

CHAPTER 7

PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN

THE 442d Infantry and the 232d Engineers closed into the Peninsular Base Section Staging Area at Pisa at 1600, March 25. Both units were assigned to Fifth Army, attached to IV Corps, and placed under the operational control of the 92d Infantry Division, Major General E. M. Almond commanding.

The regimental supply section immediately got busy drawing new organizational equipment. Vehicles, radios, crew-served weapons, and many other necessary items rolled into the area in a steady stream.

The men were not permitted to leave the staging area, inasmuch as the presence of the 442d Infantry in Italy was a closely-kept secret. Together with elements of the 92d Division, the regiment was to crack the western anchor of the Gothic Line. The center of these fortifications had been pierced during the Fifth Army's fall offensive but no one had yet been able to pry the Germans loose from the western end.

March 28 saw the regiment leave the staging area and move to a bivouac at San Martino, near the walled city of Lucca. The move was made in absolute secrecy, under cover of darkness. All units utilized their time for training. Makeshift ranges were set up, and the men spent hours adjusting their new weapons to the greatest possible accuracy. New replacements who had seen little or no combat practiced small-unit problems with their squads and platoons far into the night.

Training and command inspections by the staff of the 92d Division occupied the regiment's time until April 2d. The next day General Mark W. Clark, now the Commanding General of the 15th Army Group, visited the regiment and briefly inspected the 100th Battalion.

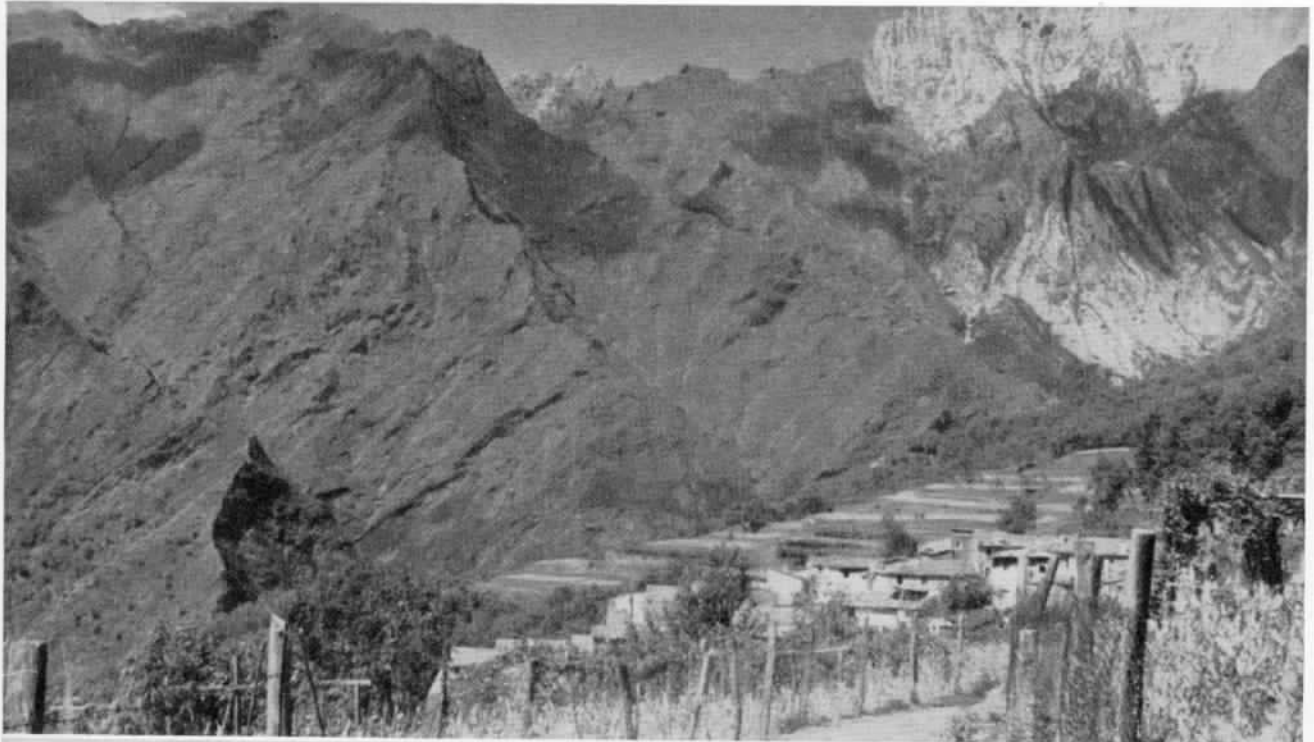
The regimental commander, with the battalion commanders and their staffs, had been going over possible plans of attack since the regiment's arrival in Italy. The enemy's elaborate system of fortifications, hewn out of solid rock and reinforced with concrete, formed the western anchor of the Gothic line. These positions were so constructed as to give interlocking fires and all-around protection to the defenders. They also afforded observation for the

enemy's mobile field guns as well as his batteries of long-range coastal rifles located on Punta Bianca, a peninsula jutting out from La Spezia. They were dug into mountain peaks rising almost sheer from the coastal plain and leading up to Mt. Folgorito (2800 ft.) and Mt. Carchio (3000 ft.), which gave the enemy unlimited observation of the Ligurian Coast and Highway 1. So long as the enemy held out here the route north to Genoa was untenable. These marble masses were bare of vegetation save for scanty scrub growth. Their surfaces were steep and in places precipitous. The enemy forces, which the enemy had been upgrading for three weeks prior to the attack, were veteran troops of the 281st Regiment, 148th Division, later reinforced by five crack infantry battalions which had initially been in reserve.

Colonel Miller, the regimental commander, was faced with the necessity of making a difficult decision: whether to throw two battalions against these formidable positions in a frontal assault or to attempt an encircling movement which would send one battalion into a 2500-foot climb up the slopes of Mt. Folgorito in total darkness, to be followed by a dawn attack over unknown terrain. Colonel Miller discussed the situation with his 3d Battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Alfred A. Pursall. Colonel Pursall decided that his battalion could make the gamble work, and the die was cast.

Beginning at 1945 April 3d, the 3d and 100th Battalions moved to forward assembly areas under cover of darkness. The 100th Battalion moved into the vicinity of Vallecchia. The 3d Battalion marched to an assembly area in the small mountain town of Azzano on the Mt. Cavallo hill mass, separated by a narrow valley from Mt. Folgorito and under full observation of the enemy. The climb to the assembly area required five hours under full equipment, and a misstep meant a fall of anywhere from fifteen to 150 feet down the mountainside. All the following day both battalions remained hidden in houses and olive groves, since the success of the entire operation hinged on secrecy.

During the night of April 4 the 100th Battalion moved up to its line of departure on the "Florida" hill mass, effecting the relief of elements of the



These were the enemy's rock-ribbed defenses



Men pulled themselves up by low-growing shrubs

371st Infantry. The enemy had not the slightest suspicion that a relief was taking place. The "Florida" hill was the southernmost of a series of saw-tooth hills culminating in the Mt. Folgorito peak to the north. The others were designated "Georgia," "Ohio 1, 2, and 3," and Mt. Cerretta. At the same time the regimental Cannon Company moved into position at Vallecchia and tied into the Fire Direction Center of the 599th Field Artillery Battalion, acting as an extra battery. Antitank Company, unable to use its guns effectively in the mountainous terrain, was split up into carrying parties and litter squads. Two platoons were assigned to the 3d Battalion and one each to the 100th and 2d Battalions.

Companies I and L of the 3d Battalion, reinforced by the machine-gun platoons of Company M, took off from Azzano at 2200 April 4. Reaching the valley floor, the men started the long climb toward the saddle between Mt. Folgorito and Mt. Carchio, from

where the attack was to be launched. The "trail" zigzagged constantly upward over the treacherous, shale-covered slope. The men, in full battle equipment, crawled for the most part on their hands and knees or pulled themselves up by a low-growing shrub or the rifle butt of the man above them. One man was hospitalized for concussion and bruises when a loosened boulder struck him and hurled him sixty feet down the slope. Many others suffered minor bruises and sprains, but no one turned back.

The attack on Mt. Folgorito was scheduled for 0500 April 5 without artillery preparation. Because of the eight-hour climb, the troops did not reach the Line of Departure until about 0530. However, the attack was in full swing by 0600, some time before dawn. Company L swung south along the saddle toward Mt. Folgorito and Company I sent one platoon north along a spur toward Mt. Carchio. Gun positions were seized almost without a struggle and the enemy killed or taken prisoner, and it became

evident that complete surprise had been achieved. The ridgeline was secure by 0730, but the enemy was now thoroughly aware of the threat to his rear. It was considered inadvisable to waste manpower trying to seize Mt. Carchio at this time, so the platoon of Company I contented itself with driving the enemy into the recesses of the peak and destroying two observation posts with artillery fire. Company L drove rapidly toward the peak of Mt. Folgorito, but the men were halted and forced to take cover about half way to their objective.

The enemy, desperately holding to his key observation post, let loose with a storm of small-arms, mortar, and artillery fire. Casualties were fairly heavy, but Company L drove off a sharp counter-attack and reached the base of the peak. The enemy in the observation post on the summit now called down a ring of protective fire from field artillery and the Punta Bianca coastal guns. The attacking troops filtered through the fire by ones and twos and stormed the summit. In a fierce hand-to-hand action the enemy lost 6 dead and 4 captured while the remainder of the force fled down the west side of the peak.

The luck of the battalion held out until Company K and the mortar platoon of M left Azzano and started for Mt. Folgorito in daylight. Enemy observers picked up the column and laid in a barrage of 120mm mortar fire. Company K lost 3 killed and 20 wounded. Company M suffered twenty casualties as both units were caught in the bottom of a draw from which there was no escape.

The 100th Battalion had attacked to the north at 0500 April 5 behind a tremendous demonstration of power by the artillery. The 599th and 329th Field Artillery Battalions, the Regimental Cannon Company, Company B of the 895th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company B of the 84th Chemical Battalion (4.2 mortar), and the Assault Gun Platoon of the 758th Tank Battalion had all let fly a ten-minute concentration on the enemy positions.

The battalion's first objective was the "Georgia" peak. This knob of solid rock contained at least fifteen emplacements manned by a company of the enemy. Although it had been shelled and attacked over a five-month period, it had never been reduced. The leading men had advanced about 150 yards toward their objective when someone tripped a mine. In the scramble for cover seven more mines went off, causing heavy casualties and bringing down grenades and machine-gun fire on the attackers. The

attack faltered and stopped, inasmuch as many of the men in Company A were inexperienced replacements.

The commander of the leading platoon then committed his support squad to the flank. At the time the leading scout of the squad was Staff Sergeant (then Private First Class) Henry Y. Arao. Leading the attack, he crawled through the heavily mined approaches to a machine-gun emplacement. Just at this point a grenade burst wounded the squad leader, and the green troops faltered again. Quickly and efficiently Sergeant Arao administered first aid to his squad leader and reorganized the squad. As his men were pinned down by more grenade bursts, he crawled to one emplacement alone, tossed in a grenade and charged. He killed the gunner with his tommy gun and forced the assistant gunner to surrender. As another gun took him under fire he made his way toward the emplacement, tossed another grenade and killed the crew as they came out of the emplacement. Demoralized, the rest of the enemy fled toward a bomb-proof dugout. With the enemy driven off by Sergeant Arao's action, the platoon moved up and seized its objective.

In the same action under similar circumstances Private First Class Sadao S. Munemori, an assistant squad leader of Company A, also contributed immeasurably to the success of the attack. When his unit was pinned down by the enemy's grazing fire and his squad leader was wounded, command of the squad devolved on him. He made frontal, one-man attacks through direct fire and knocked out two machine guns with grenades. Withdrawing under murderous fire and showers of grenades from other enemy emplacements, he had nearly reached a shell crater occupied by two of his men when an unexploded grenade bounced from his helmet and rolled toward his helpless comrades. He rose into the withering fire, dived for the grenade, and smothered the blast with his own body. By his swift, supremely heroic action, Private First Class Munemori saved two of his men at the cost of his life and did much to clear the path for his company's advance.

By direction of the President Private First Class Munemori was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, his country's highest decoration.

By 0520 the 100th Battalion had gained the crest of the "Georgia" peak. It had taken the 442d Combat Team exactly thirty-two minutes to accomplish a mission that had resisted the best efforts of friendly troops for five months. Sergeant Arao, who had



The cost—these men died in a mortar barrage on the "Ohio" peaks

sparked the attack, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

The enemy, although he had lost the first round, was not whipped. He threw heavy concentrations of mortar and artillery fire on the reverse slopes of "Georgia" as the troops started down to attack the first of the "Ohio" peaks. Enemy machine guns set in bunkers on the forward slopes of "Ohio 1" opened up, pinning the attackers to the ground. Still another company was stopped with heavy losses as it attempted to maneuver to the left flank of the leading elements. Mortar and such artillery fire as could be used at close quarters failed to dent the well-constructed emplacements. Finally the troops were forced to filter through the heavy fire and close to hand-grenade range. The battle raged furiously all through the 5th, inasmuch as the bunkers had to be approached and destroyed one by one, but the position was still not reduced. Then, at midnight, the enemy mounted a strong counterattack which caught no one napping. After an hour-long fire-fight at close quarters the enemy fell back.

The day's action had cost the Germans 30 dead, 12 bunkers destroyed or captured, 17 machine guns

and three 75mm mountain howitzers captured, and several tons of ammunition and supplies taken intact. The price, however, was terribly high: 20 men killed and 123 wounded.

April 6 saw the 100th and 3d Battalions close the pincers on the enemy troops still holding the three "Ohio" peaks and Mt. Cerretta. The 2d Battalion was also committed to action. It had gained the Mt. Folgorito ridge during the night and was now poised for an attack on Mt. Carchio and Mt. Belvedere to the north, the peak that looked down on the city of Massa.

In the 100th Battalion sector, after a two-hour effort against the first of the "Ohio" peaks had yielded only slight gains, the regimental commander called for an air mission on the objective. As the planes arrived each made an initial pass for range. Ground observers with the 100th Battalion relayed corrections to officers at regimental headquarters who in turn relayed them to the pilots through air liaison personnel there. In this way the pilots were able to achieve pin-point bombing and strafing with devastating results. As the planes came in the Nisei, with complete disregard for the enemy, stood up and watched the show as if it were a three-ring circus. Then, behind a ten-minute artillery barrage, they went back to work. Although the enemy was battered and stunned small groups resisted desperately with machine guns, small arms, and grenades. The close coordination of their fire had been destroyed by the air and artillery attack, however, and they were no match for the determined attackers who closed rapidly with each group and wiped it out.

Meanwhile Company L of the 3d Battalion had been driving south for Mt. Cerretta. Intense mortar and artillery barrages together with a constantly lifting and falling fog made any progress slow and dangerous. The enemy group on Mt. Cerretta was determined to hold out, evidently suspecting that they were completely cut off from any help. The peak was taken only after a stiff battle that cost the company 2 killed and 11 wounded. The enemy lost 20 killed and 11 captured. At 1900 Company L and patrols from Company C made contact and the destruction of the Germans' main line of resistance was complete.

In the north Company F had reduced Mt. Carchio by noon while the rest of the 2d Battalion began working on the wide, rolling top of Mt. Belvedere. This, however, was slow going. The Germans had intrusted the defense of Belvedere to the crack Ma-

chine Gun Battalion Kesselring, veteran troops. The Nazi battalion gave ground grudgingly and battered the attackers with a steady stream of mortar fire and concentrations from the coastal rifles on Punta Bianca.

Still, the enemy lost heavily. The regiment took 106 prisoners, mostly from the 281st Regiment. This almost entirely eliminated the 1st Battalion of that regiment.

On the left flank of the regiment the 370th Infantry had made extremely limited gains against heavy enemy mortar barrages. As a result the left flank of the regiment was now exposed to a depth of about two and a half miles. The right flank was completely exposed, but was not so dangerous in that the terrain was extremely rough and the sector was garrisoned by low-grade Italian troops. Consequently the regiment devoted most of April 7 to consolidation and organization of the ground.

The 3d Battalion wiped out a force which had been infiltrating toward Mt. Folgorito from the Colle Piano spur, on the western flank of the Combat Team. Company K was assigned to get behind the enemy strong point and clean off the spur entirely. However, the company missed direction in the broken terrain and ended up capturing 20 Germans, 4 81mm mortars, and a large supply of ammunition near the town of Strinata, several thousand yards from where they were supposed to be.

The 100th Battalion cleaned out their area of some stray Germans and generally improved their positions. The men did what they could to help the stalled 370th Infantry on the left flank by fire, but to no avail.

While the rest of the Combat Team was cleaning up its back yard, the 2d Battalion was still slugging it out with the Machine Gun Battalion Kesselring on Mt. Belvedere. Company F finally broke the deadlock and cleared off most of the ground, although there were still pockets of the enemy scattered on the peak, most of whom surrendered later. A great deal of the credit for the defeat of the enemy went to Technical Sergeant Yukio Okutsu. Held up by a strongpoint of three machine guns, Okutsu crawled to within thirty yards of the first emplacement and killed the crew with two well-placed hand grenades. Running from cover to cover, he approached the second nest and tossed in a single grenade. Two of the crew were wounded and the other two surrendered. As he started to crawl toward the third gun, Sergeant Okutsu was momentarily

stunned by a German slug which ricocheted off his helmet. Recovering, he charged several enemy riflemen, firing his tommy gun, and forced them to withdraw. He then rushed the machine-gun nest from the flank and captured the entire crew of four. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

On April 8 the 3d Battalion pushed down the Colle Piano ridgeline and occupied Montignoso, gathering up 16 prisoners on the way. With the fall of Montignoso, Highway 1 was open almost to Massa, cutting the regiment's supply and evacuation haul from sixteen hours to two.

While the occupation of Montignoso was taking place, Company G of the 2d Battalion was attacking Colle Tecchione. Colle Tecchione was another spur which ran west from Mt. Belvedere and ended on the eastern outskirts of Massa. Company G came under constant artillery and mortar fire. The leading men came under small-arms fire after they had advanced down the spur about two hundred yards. The ridge was defended by about two companies of Germans well dug in and supported by mortars and machine guns. After a three-hour firefight, 8 Germans were killed and 6 taken prisoner along with 3 machine guns and 4 mortars. Company G was unable to clear the ridge, however, and dug in for the night. From 2000 to 0200 the next morning, the positions were under constant mortar and small-arms fire, and at midnight the Germans counter-attacked, but were beaten back.

The other two companies of the battalion, E and F, moved down the northern slopes of Mt. Belvedere to attack the towns of Altagnana and Pariana. Company E on the right got into Altagnana without a great deal of opposition. The attack had been launched at 1800 and the town was under control by midnight. A patrol probing into Pariana drew violent opposition and withdrew.

On the left flank, the 370th Infantry still had not advanced and control of the coastal sector passed to the 473d Infantry at 1100, April 8. The 473d immediately launched a drive for Massa.

The following day a bitter battle developed for Pariana. The remnants of the Machine Gun Battalion Kesselring, about 150 Germans, were assembled in the town, supported by automatic weapons and mortars, a tank, a self-propelled gun, and an armored car. After an artillery preparation and a battle that lasted through the entire morning, the 2d Platoon of Company F, supported by Company H's machine guns, succeeded in occupying the edge of

the town at 1400. In doing so they captured 8 German mortars and 75 cases of ammunition intact and promptly turned them against the enemy. In the fighting that followed, 65 Germans were killed, 8 machine guns and 4 more mortars were captured and control of Pariana passed to Company F, although all pockets of resistance were not subdued until dark. In the last roundup, 62 prisoners were captured, including 3 German officers. That was the end of the Machine Gun Battalion Kesselring. There may have been a few stragglers not accounted for, but the battalion was finished as a fighting unit.

Meanwhile, on the left of the regimental sector, the 3d Battalion was driving for the Frigido River line. At 0830, Companies I and K started out to cross the Mt. Belvedere-Colle Tecchione ridge and found it, as well as Colle Tecchione itself, still full of Germans. Company K engaged the enemy forces while the mortar platoon of Company M fired for three hours. The terrible pounding drove the enemy into the open, where they were promptly hit by artillery. Company K took 50 prisoners, 7 machine guns, and 4 mortars on the hill. The battalion then passed through Company G on the ridge and reached the Frigido by nightfall.

The 100th Battalion, which had been protecting

the regimental right and rear on Mt. Folgorito, Mt. Carchio, and Mt. Belvedere, was in the process of being relieved by the 370th Infantry. When the relief was completed, the 100th assembled around Altagnana and Pariana as a regimental reserve.

The enemy's expected defense of the Frigido River never developed. The badly battered Germans had pulled back beyond Carrara, probably to a line of defense on the high ground to the northeast, between Carrara and Aulla. There was considerable evidence that the regiment had been successful in its chief mission: to draw off some of the enemy's scant central reserve from Bologna prior to the Fifth Army's all-out push in that sector. This evidence received further confirmation when the regiment hit the enemy's last line of defense and prisoners began to come in from units which had not been in the sector before the drive started.

On April 10 the 442d Infantry crossed the Frigido River and drove three thousand yards north to occupy the high ground before the marble-mining center of Carrara, a city of about fifty thousand people. While the 3d Battalion moved rapidly ahead through the foothills above the coastal plain, Company E of the 2d Battalion seized 3000-ft. Mt. Brugiana, which dominated the city itself. Elements of the 100th Battalion occupied Antona on the eastern flank of the regiment while Antitank Company blocked the roads leading into Massa from the east.

On the left flank, the 473d Infantry had taken Massa without a battle, but had still not advanced abreast of the leading companies of the 442d by some three thousand yards. As soon as Massa was occupied, the enemy cut loose with his Punta Bianca guns, keeping the city and Highway 1 under heavy fire for several days. Parts of the city were badly wrecked by the shelling and our lines of communication were constantly cut. Wire crews were forced to work day and night repairing lines to the rear.

Company L moved down on Carrara on April 11, and found the city in complete control of the partisans. The Germans had pulled out to the northeast. Company K by-passed the city and pushed north into the mountains again, taking Gragnana and Sorgnano without opposition. Other units of the battalion outposted the southern outskirts of Carrara until the 473d Infantry advanced far enough to cover the left flank. The 100th Battalion had made an eight-hour march over a mountain trail to seize Colonnata and outpost the regimental right flank.



Wire crews worked day and night keeping the lines in



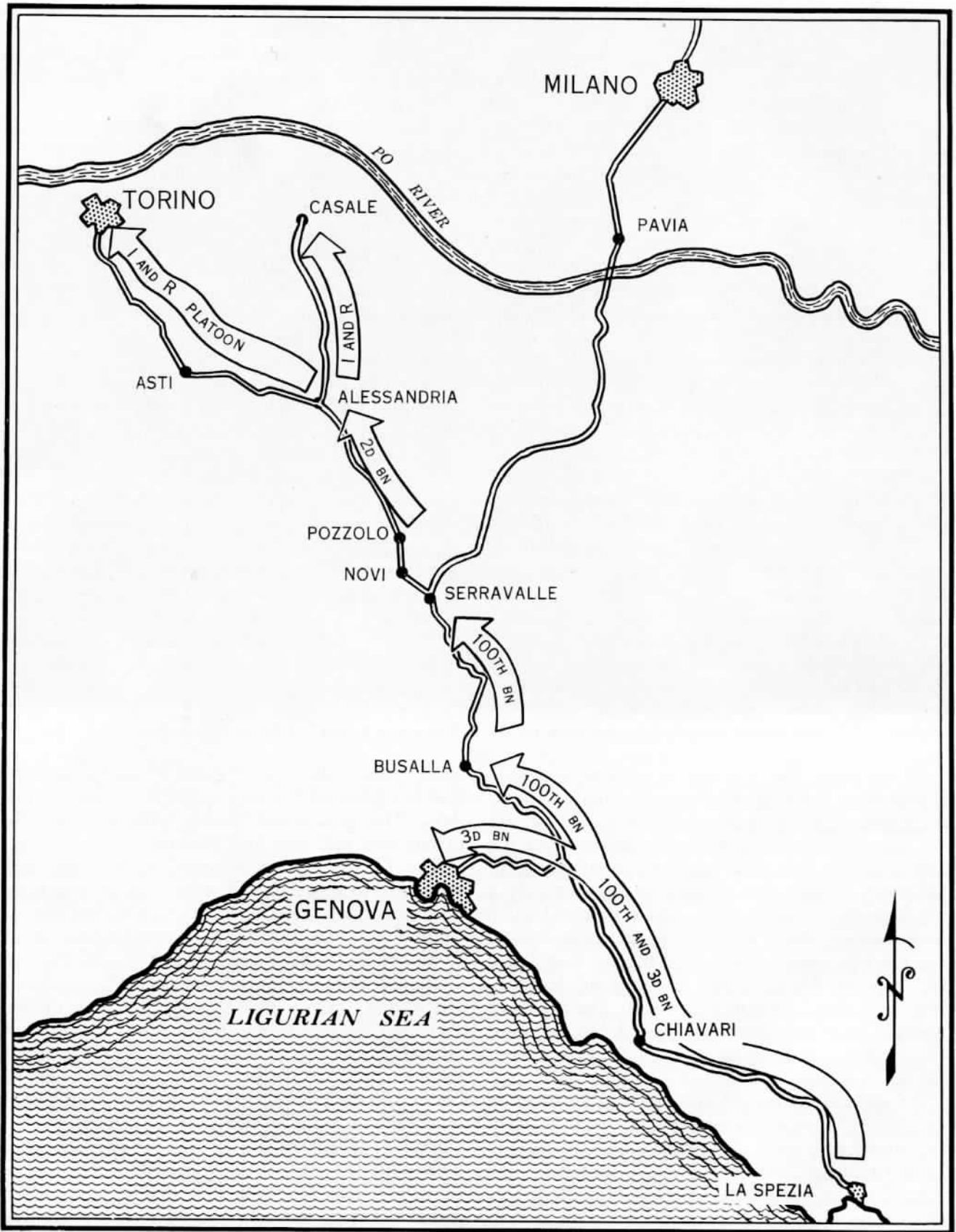
Combat Team supply convoy moves across the Frigido River over a by-pass built by the 232d Engineers

At this point the regiment was about to outrun its supplies. The 232d Engineers had not succeeded in clearing Highway 1 from Massa to Carrara for two reasons. The road was still under sniper fire from the west side, and they were running out of bulldozers. Three dozers had been blown up by a very ingenious German mine. The enemy had wired three 12-inch shells together, fused them with a pressure type device, and buried them a foot and a half deep in the road, out of range of detectors. They had then resurfaced the road. In all three cases the dozer operators were injured, but there was still another man ready to climb in the driver's seat and take a chance.

The situation remained substantially the same on the 12th. The engineers, assisted by a crew of civilians armed with picks and shovels, had the road to Carrara open by 1730. Supplies and hot food rolled forward to the companies. The only way the supply vehicles could get to the 100th Battalion was to

bump three miles over the ties of an old railroad that had been used to haul quarried marble in other days. The jeeps stood the trip fairly well, but the drivers were still twitching two days later.

The 2d Battalion had moved up and was now preparing to attack Mt. Pizzacuto, some five miles north of Carrara. The companies moved out of Carrara at 0730, April 13, marching in column. Company G, leading the advance, passed through Gragnana and Castelpoggio without being molested, but as the leading elements hit the base of Mt. Pizzacuto all hell broke loose. The Germans had observation on the road from Fort Bastione to the left front and they began covering the road with air bursts. At the same time self-propelled guns on the objective cut loose at Company G with direct fire. Observers called for fire on the enemy observation posts, but the only artillery battalion not out of range had been caught in the same barrage at Gragnana and could not get the guns into position. The



ITALY: The Breakthrough, La Spezia to Torino

2d Battalion was forced to dig in for the night.

The 100th Battalion had also been assembled and was following the 2d at twenty-five hundred yards. As the troops moved into Gragnana, they were also caught in the barrage and forced to take cover in houses for the better part of six hours. The 3d Battalion, assembled in Carrara in reserve, and the regimental command post, also in Carrara, took an all-day pounding from the coastal guns on Punta Bianca. Two jeeps, a 2½-ton truck, and an ambulance were completely wrecked by heavy caliber fire which fell around the command post. Building walls dropped as if they had been made of cardboard. Probably the bravest people in town that day belonged to the Carrara Fire Department. Before the shells had stopped falling, they wheezed up in an ancient fire engine and determinedly proceeded to extinguish the fires in a blazing truck and jeep.

During the night of the 13th, Company B left Gragnana and marched to Castelpoggio to reinforce the 2d Battalion command group in the town. Castelpoggio was extremely vulnerable to attack from the left flank, in the direction of Fort Bastione. It was extremely fortunate that the precaution was taken. The Germans infiltrated to within fifty yards of the outskirts under cover of the predawn fog on the 14th. Just at daybreak, they launched their attack in battalion strength. Company B met the attack and fought until 0830, supported by Company H's mortars. When the smoke cleared, there were 16 dead Germans and 8 wounded in the area. Our own losses had been 5 killed and 5 wounded. The enemy battalion, identified as the 1st Battalion, 361st *Panzer Grenadier* Regiment, withdrew toward Fort Bastione.

Meanwhile, Company G had jumped off against Mt. Pizzacuto at 0800, meeting considerable resistance. However, the artillery and mortar support which was now available carried the attack to the objective by 1000. The men continued the advance down the west slope during the afternoon. By nightfall 12 Germans had been killed and 54 captured along with large quantities of equipment. Company G then deployed to assault Fort Bastione and Company F took over the garrison of Mt. Pizzacuto.

Early that morning, before any action had taken place, six new replacements from the Provisional Company had left Castelpoggio with water and rations for Company G. The men were loaded down and unarmed. As they made their way up the trail, they were ambushed and captured by a German patrol. The men were taken to Fort Bastione and

questioned, but revealed nothing but the required name, rank, and serial number to their captors. The Germans stripped them of equipment and sent them to the rear. As they passed through Vallechia, they were caught in an American artillery barrage. One guard was killed and the prisoners managed to beat the other two to death. They then made their way back through the German lines, reaching the 100th Battalion Aid Station at Gragnana late in the afternoon. The men had very little information on German positions in the general vicinity, but they were able to give valuable assistance in describing the layout of Fort Bastione.

The attack on the fort was made on April 15, preceded by a bombing attack and an artillery preparation at 1005. Immediately afterward, Company G closed in and seized the fort at 1300. One platoon then continued northwest and took Mt. Grugola along with Company F, which had advanced from Mt. Pizzacuto. Opposition was not especially heavy and the peak was taken in about two hours.

In the meantime, heavy fighting had broken out to the left rear of the regiment on La Bandita Ridge, opposite Castelpoggio. The 232d Engineers had taken over the ridge from elements of the 3d Battalion. At the same time, Company C had attacked down the forward slope to help the 473d Infantry in its battle for Ortonovo. Strong resistance developed and at 1450 the Germans counterattacked, involving Company C and the engineers in a battle that lasted until dark. The enemy force, the 2d Battalion of the 286th Infantry, withdrew after Company M had dumped 400 rounds of mortar on their positions. The withdrawal was seen by the engineers' observation post and brought under fire. Company C had ten men wounded in the action. Captain Pershing Nakada, Commanding Officer of the 232d, was wounded along with several of his men.

During the night the Fifth Army offensive, for which the 92d Division and the 442d Infantry had been the decoys, jumped off against Bologna. The part the 442d Combat Team (less the 522d Field Artillery Battalion) had played in turning what had originally been intended as a diversion for the Fifth Army offensive into a full scale attack along the west coast of Italy had been a vital one. The 442d Infantry Regiment and the 232d Engineer (Combat) Company were later awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation for the ten days of bitter action between April 5 and April 14.

April 16 found the battle for the southwestern tip of La Bandita ridge still going on. Company C moved down the ridge, silencing one machine-gun nest after another. Company B moved to Fort Bastione and then attacked southwest down that ridge in an effort to clear the area and facilitate the advance of the 473d Infantry.

Meanwhile the 3d Battalion had moved out of Carrara and relieved the 2d Battalion in position. Company K passed over Mt. Pizzacuto and seized Mt. Tomaggiara after a brief fight, taking prisoners from the 4th High Mountain Battalion, another new unit in the sector. Company L moved northwest of Mt. Grugola and ran into outposts from the same unit.

The following day Company L launched an attack on the town of Fosdinovo. The leading elements advanced about two hundred yards and found themselves stopped cold by fire from what was evidently a numerically superior force. The enemy was defending Fosdinovo and Mt. Nebbione bitterly. This was the last dominant terrain before the vital road center of Aulla. If Aulla fell, the German forces in the La Spezia naval base and other garrisons up the coast would be hopelessly cut off from retreat to the Po Valley, as the partisans were reported to be gaining control of the route north from Genoa. The only other practical route was Highway 63, through Aulla and the Cisa Pass to Parma in the Po Valley and the 442d Infantry was threatening Aulla.

The hub of the enemy defenses was Mt. Nebbione. The 3d Battalion probed at the enemy defenses from every conceivable angle; elements of the 2d Battalion tried a wide encirclement to the south. All of these thrusts were beaten back. Perhaps the story would have been different if the men had been fresh, but most of them had been climbing up and down 3000-foot peaks for two weeks without much rest and they were dead on their feet.

In the coastal sector there was increasing evidence that the enemy was getting ready to pull out. On the 20th the coastal rifles on Punta Bianca suddenly fell silent, and partisans reported that the enemy had blown them up and abandoned the positions. There was no withdrawal in the regimental sector, however. If anything, the Germans had gathered in stragglers and remnants of other units to reinforce their positions.

The regiment had become somewhat scattered as a result of the various attempts which had been made to flank the enemy forces. On April 20, the batta-

lions regrouped in the vicinity of Marciaso and prepared to attack north instead of northwest. The mission was to cut Highway 63 and 6320 and then strike at Aulla. The 100th Battalion attacked on the right, with the 2d Battalion in the center. The 3d Battalion remained in position on the left with the mission of continuing the attack on Mt. Nebbione.

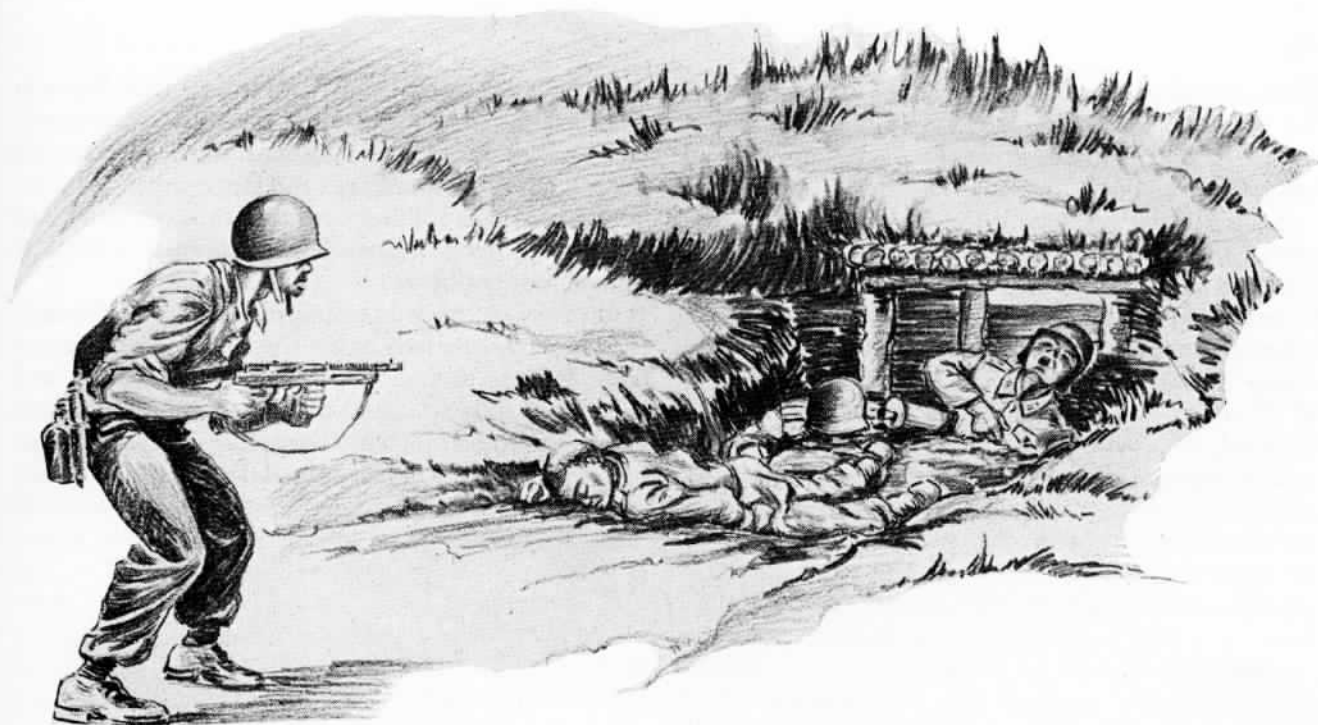
The following morning, both the 100th and 2d Battalions attacked at 0800, but progress was very slow. Contrary to the Division G-2 reports, the enemy had not yet begun to withdraw from the sector. Company E made a considerable dent in the enemy defenses when Colle Musatello fell in the early afternoon. The ridge was defended by the 3d Battalion of the crack 361st *Panzer Grenadier* Regiment, which had recently appeared in the sector from the Po Valley.

Leading the attack was First Lieutenant (then Second Lieutenant) Daniel K. Inouye. He first led his platoon in a rapid encirclement that resulted in the destruction of a German mortar observation post and brought the men to within forty yards of the main hostile force. The enemy, dug into bunkers and rock crevices, fought back fanatically, halting the advance with crossfire from three machine guns which swept an area devoid of cover and concealment. Lieutenant Inouye crawled up the slope to within five yards of the nearest gun and tossed two hand grenades into the nest. Before the enemy recovered, he stood up and raked the second gun with fire from his tommy gun, killing the crew. He was hit once, but he continued to fire at other emplacements until his arm was shattered by a grenade. In spite of his pain, he refused evacuation and directed the final assault which carried the ridge. In the attack, 25 Germans were killed and 8 others captured. Lieutenant Inouye received the Distinguished Service Cross.

The Germans counterattacked the positions late in the afternoon with two companies, but the attack was beaten off with terrible losses to the enemy.

Company K also found a chink in the enemy armor. One platoon struck the ridge between Posterla and Tendola to the north. With excellent mortar support, the enemy was driven off and Company K at least had a starting point for an attack on Tendola, held by about a company of Germans.

On the 22d, Company K hit Tendola with all three platoons, two from the north and one from the south. The resulting firefight lasted all day and on into the night. In the attack, Private Joe Hayashi,



Inouye raked the second gun with fire from his tommy gun, killing the crew

an acting squad leader, maneuvered his men up a steep terraced hill to within a hundred yards of the enemy. Then he advanced alone to a hostile machine-gun position and threw in a hand grenade, killing one man and forcing the other members of the crew to surrender. Seeing four more guns delivering fire on another squad of his platoon, he again exposed himself and fired a rifle grenade, destroying one nest. Then Hayashi crawled to the right flank of another gun and killed the entire crew of four. As the enemy troops supporting the gun fled, he got up to pursue them and was killed by a burst of fire from a machine pistol. He received the Distinguished Service Cross posthumously.

On April 23 the Germans pulled out, leaving only a covering shell as they attempted to beat the 34th Division in a race to get through Parma. Most of them stayed too long and were gathered in by the "Red Bull" Division. The covering force was easily overcome. Company L seized Mt. Nebbione and Company I pushed through and occupied Mt. Carbolo by 2000. On the right the 2d Battalion attacked San Terenzo, defended by Italian Bersagliero troops whom the Germans had left holding the well-known sack. Company E made a direct assault in addition to flanking the town from the east. Simultaneously Company G assaulted the high ground to the west. When it was all over, 40 of the enemy were dead

and 135 were prisoners. For this action, the battle of Pariana, and the massacre at Hill 617 in the Vosges Mountains in France, the 2d Battalion received the Distinguished Unit Citation.

Aulla fell to the regiment on the 25th as the 2d Battalion drove in from the east and a special task force made up of Companies B and F drove in from the northeast, having made a 10-mile forced march through the mountains.

From here on, the race began. The 473d Infantry entered Genoa on April 27 to find it pretty well under partisan control, the German general in command having surrendered his garrison. On the 28th, the 3d Battalion arrived in style after having alternately marched and ridden to the outskirts of the city. Here the men boarded street cars and rode to the western part of Genoa which they garrisoned, together with the high ground to the north and west. The same day the 100th Battalion reached Busalla, in the mountain pass which led from Genoa to the Po. The commanding officer outposted Isola del Cantone with tanks and infantry, after which the battalion halted and waited to see what would happen next.

The following day the 2d Battalion arrived on trucks, having begged, borrowed, and stolen enough gas to make the trip. The trucks rolled on to Alessandria in the Po Valley, where about one thousand

Germans called it quits without a struggle. Units of the battalion also "liberated" Asti, the champagne center. The liberation resulted in a colossal hangover.

April 30 saw the regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, led by Lieutenant Robert I. Wakuya, and a machine-gun section from Company H, make a wild dash for Turin through seventy-five miles of country that might or might not have been enemy held. The platoon made a thorough survey of Turin, which was held by the partisans, and returned.

The regimental interrogation team, First Lieu-

tenant Emil Janzen, AUS, and Lieutenant Romano Andreotti of the Royal Italian Army, was hopelessly swamped. Germans and Italians were surrendering by companies, battalions, and regiments. One or two guards was sufficient to capture a company, but what to do with it once it had surrendered was a tremendous problem.

On May 2, the war ended in Italy. The German armies which had fought so skillfully and bitterly from Salerno to the Po were finished. They had been hopelessly split and cut to pieces. The longest and bitterest of all the European campaigns was finished first, which was as it should be.