct 44) At the right wing of Tenth Army the situation was equally serious, and it was decided to move 1 Para Div from its two-day stand south and southwest of Cesena to the area between 90 Pz Gren Div and 98 Inf Div. From the Adriatic wing 26 Pz Div reported that enemy forces, which had crossed the Savio west of Borgo di Ronta, had been thrown back across the river (see H.S. Report No. 25, paras 146-148). Fighting had also spread to 114 Jg Div, which had relieved 1 Para Div in the coastal stretch and which had been placed there under the Venetian Coast Command. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 23 Oct 44)

186. The decision regarding the major changes in command relationships had been made, and all headquarters were now working on the necessary arrangements. The day was a busy one for Marshal Kesselring; Reichsminister Speer was with the Army Group, and had called at the headquarters of 76 Pz Corps in order to gain a picture of the ammunition problem;<sup>57</sup> a group of Japanese officers was at the headquarters of Tenth Army,<sup>58</sup> and tactical developments clearly indicated a further increase in the weight of pressure on the right wing of 76 Pz Corps. During the morning the Marshal had visited 26 Pz Div, 1 Para Div and 114 Inf Div; in the afternoon he moved on to the headquarters of the divisions at the critical points, and announced his intention of calling later at the headquarters of 76 Pz Corps or Tenth Army. At 1735 hrs he was at the tactical headquarters of 29 Pz Gren Div, where he gave his verbal consent to a necessary local withdrawal of 94 Inf Div and the western wing of 16 S.S. Pz Gren Div.<sup>59</sup> Whether or not he went from there to the headquarters of 90 Pz Gren Div cannot be told from the documents on hand,<sup>60</sup> but at 2002 hrs, unconscious and with a fractured skull, the Marshal was reported as being at the casualty clearing station of 90 Pz Gren Div at S. Lorenzo di Gaiano (5 km north-north-west of Castel S. Pietro dell'Emilia). (G.M.D.S. – 63426/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 22-26 Oct, Appx 475, tel cons 23 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285))

187. According to the record of Tenth Army's telephone conversations, the first word of the accident reached Army Headquarters at 1955 hrs, when C. of S. 51 Mtn Corps told Wentzell: "Field Marshal in accident; fractured base of skull". Wentzell immediately informed Army Group. At 2002 hrs C. of S. 51 Mtn Corps reported that the Marshal was at the casualty clearing station at S. Lorenzo (para 186 above). According to a conversation later in the evening, Kesselring was moved to Base Hospital No. 200 at Ferrara shortly after 2000 hrs (op cit, tel cons 23 Oct). In the Main War Diary of Tenth Army the following was recorded:

In the evening hours of 23 Oct Tenth Army received word that Marshal Kesselring, who during the afternoon had announced his intention of calling at Army Headquarters for conversations, had suffered a serious accident in a collision with a gun. O.B.SW was first moved to the nearest casualty clearing station; then to Base Hospital No. 200 at Ferrara. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 23 Oct 44)

In the synopsis of conversations the accident was referred to as a traffic accident. Nothing has been found to indicate that the event occurred during an air raid.<sup>61</sup> The War Diary of Fourteenth Army does not refer to the occurrence; presumably for reasons of security, after 23 Oct references to the Marshal's condition were omitted from the records of conversations. In addition to the

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<sup>57</sup> Op cit, tel cons 22 Oct

<sup>58</sup> G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 23 Oct 44

<sup>59</sup> G.M.D.S. – 65922/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, 23 Oct 44

<sup>60</sup> At 1830 hrs Wentzell told Roettiger that the Marshal had left a message to be forwarded to Wentzell, according to which everything possible was to be done to move one regiment to the rear of Baade. (Note: "einen Haufen" – at the time being used in these circles as a colloquial code word for "one regiment".) (op cit, tel cons 23 Oct)

<sup>61</sup> In this connection see also: v. Schramm, op cit, para 128:

On 23 Oct Marshal Kesselring's car drove over a gun in the darkness. O.B.SW was so severely hurt that he had to be taken to the hospital.

major changes in commands already pending, a shuffle in the top personnel of the Army Group would now be necessary. At 2300 hrs Roettiger told Wentzell:

I have talked with Jodl regarding the temporary replacement. It is of course your chief.  
(Note: Literal translation would distort the meaning)  
(op cit, tel cons 23 Oct 44)

76 Pz Corps withdraws to the Ronco (24 – 26 Oct)

24 Oct

188. In the area of 1 Para corps an attack developed east of the Futa Pass road at the Monte Belmonte (which was lost in the evening). After initial penetrations the situation was stabilized (see para 192). At 1800 hrs 1 Para Corps passed under the command of Tenth Army with the following formations:

94 Inf Div  
16 S.S. Pz Gren Div  
4 Para Div  
65 Inf Div  
29 Pz Gren Div  
362 Inf div

all G.H.Q. troops with the Corps, and, of 42 Jg Div:

142 Recce Bn  
3 Bn 25 Jg Regt  
3 Bn 40 Jg Regt  
(balance to follow)

(G.M.D.S. – 65922/1, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, 24 Oct 44)

In keeping with its future role, Fourteenth Army was now well on the way towards becoming an aggregation of vastly different complexion and inferior substance.

189. The focal point of action during the day was northeast of M. Grande, where American advance elements reached Vedriano (less than 7 km from the Via Emilia). After several hours of bitter fighting the units of 90 Pz Gren Div and 98 Inf Div in the area succeeded in sealing off the penetration. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 24 Oct 44). But, while Baade obtained some measure of defensive success, heidrich would be needed in addition to the present forces. The first elements from 1 Para Div were expected during the night 24/25 Oct.<sup>62</sup> In the meantime much anti-aircraft artillery had been moved to the support of 90 Pz Gren Div (G.M.D.S. – 63426/7, Tenth army, W.D. 9, Appx 22-26 Oct, Appx 493, tel cons 24 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285))

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<sup>62</sup> 4 Para Regt and 3 Bn 200 Pz gren Regt (90 Pz Gren Div, (see para 192) were then en route to 51 Mtn Corps (ibid, Appx 497).

190. At the left wing of 76 Pz Corps, 26 Pz Div in the absence of pressure reported heavy harassing fire; 114 Jg Div withdrew as planned. According to the Main War Diary of Tenth Army, the front was now on the following line:

3 km SW Vergato – 6 km NE Vergato – 6.5 km SE Marzabotto – east slope of M. Adone – 2 km W.M. Belmonte (height 407) – M. Belmonte – N. Parra. di Vignale – 1 km SW M. della Piana – indefinite to Vedriano – 2 km S. Vedriano – 2 km ENE S. Clemente – northern slope M. Spaduro – 1.5 km SE M. Spaduro – NW M. dell'Acqua Salanta – unchanged to 1.5 km NE Tontola – S Pacolo in Acquilone – 1.5 km SW Bagnale – 1 km S Polonta – road fork 2 km SSE Pertinuovo – 2.5 km E Forlimpopoli – SW Casemurata – multiple road junction at Borghese – 5 km E Campiano – thence along the Savio to coast.

Nothing of course was more important at the moment than the freeing of forces for the immediate strengthening of the extreme right wing of 51 Mtn Corps, and in the afternoon the Army commander issued a detailed order for a withdrawal in this connectin of 76 Pz Corps and 114 Jg Div (Venetian Coast Command). The main line of resistance was to be taken back to the general line: North-west of Bagno – M. Velbe – northern outskirts of Meldola – bridge north-east of Magliano – railroad bridge 4 km south-east of Forli – 3 km south-west of S. Pietro in Vincoli – road intersectin 5 km north-east of S. Pietro in Vincoli – coast at Bocca Bevano. The order contained much relevant additional information, and is being retained in photostatic form. (G.M.D.S. 63426/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 22-26 Oct, Appx 496, 24 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D304))

191. Apart from dealing with the orders for withdrawals to the Bevano and Savio rivers, General v. Vietinghoff, in his new role as interim Army Group commander, now informed Hitler of his intention to carry out a gradual withdrawal of the Army to the line Bologna – Lake Comacchio; a bold suggestion which surprisingly enough seemed acceptable to Hitler (with the usual reservations). This information, however, is not based on original documents, but appears in Major v. Schramm's study:

At 1800 hrs 24 Oct v. Vietinghoff reported the intentin of withdrawing Tenth Army during the coming month to a line from the hills south of Bologna – Budrio – Molinella – Argenta – western shore of Lake Comacchio, there passing to permanent defence. ...

(v. Schramm, op cit, para 128)

Thereupon, on 25 Oct, the Fuehrer declared himself in agreement with the further weakening of the Adriatic front, ground however to be yielded only under pressure ...

(Ibid, para 129)

25 Oct

192. In the late hours of 24 Oct 29 Pz Gren Div had lost M. Belmonte. Moderate pressure was reported from all sectors. Armoured reconnaissance groups had followed the withdrawals in the

Savio – Ronco area to the road just west of Casamurata, to Campiano and to the Bevano bridge of Route 16. But all attention was focussed on the Vedriano sector, where the fate of the Army was precariously hanging in the balance. 3 Bn 200 Pz Gren Regt had rejoined its division; 4 Para Regt was being built up between 90 Pz Gren Div and 98 Inf Div; the best available troops were in the fight; Heidrich had arrived during the day, and thus the two ace divisional commanders of the Army Group were now in the sector. But needs be, one regiment of 1 Para Div would have to remain at the front south-east of Forli; 26 Pz Div would have to remain on the left wing lest 1 Cdn corps bypass Ravenna on the West. All that could be done had been done, and if the Allies were in a position to throw additional forces into the fray, a strategic breakthrough could no longer be prevented. Telephone conversations were interlarded with anxious and hopeful exclamations: “If Heidrich fails it means a big withdrawal”; “All our hopes rest on Heidrich”; “Can Heidrich do it?”. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 22-26 Oct, Appx 513, tel cons 25 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285))

193. At 1800 hrs General v. Senger and the headquarters staff of 14 Pz Corps assumed command over the forces previously commanded by General Feurstein and the headquarters of 51 Mtn Corps (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 25 Oct 44). Both generals were well known and respected in the Army’s staff circles. The departure of Feurstein was regretted and ascribed to political considerations (op cit, tel cons 23 Oct 44). Late in the evening the situation in the critical sector seemed to come to hand, and Wentzell was told that the penetrations had been sealed off (op cit, tel cons 25 Oct 44).

#### ALLIED OFFENSIVES HALTED BY MUD AND WATERS

(26 – 31 OCT)

26 Oct

194. Due to uninterrupted heavy rainfall the weather had now become the dominant factor. Traffic across the river Po was paralysed at times by storm and rain; Allied air activity was at a standstill; in most sectors the commitment of armour and heavy weapons had become impossible. Regarding the events in the critical sector, Tenth Army’s Intelligence Summary contained a somewhat enigmatic entry: “Due to the continuous rain 94 prisoners were taken in the area of 85 and 88 U.S. Inf Divs” (G.M.D.S. – 63426, Int Summary Tenth Army, 26 Oct 44).<sup>63</sup> A bridgehead across the Ronco, which had been established during the night 25/26 Oct by 4 Brit Inf Div 4 km south-west of Forlimpopoli, was wiped out during the day, and 264 prisoners were taken (ibid). This German counter-attack was carried out by elements 278 Inf Div supported by Tiger tanks from 508 G.H.Q. Hy Tk Bn. The following units participated: 1 Bn 992 Gren Regt, 7 Coy 993 Gren Regt (i.e. one company of 2 Bn 993 Gren Regt), 2 Bn 994 Gren Regt, 4 Bn 278 Arty Regt (all from 278 Inf Div), and elements 508 G.H.Q. Hy Tk Bn. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 26 Oct 44)

195. On the previous day concern had been felt regarding a possible intervention of 1 U.S. Armcd Div at the critical point. According to Wentzell these fears had proven groundless, and the situation now seemed to justify some measure of optimism:

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<sup>63</sup> These prisoners were taken by 1 Para Regt (G.M.D.S. – 63426/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 551, sit rep 26 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D286))



W: With Heidrich going in, the front might hold.

R: But it is only a temporary solution.

The next problem would be the disengagement of troops for the creation of a new Army Reserve. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/7, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 22-26 Oct, Appx 534, tel cons 26 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285)) In the evening General Schlemm told General v. Vietinghoff on the telephone that in a letter dated 20 Oct he had been informed by General Conrath, Inspector of Paratroops, of the Reichsmarshal's intention of placing General Heidrich in command of 1 Para Corps; Colonel Schulz to command 1 Para Div; Schlemm to be entrusted with the creation of a new Corps. According to Schlemm "this created a difficult situation". v. Vietinghoff told him to wait for official orders (*ibid*). In view of Vietinghoff's devastating criticism of Schlemm's performance (para 164 above) it may be reasonable to surmise that this development was not unexpected.

27 Oct

196. Pouring rains were drenching the front; heavy fogs shrouded the mountain areas; rivers were in flood; many roads were impassable. No engagements of consequence were reported from any part of the front. General Lemelsen arrived at the headquarters of Tenth Army, and took over command from General v. Vietinghoff, who then moved to Army Group headquarters on the morning of 28 Oct. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 27 Oct 44)

197. According to Wentzell 4 Brit Div had received a marked setback at the Ronco, and had lost almost a whole brigade. This was due to the fact that the Ronco had been crossed at normal water level; whereupon the waters had risen and could not be recrossed when the counter-attack went in. Wentzell told Runkel of a message from the High Command which expressed extraordinary displeasure at the withdrawal [to the Ronco] in the absence of pressure. This meant that in future disengagements for transfer could only be carried out if the opponent were attacking, or if the sector could be bolstered by means of spreading neighbouring formations. (G.M.D.S. – 63426/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 27-31 Oct, Appx 553, tel cons 27 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D285))

198. As ever after a critical period it was now necessary to straighten out the formations which had become entangled at difficult moments. Most urgent was the preparation of defence lines in the Bologna area, where the Allied forces might soon resume major operations. Many changes in commands and dispositions were to be made. The composition of Tenth Army on 27 Oct (before the changes began to create a new picture) was as follows:

#### Tenth Army

(from West to East)

1 Para Corps

94 Inf Div

16 S.S. Pz Gren Div

	4 Para Div
	65 Inf Div
	29 Pz Gren Div
	362 Inf Div. <sup>1</sup>
14 Pz Corps	90 Pz gren Div
	1 Para Div
	98 Inf Div
	334 Inf Div
	715 Inf Div
76 Pz Corps	305 Inf Div. <sup>2</sup>
	356 Inf Div
	278 Inf Div
	26 Pz Div <sup>3</sup>
Venetian Coast Command	114 Jg Div
	162 (Turc) Inf Div <sup>4</sup>

(G.M.D.S. – 63426/1, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 26 and 27 Oct 44; 63426/11, Tenth Army, sit maps 21-30 Oct, sit map 27 and 28 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D305))

The above order of battle is confirmed and enlarged by the detailed situation maps of the three corps for 28 Oct 44:

Photostat 981A10.(D306)	1 Para Corps Sit Map 28 Oct 44
Photostat 981A10.(D307)	14 Pz Corps Sit Map 28 Oct 44
Photostat 981A10.(D308)	76 Pz Corps Sit Map 28 Oct 44

A graphic tabulation of the fighting strength of the Army's divisions is also being retained in photostatic form (G.M.D.S. – 63426/8, Tenth Army, W.D. 9, Appx 27-31 Oct, Appx 561, 27 Oct 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D309))

199. In the meantime Fourteenth Army had been largely denuded of formations with a fighting value, and now consisted of:

#### Army Headquarters

232 Inf Div  
 elements 42 Inf Div (gradually moving to Tenth Army)  
 4 Ital Mtn Div (“Monte Rosa”) (elements arriving)  
 135 Fortress Brigade

#### Corps Lombardia with:

148 Inf Div

3 Ital Inf Div ("San Marco")  
2 Ital Inf Div ("Litterio") (en route from Germany)

Army Reserve:

Nil

A schematic order of battle of Fourteenth Army on 1 Nov 44 appears as Appendix "Y" to this report. (G.M.D.S. – 65922/2, Fourteenth Army, W.D. 5, Appx 5, Appx 1 Oct – 31 Dec 44, Appx 1075, 1 Nov 44) (Photostat 981A10.(D311))

28-31 Oct

200. During the last four days of October the situation continued to be dominated by the adverse weather conditions. Between the Via Emilia and the sea, east of the Ronco 1 Cdn Corps was withdrawn into Army Reserve; west of the Ronco 3 Para Regt moved off to rejoin its division. 114 Jg Div and 26 Pz Div extended their respective positions to the right. On 29 Oct a deep penetration north of Meldola heralded the beginning of the fight for Forli.

#### CONCLUSION

201. Due to the surprise achieved by the Eighth Army at the beginning of the Battle of Rimini, the Adriatic portion of the Gothic Line (Green Line I) was not fully manned; neither could it be held by the Germans flooding back to the line simultaneously with the pursuing forces. What had originally been meant to be the Winter Line had thus been lost. By the end of October however, with a skill and determination worthy of a better cause, Army Group "C" had succeeded in ensuring the continuation of the German hold on Northern Italy for another winter. The Allies, now in full ascendancy, were nevertheless the gainers in this campaign of attrition, and many of the enemy's best formations, worn out or pinned down in Italy, were unavailable for other undertakings designed to prolong the existence of the dying Third Realm.

202. At the time of writing, the War Diaries of Tenth Army and 76 Pz Corps for the remainder of the Italian campaign are not in Allied possession, nor is there any certain knowledge of their whereabouts. It is therefore not possible to supply a narrative based on enemy documents for the last four months of Canadian operations in Italy.

62. 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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1. **Plus elements 42 Jg Div; balance following**

2. **Under command of 76 Pz Corps since 25 Oct (Tenth Army, W.D. 9, 25 Oct 44)**

3. **Plus remnants 20 G.A.F. Div**

4. **In reserve about 10 km north-west of Ravenna (op cit, sit map 27 and 28 Oct)**