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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE  
1947 - 1948

OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "E", 442D INFANTRY REGIMENT  
(ATTACHED TO 92D DIVISION) AT SAN TERENZIO, ITALY,  
20-23 APRIL 1945  
(PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: COMPANY IN THE ATTACK

Major Thomas W. Akins, Infantry  
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO 2

OPERATIONS OF COMPANY C, 442D INFANTRY REGIMENT  
(ATTACHED TO 2ND DIVISION) AT SAN TERENZO, ITALY,  
20-23 APRIL 1945  
(PO VALINNY CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

INTRODUCTION

"Both battalions ground out a slow costly advance until 23 April, when elements of the Second Battalion executed a brilliant flanking movement and seized the town of San Terenzo." (1) The action of B Company, 442d Infantry Regiment, which was the so-called "elements" in this "brilliant flanking movement," on the 23d of April 1945, and its actions in leading up to and setting the stage for this "movement," are to be discussed in this monograph. The study will show how the exercise of initiative and aggressiveness of a small unit leader can mean the difference between a well executed, successful attack and a failure; and how the training of the individual soldier dictates the outcome of the small unit actions. The company action to be described depended upon how well one platoon sergeant had been trained and how his aggressive nature led him into a boldness of action that made for success in offensive combat. The study will further show that the action, which in retrospect was described as "brilliant," was actually only the normal action of a good, well-trained soldier and a good unit.

First, though, an examination of the organization of the 442d Infantry Regimental Combat Team is worth while, in order to better understand the type of individual and unit concerned. The regiment was composed of three battalions. The numbering of these battalions was not normal though. Instead of the usual "First Battalion", the 100th Infantry Battalion (Separate) had been absorbed by the regiment and had maintained its identity as the 100th Battalion. The usual Second and Third Battalions completed the infantry regiment. The 232d Engineer Company (Combat) furnished the organic engineer support for the regiment. The 522d Field Artillery Battalion,

(1) A-1, p. 38.

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OPERATIONS OF COMPANY (C) 442D INFANTRY REGIMENT  
(ATTACHED TO 52D DIVISION) AT SAN TERENZO, ITALY,  
20-23 APRIL 1945  
(PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

INTRODUCTION

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(1) A-1, p. 58.

which had been activated to complete the combat team, had been left in France when the regiment returned to Italy late in March 1945 to participate in the attack on the German Gothic Line in Northern Italy.

All of the enlisted men and many of the officers of the combat team were Japanese-Americans, who had volunteered for military service soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. These volunteers were augmented by some Japanese-Americans who were already in the army and who had been placed in non-combat units after the Pearl Harbor attack. This was the organization, its components and its individual members, that returned to Italy to a war that had been for several months as the press expressed it - "patrols were active on the Italian front."

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

In Northern Europe the Battle of the Bulge in the winter and the advances of the Allies in the west, coupled with comparative inactivity in Italy, had in truth made a forgotten front of the war in Italy, forgotten except in Italy. Here in the early spring of 1945, "the task before the 15th Army Group was to destroy some thirty divisions of the Nazis Army Group Southwest before they could retire to the northeast into the Alps toward Austria and prolong the struggle...."

Two lines of action were open to the enemy:

- a. He could fight where he stood, and if forced to withdraw could delay successively on each river line, using floods and demolitions to slow our advance, or
- b. He could attempt a voluntary withdrawal to a position behind the Po and subsequently the Adige.

Since he desperately needed the Po Valley, it was believed he would contest every foot of ground. It appeared to the Group Commander that if the 15th Army Group could achieve a quick break-through and a rapid exploitation, huge enemy forces might well be destroyed or captured before they could retire across the Po." (2)

(2) A-2, p. 7.

The plan was for the Army Group to make the main effort toward Bologna, in about the center of the leg of the Italian boot. And "of some importance to the main plan--destruction of enemy forces in Italy--but independent tactically, there was to be a diversion against Massa, on the battle front's extreme left flank, at the mountains' edge and overlooking the route up Italy's west coast." (3) (See Map A)

On 12 February 1945 the 442d Infantry Regiment was holding a series of mountain peaks, along the Italian frontier, in the Alps Maritime Mountains, extending north from Menton, France. The "Champagne Campaign" was still in session and the members of the regiment wondered how long the easy living would last before the time came to move to the Pacific. The consensus of opinion and the best rumors in the regiment in February 1945 all pointed to the shipment of the combat team to the Pacific. No one considered the possibility of a return to Italy, which made the secret of the movement of the regiment to Leghorn a very well kept secret. This secrecy was maintained until 5 April 1945. But on 12 February events began to happen in Italy that were to affect the regiment considerably. On that day the 15th Army Group issued Operations Instruction Number 3. This order was the basis for the initial attack of the 15th Army Group's April 1945 Po Valley Campaign. (4)

From 25 March 1945, when the 442d Combat Team, less the 522 Field Artillery Battalion, debarked in Leghorn, Italy, until dawn 5 April, when the beginning of the "diversion against Massa" was made, all the necessary preparations for a coordinated attack, including detailed reconnaissance to include company commanders and platoon leaders were carried on. It was now known in regimental headquarters that "five days prior to D-Day (17 April 1945) a preparatory attack was to be launched along the Ligurian Sea" and that the regiment would participate in this preparatory attack. (5) For this operation the regiment was attached to the 92d Infantry Division. The attack (5) A-2, p. 10; (4) A-3, p. 19; (5) A-3, p. 22.

began at dawn 5 April and had, by nightfall of 23 April progressed ever more rapidly to the point that on the morning of 24 April 1945 elements of the regiment were advancing against the fiercest sort of resistance.

#### THE REGIMENTAL SITUATION, 5 - 19 APRIL 1945

To better understand the situation confronting the regiment upon its attachment to the 92d Division, a brief explanation of the 1944-45 winter operations of the 92d Division is necessary. Since the previous October 1944, when the Division had arrived in the theater, there had been only limited attacks accomplished by the division. As early as that October the 92d Division had been assigned the mission of taking the city of Massa. (6) The German positions were occupied all through the winter, with the result that the approaches to these positions were honeycombed with minefields and artillery and mortar concentrations. These positions were generally on the military or topographical crests of very rugged hill masses and mountains that rose in sheer slopes, up from the plain on the west. During the attacks of the succeeding three weeks it was not uncommon to climb as much as eight hundred meters within as little as a thousand meters of horizontal distance. (7) (See Map 3)

The order of the 92d Division on 5 April 1945 was for the 442d Infantry "to take Massa, with the 473d Infantry on the left of the regiment to reach the Frigido River line. The 92d Division Reconnaissance Troop Commander and the Division Intelligence Agencies knew little about troop disposition and strength except to know that the Jerries were firmly entrenched on all the peaks. For months they had gone without prisoners and most of their information had been obtained through Partisans." (8) The sector of the regiment on the left was a flat plain, varying from two to five thousand meters in width, that had been cut up by canals and drainage ditches running generally from east to west. This plain joined the Ligurian Sea to the Apennine Mountains. The sector of the 442d Regiment was characterized by a series of

(6) A-4, p. 41; (7) It will be shown later that these typical mountain terrain noticeably influenced tactical employment of units as small as platoons; (8) Statement of Major Ivan Kovac, then 3-3 442d Infantry Regiment, 20 Dec 47.



Jagged, high mountain peaks, the sides of which dropped abruptly to the plain on the west and joined similar peaks on the east.

With the frontal attack on the morning of 8 April by the 100th Battalion, the regiment began its last push of the war. Attacking through the mountains, some of which reached heights of over one thousand two hundred meters, at five to eight thousand meters from the west coast of Italy, the regiment in fourteen days had worked its way to Carrara and old Fort Bastione and commanded the terrain as far as Sarzana and the peninsula that formed the harbor at Spezia. There were naval and/or railway guns of large caliber in the vicinity of Spezia, on Punta Bianco, that had hampered considerably the operation of the regiment until the peak with Fort Bastione on it had been taken.

E Company was protecting the regimental right flank by clearing and occupying a series of peaks that extended over some five thousand meters. However there was only patrol action on the part of the Germans. The Company was used in this manner from 13-18 April. (9) Then on 19 April E Company was released from regimental control and was attached to the 100th Battalion, whose command post had moved into Fort Bastione. (10) This change was necessitated by the attachment of B Company to the Second Battalion which was then operating to the west and south of Fort Bastione.

The opposition in this whole area was particularly severe and determined. The sector was defended by the 361st Panzer Grenadier Regiment and had machine gun battalions attached, one of which, the Kesselring Battalion, had been encountered by the regiment prior to this time. (11) A strong counterattack on the Second Battalion, which had come between the two companies and which was beaten off by the battalion command post group had made the attachment of E Company to the Second Battalion advisable. (12) Since the 100th Battalion was to attack Fosdinova and the ridge on which it was situated, and since all other companies of the regiment were more heavily engaged

(9) A-5, p. 13; (10) Personal knowledge, Statement of 1st Lt Byron E. Burns, then executive officer, E Company 442d Infantry, 28 Dec 47; (11) (12) Personal knowledge, Statement of Major Ivan F. Kovac, then S-3 442d Inf Regt, 20 Dec 47.

Company, this company was attached to the 100th Battalion and closed into the area of Fort Bastione on 18 April at 2100 hours.

The Third Battalion was attacking north of the fort toward Mount Nebione and Pulice. The plan of attack was to make a wide sweep around the right of Mount Nebione and then attack the mountain from both the East and North-east.

(13) Mount Nebione was a huge hill mass rising seven hundred meters and having long, steep slopes. The entire mass was void of trees and any sort of heavy vegetation. Since direct attacks up the south slopes had not carried the hill, the flanking move was considered.

Thus, on 19 April 1945, all companies in the regiment, including the 232 Engineer Company, were committed, and in most instances the companies were widely separated from each other fighting small, independent actions. However, looking at the picture as a whole, the companies of the regiment were, in effect, radiating from the old fort. This made for a tremendous frontage, which was increasing as gains were made.

At this time intelligence reports showed that the Germans were evacuating the naval base at Spezia, which indicated that a general withdrawal might be made in the sector. Any withdrawal had three routes that could be used by the enemy, north on Highway 1, or east on highways 62 and 65 which joined at Aulla. (14)

The advance of the 473d Infantry on the left of the regiment allowed that regiment to relieve some companies South-west of Fort Bastione. This made a change in plans advisable, so that the attack of the 100th Battalion on Fossinova was changed with the result that the 100th Battalion moved on 20 April to the right, east, of the Third Battalion. (14) The mission of the 100th Battalion became the cutting of Highway 68, with the Second Battalion following the 100th Battalion. (15) With this mission in mind the 100th Battalion moved to the burned out village of Larchiaso, and while the attachment of E Company terminated when the movement to Larchiaso started,

(13), (14), (15), Personal Knowledge, Statement of Major Ivan P. Kovac, then S-2, 442d Infantry Regiment, 20 December 1947.

E Company moved behind the 100th Battalion and at 1300 20 April was on the south slope of Mount Tomaggiore.

20 - 21 APRIL 1945

F and E Companies were not able to break contact with the Germans west of the fort until late on the 20th of April. This allowed those two companies to move to the vicinity of Marchiaso the night of 20-21 April. However, the battalion headquarters moved into Marchiaso late in the afternoon of 20 April. During the interval between the time E Company arrived at Mount Tomaggiore and the arrival of the Second Battalion commander at Marchiaso there was no communication between the company and battalion headquarters. For this reason it was felt that coordination with the 100th Battalion was advisable. To make this coordination I went to the command post of the 100th Battalion in Marchiaso. (See Map C)

By 1500 C Company of the 100th Battalion had moved around the east side of Mount Tomaggiore and A Company had moved toward the North-east, well to the right of C Company. In the absence of the Second Battalion commander, I agreed with Lieutenant Colonel Jack Conley of the 100th Battalion that there should be some protection on the left of C Company. The battalion was able to refuse its right flank, but the gap between its left and the Third Battalion was considered dangerous. Therefore, it was agreed to send at least one platoon around the west side of Mount Tomaggiore to form that flank protection and to plug the gap to some extent.

First Lieutenant Reichiro Yamato at about 1800 moved out with the second platoon with the mission of going around the west side of Mount Tomaggiore on about the same contour level to make contact with C Company on the north slope of the mountain. Visible contact was impossible since most of the mountain was covered with olive groves and was terraced in all possible places. Contact was to be maintained by a relay of SCR-536 radios across the top of the mountain. It was felt one station on top would be

able to make connection, and at the same time would offer some protection against infiltration of the Germans. It was roughly estimated that it would take one hour and a half or two hours for Lieutenant Yamato to reach his objective. He was not to move too far down the slope of the mountain to the west, since Germans were known to be in the vicinity of Pulica and it was thought best not to make contact there at that time. In fact, the Third Battalion was fighting on the north side of Pulica at this time. (16) We were reasonably sure that the rest of the battalion would follow in the path of the second platoon early the following morning, and that the Third Battalion would clear the vicinity of Pulica and Tendola which were in the Third Battalion sector at that time. Lieutenant Yamato and I had made a reconnaissance to the top of Tomaggiora and were convinced that he would not be engaged in a fire fight with the enemy if he remained well up on the slope of the mountain.

At 1700 the weapons platoon leader, Second Lieutenant Mitsuo Tsuruda, Second Lieutenant Hitoshi Yonemura, who was a cannon company forward observer, and I took a radio operator and followed the second Platoon's trail. The purpose of the reconnaissance was to know the route the company would take in the event of a before daylight movement the following morning. By the time we had gone half way around the mountain there was a fire fight in progress ahead of us. It developed that the second platoon had struck some reverse slope positions on one of the shoulders, which actually was a ridge that extended north from Mount Tomaggiora. Lieutenant Yamato estimated that a platoon was dug in in the heavy brush and that there was not enough daylight left to attack and take the position. He estimated that his own position was not too bad - he was above the enemy - and that he could hold his position without difficulty through the night. He could also send a small patrol on around the mountain, by sending them at a higher

(16) A-5, p. 20.

level, to contact C Company. By a map study we estimated we were still approximately eight hundred or a thousand yards from where we supposed C Company to be. (17) Before the patrol left we were able to contact First Lieutenant Byron E. Burns, at the company command post and have him ascertain the position of C Company by contacting the 100th Battalion command post. (18) The patrol made physical contact and returned to the second platoon area soon after dark. C Company had reached the outskirts of Posterla and had not had time to enter the town prior to darkness. (19) There were no Germans between C Company and the second platoon. C Company had not been able to send a patrol to determine whether it was actually the platoon they expected to contact them, that was engaged in the fire fight to their left.

Lieutenant Yonemura made contact with his radio with Cannon Company and was able to deliver observed fire on the German positions prior to darkness. He registered his concentrations for a defense of the second platoon. Lieutenant Tsuruda and I returned to the company command post.

By 2000 the Second Battalion commander, Major Robert A. Gospel, had established his command post in Marchiano and had had a telephone wire run to E Company. The communication sergeant, Sergeant Stanley Ebata, and I went to the battalion command post to receive an attack order for the following morning.

The mission of the Second Battalion had been changed so that it would attack north along the Fendola-Ceserane Road to reach and cut Highway 63. This was the mission previously assigned to the 100th Battalion, but the peculiar position of the 100th Battalion had forced a change in plans. (20)

The 100th Battalion was to revert to regimental reserve, when it had been passed on the left by the Second Battalion and it had become disengaged. E Company was to attack at daylight 21 April along the ridge, at the southern

(17) Personal knowledge, Statement of 1st Lt K. Yamato, then second platoon leader, E Company, 442d Infantry, 15 Dec 47; (18) Personal knowledge, Statement of 1st Lt Byron E. Burns, then Executive Officer E Company 442d Infantry, 28 Dec 47; (19) A-5, p. 20; (20) Personal knowledge; Statement of Major Ivan Kovac, then S-3, 442d Infantry, 20 Dec 47.

end of which sat the second platoon. The attack was to have Colie Musatello as an objective. This round appearing hill was approximately twelve hundred meters out at the other end of the ridge, and was practically a sheer cliff on the southern side, except for the south-west side at which the ridge joined it. The second platoon received machine gun fire from the eastern end of the hill while it was in contact with the enemy late that afternoon.

Supply of the company was by mule train at night, but there were adequate supplies of all kinds. Evacuation of wounded was a problem because of the long tedious hand carry that was necessary. However, there had been only two litter cases and there were many volunteers to carry the litters. In situations of this kind it was found that if the tactical situation allowed there were men who wanted to carry their buddies back. This is attributed to the very high morale and esprit-de-corps present in the organization.

There was little activity during the night 20-21 April. The Germans limited their activity to the long range harassing machine gun fire on the forward slope positions of the second platoon. This was interspersed with bursts of machine pistol fire, using many tracers. Lieutenant Yonemura fired concentrations of cannon company fire at intervals during the night, both on Colie Musatello and on the positions immediately to the front of the second platoon. (21)

E Company, less the second platoon, moved from the South slope of Mount Tomagloro the morning of 21 April along a mule trail on the west side of the mountain. The first platoon and command group led, followed by the third and fourth platoons. The move was started at 0500, but a fog covered the entire mountain and made movement very difficult, even over the previously reconnoitered trails. The head of the column took the wrong

(21) Personal knowledge, Statement of 1st Lt Keiichi Yamato, then platoon leader 2d Platoon, E Company, 15 December 1947.

trail and went down the side of the mountain, rather than maintaining a level. After having moved for about an hour and a half a burst of machine-gun fire was heard ahead of and above the column. This indicated that the column had moved too far down the mountain, so a patrol was sent in the direction of the firing. Both German and our own type weapons could be heard, so it was rather certain that we were in the vicinity of the second platoon. The patrol ascertained this, and led the column up the hill to an assembly area in rear of and in a reverse slope position from the second platoon.

By about 0900 the company had closed into the area and a drizzling rain had begun to fall. By 1000 hours the rain had stopped and the fog was dissipated. There had been time for reconnaissance and orientation and the issuance of an attack order. It was anticipated that there would not be too much difficulty with the position in front of the second platoon, so it was planned that the first platoon would make a wide encirclement to the west of the position in order to cut the ridge to the rear of the position. The second platoon would coordinate its push down the hill with the attack of the first platoon. The active and accurate machine gun fire from Colle Musatello made the use of the forward or north slope of Mount Tomaggiara impractical. The cannon company forward observer, Lieutenant Yonemura was killed by this machine gun fire when he moved far enough forward on the hill to observe the entire enemy position. His radio operator carried on with the fire missions alone after the death of Lieutenant Yonemura. (22)

Second Lieutenant Daniel Inouye split his first platoon into two groups to make his encircling move. He sent the platoon sergeant, Technical Sergeant Gordon Takasaki, with about half the platoon far around to the west to cut the ridge and then turn back down the ridge in rear of the Germans.

(22) Personal knowledge.

Lieutenant Inouye took the remainder of the platoon in a push straight up toward the right flank of the enemy. The ruggedness of the terrain and the heavy undergrowth through which this move was made dictated this action on the part of the platoon leader.

This plan was used and required approximately one hour to reduce the position. Rifle grenades were used to good advantage in the actual reduction of the dug in positions. Four Germans were able to escape to the position on Colle Musatello by running down the hill to their left rear under cover of the machine gun fire from Musatello. However, the German dead and prisoners totalled fourteen. These were all German troops, presumably from the same regiment we had been facing. (23)

As soon as the situation was well in hand, the first platoon turned around and moved north along the ridge toward Colle Musatello. The company followed in column of platoons in the order third, fourth, second. The only approach to Musatello was along this ridge, which had considerable cover but was wide enough to accommodate only one platoon in the attack. By very aggressive action on the part of Lieutenant Inouye and Technical Sergeant Takasaki, the platoon had cleared the local security - two Germans with machine pistols - and was assaulting along the top of the mountain by 1300 hours. The Germans had positions in the rocks along the crest of the hill, extending all across the top from west to east. In something less than an hour E Company was occupying Colle Musatello and Lieutenant Inouye was being evacuated with a badly mangled right arm, having been hit by a burst of machine pistol fire at less than twenty-five yards range. For his action on Colle Musatello Lieutenant Inouye was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Sergeant Takasaki assumed command of the first platoon when Lieutenant Inouye was wounded and completed the clearing of the hill of Germans. The third platoon had followed the first platoon up on the west end of

(23) Personal knowledge, Statement of 1st Lt Byron E. Burns, then executive officer, E Company, 442d Infantry, 28 December 1947.



the hill and occupied the western half of the top of the hill. Hills the first platoon organized the eastern half of the forward slope. The second platoon was to the left rear of the third platoon astride the ridge extending south up which the attack had been made.

The expected counterattack was made less than an hour after the hill had been taken. It was of about fifty men in strength and was supported by self-propelled 88 millimeter gunfire. This fire came from the vicinity of San Terenzo. (24) During the remainder of the day and that night the only enemy activity directed toward the company position consisted of artillery concentrations and 88 millimeter gun fire.

A small patrol led by Sergeant Takasaki ascertained at about 1600 that the entire forward slope of Colle Musatello was clear of the enemy. Unlike the southern side of the hill, the north slope was wooded to the extent that while visibility down the slope was good up to about four hundred yards, the town of San Terenzo and Hill 270 were only visible from several open spaces near the military crest of the hill. The elevation of Colle Musatello was about four hundred meters, compared to two hundred seventy meters at Hill 270, two hundred fifty five meters in San Terenzo, two hundred ninety five meters at the road junction just west of San Terenzo and three hundred and three meters at the hill just north of San Terenzo. There were several excellent observation posts from which the entire area from the road junction on the west to Bardine di San Terenzo on the east could be seen. There was no enemy activity observed in either of the towns. In fact there was no activity of any sort, which indicates that they were German occupied. There were several enemy soldiers noted on Hill 270 and at the house just to the west of Hill 270. Never more than two or three were seen, so it was estimated that probably a platoon command post was in the house.

(24) Personal knowledge.

Some time in the afternoon telephone communication with the Second Battalion commander was established. There was no indication that we were to attack either that afternoon or the next morning. G Company had occupied positions on Mount Tomaggiara and F Company was in an assembly area on the south side of the same mountain.

The 100th Battalion had occupied Posterla and a hill a thousand meters northeast of Marchiaso, and had sent patrols to the north and northeast of Posterla which had met heavy resistance. A Third Battalion patrol had approached Tendola but had been driven back toward Pulica. The Third Battalion was preparing for a coordinated attack on Mount Nebbione. (25)

#### 22 APRIL

Word was received early the morning of the 22d to patrol to both flanks to make contact with the 100th Battalion on the right and the Third Battalion on the left. The purpose of these patrols was not to locate the flank units, but to insure that the Germans were not occupying the low ground between the battalions or infiltrating between units. The regiment was dispersed in a large semi-circle and occupied only peaks on the perimeter of the arc. Strong opposition had been met the previous day by all units and the enemy had ample opportunity to move sizable forces between these units.

One half-squad patrols were sent to both the right and left. The patrol to Posterla saw no enemy and made contact with the unit in Posterla. The patrol to the left was fired on before it reached to bottom of the west end of Musatello from houses along the road north of Tendola. The forward slope was patrolled again but no sign of the enemy was found on Musatello as far as the creek bed to the front.

Fog again limited visibility during the morning, but had dissipated by 1000 hours, so that San Terenzo and Hill 270 were clearly visible.

(25) L-5, p. 21.

There was still enemy activity observed on Hill 270, and still no activity of any kind in the towns. (26) At about 1200 hours a German ambulance left Bardine and drove to the road junction west of San Terenzo. A German medical corpsman stood on the running board and waved the red <sup>cross</sup> flag during the trip across our front. The ambulance was the ordinary German ambulance with red crosses on the sides and top. We had not observed this vehicle enter Bardine, nor had we heard it on the road at night.

At 1230 E Company was ordered to send a patrol to Hill 270. This order was telephoned, in code, from battalion headquarters, and did not specify the size or any specific mission for the patrol. It was decided that since E Company would undoubtedly have to attack San Terenzo the morning of 23 April, that a platoon in position on Hill 270 would be advantageous to that attack. Therefore Lieutenant Yamato and the second platoon, with two company light machine guns attached, moved out at 1330 to attack Hill 270. His route to the hill had been chosen by a Partisan who had been brought up to the company by First Lieutenant Arthur Mac Coll, the Second Battalion S-2. Lieutenant Mac Coll had been in close liaison with the Partisans in the area and had chosen the one he thought was the most reliable and intelligent. (27) This man was a native of the sector and apparently knew all trails in the area. He assured Lieutenant Mac Coll and Lieutenant Yamato that Hill 270 was unoccupied by the Germans. He agreed to accompany and guide the platoon to the top of the hill. (26)

An artillery forward observer had joined the company that morning. He had first mission on our entire front and had concentrations plotted on important terrain features, including the house west of Hill 270 and

(26) It was characterized all through the Italian campaign that when the Germans were in positions in the towns that there was no civilian activity of any kind. However the civilians appeared as soon as American troops entered the towns, or when the Germans abandoned positions in the towns;

(27) Personal knowledge, Statement of 1st Lt Arthur A. Mac Coll, then S-2 Second Battalion, 442d Infantry, 16 December 1947; (28) This was a good sign, because experience had shown that these "guides" seldom wanted to do any more than point out general directions. Too, we knew the hill to have enemy on it by our own observation. This man referred only to German troops in the area, which we later found to be inaccurate. However, Lieutenant Mac Coll, who worked closely with the Partisans, only passed on their information, giving credit to the source.

the hill itself. When the platoon moved out it was thought best not to fire a concentration for its attack. It had been noted that the Germans were unusually observant after an artillery concentration had been placed on them. So it was felt that the element of surprise was worth more than the artillery on their own dug in positions. Consequently missions were fired in rear of Hill 303 and at the road junction.

The difference in elevation between our position and the top of Hill 270 made the entire top and forward slope of the hill visible to us on Musatello. The distance was approximately twelve hundred meters, airline. There were rows of grapevine on top of the hill and the slopes that were visible were terraced in the narrow terraces characteristic to steep Italian hillsides. The reverse slope of the hill had low olive trees that could be seen from our observation posts.

One squad of the third platoon with a machine gun and two automatic rifles moved well down the forward slope of Colle Musatello to be able to assist by fire the movements of the second platoon. This squad was able to find fire positions in breaks in the trees from which most of the south side of Hill 270 could be covered by fire.

By 1500 the second platoon had reached the top of Hill 270 undetected by the Germans. One squad of the platoon was on the flat top of the hill with the other two squads along a trail on the side of the hill. In the confusion that followed, Lieutenant Yamato forgot the Partisan, (29) but we on Colle Musatello saw him run down the east side of the hill.

When the squad on top of the hill began to spread out, a machine gun at the north end of the table top began to spray the entire flat top. It was impossible to move laterally so the platoon leader called back for some of the other two squads to move around the left side of the hill. When they came within sight of the house just west of Hill 270 another machine gun fired on the maneuver element from the house. We were able to direct artillery fire on the house but the machine gun continued to

(29) Personal knowledge, Statement of 1st Lt Keichiro Yamato, then platoon leader second platoon, I Company, 442d Infantry, 15 Dec 47.

fire. Progress on the top of the hill was very slow, but some men were advancing by bounds. From both the house and on top of the hill there was rifle fire with the machine guns by this time.

The Germans began by this time to move more men up the reverse slope of the hill. These were not visible to Lieutenant Yamato, (30) but were to us in the observation posts. We were able to count eighteen men move up the hill from in rear of the house and from a dug-out that we had not previously located on the north slope of Hill 270. The platoon also was receiving quite a bit of mortar fire. The SCR-536 should have provided good communication across the open space, but Lieutenant Yamato was unable to receive and our reception was limited to a badly garbled word occasionally.

The order to Lieutenant Yamato in the beginning had been for him to remain on the hill if possible, and if not to return to Colle Musatello. By 1600 it was evident that he would not be able to take the entire hill with his one platoon. He failed to hear the order to withdraw that was transmitted over the radio, (31) but he decided at the same time that his position was untenable and began to try to move his platoon back. We were able to receive one word on the radio from him - "smoke". The artillery observer fired a smoke mission so that a breeze carried the smoke from west to east and covered the entire top of the hill. The platoon withdrew under cover of the smoke and was able to bring its wounded with it. Three litter cases were carried from the hill piggy-back. There were also four walking wounded.

No prisoners were taken and no weapons lost. The platoon was met in the stream bed with litters and litter squads to evacuate the wounded. The Germans made no attempt to follow the platoon other than by firing

(30) Personal knowledge, Statement of 1st Lt Keichiro Yamato, then platoon leader second platoon E Company, 442d Infantry, 15 December 1947; (31) Personal knowledge, Statement of 1st Lt Keichiro Yamato, then platoon leader, second platoon E Company 442d Infantry 15 December 1947.

mortars and artillery on it as it came through the trees up the forward steps of Colle Musatello. During the attack of the second platoon on Hill 270 and its withdrawal approximately one hundred rounds of artillery and SP fire fell on the company positions on Colle Musatello. The withdrawal was completed and the report to battalion that "the patrol had been to Hill 270, and had been driven off by small arms and mortar fire" made by 1800 hours.

#### 23 APRIL

At 0700 on 23 April E Company had not received the order to attack San Terenzo. During the night 22-23 April the regimental commander, Colonel Virgil R. Miller, decided to form a task force of two companies to make a flanking move on Aulla. The capture of Mount Nebbione and Tendola the previous day by the Third Battalion had made a thrust to the north west feasible. (32) The town of Aulla, about eight kilometers west and five kilometers north of San Terenzo, was at the junction of two highways that led over the mountains into the Po Valley. F and B Companies were chosen for this task.

When no order to attack was received at E Company, it was decided to send a patrol to San Terenzo. The loss of Mount Nebbione the day before may have caused a withdrawal along the entire regimental front. There had been no contact with the Second Battalion Commander since midnight the night before, when the telephone wire had been cut by artillery fire, so the patrol could serve one of two purposes. If an attack order was received, the company would have information of the German positions in the town. If no attack order came, a patrol would serve to ascertain that the Germans still occupied San Terenzo.

After the attack by the second platoon the day before, concentrations of artillery, of battalion size, had been fired on Hill 270 and the town of San Terenzo. There was no activity in San Terenzo or on Hill 270 after

(32) Personal knowledge, Statement of Major Ivan Kovac, then S-S 442d Infantry, 20 December 1947.

for artillery concentrations.

Sergeant Yukio Tanimoto left Colle Musatello at 0700 with three men, with the mission of entering San Terenzo if possible, and determining the strength and location of any enemy in the town. There was some mist and visibility was limited even though there was not fog of the density of the previous three mornings. The first platoon, now commanded by Technical Sergeant Gordon Takasaki, moved well down the forward slope of Colle Musatello to be ready to assist the patrol.

By using drainage ditches and terraces the patrol was able to reach the town undetected, even though the route could not be observed from the observation post on Colle Musatello. Fifteen minutes after the departure of Sergeant Tanimoto the battalion commander, Major Robert A. Gospel, arrived at the observation post of E Company. The battalion had been ordered to attack San Terenzo, so he brought the company commander of G Company forward to plan a coordinated attack by E and G Companies on San Terenzo. It was decided to wait until the patrol returned before moving into the town. G Company was to assist by taking Hill 270 simultaneously with E Company's attack on San Terenzo.

To be prepared for the earliest possible attack, E Company was dispersed on the forward slope of Colle Musatello under cover of the trees, and G Company passed to the right to be prepared to attack Hill 270 from two sides. The battalion commander had been planning with the Partisans, who assured him that there would be a Partisan force in control of the

~~town by 0800. This planning had taken place the previous night. (10)~~

However, the attack by E Company was planned without taking into account any assistance from the Partisans.

Sergeant Tanimoto returned at 0830 with the information that he had been to the center of the town and had seen no enemy troops. He had gone

(55) Personal knowledge, Statement of 1st Lt Arthur Mac Coll, then S-3 Second Battalion, 442d Infantry 16 December 1947.

and several houses which appeared to be deserted. He had seen a priest in the church, which stood on the square in the center of town. The priest had seen no enemy since the night before. In fact he had seen no one since the previous evening. The civilians had, according to the priest, left the town after the heavy artillery barrage the afternoon before. The priest had not been away from the church. Questioned about Partisans in the town, Sergeant Tanimoto had seen none.

At about 0900 Technical Sergeant Takasaki took the first platoon and entered the town, using the same route that the patrol had taken. His mission was to go through the center of town, go through the first break in the houses to the west and then go straight to the road four hundred yards west of the town. Once on the road he was to turn south and at the road junction make contact with the second platoon, which would enter the south end of the town and then turn left along the high ground southwest of the town. The third platoon would go straight through the town to Hill 303, where G Company would make contact from the east. The fact that the patrol had not made any contact with the enemy indicated that the area may have been evacuated during the night.

The first platoon passed the square and took the first side street to the left. The streets in this village were hardly wide enough to be called streets. Too, they were not at any place straight. Sergeant Takasaki had his platoon in an extended column of twos and was leading it himself. He was in constant contact by 536 radio and kept his position reported at all times. He had turned through the break in the houses and started to cross the low, saucer-like area west of the town when his platoon received the first enemy fire. The platoon had worked its way to within one hundred yards of the road when Sergeant Takasaki was hit by a burst of machine gun fire. He was killed instantly. The enemy fire was coming from the knoll in the vicinity of the road junction. There



and as they fired they moved on the platoon. Sergeant Biscardi, Platoon

leader of the platoon and completed the move toward the road.

The second platoon, under Lieutenant Yamato, went into the town and turned left immediately. This platoon received no fire in the houses, but when it attempted to leave the buildings it was fired on from the knoll by rifle, machine pistol and machine gun fire. (34) The platoon moved, in contrast to the rapid encirclement of the first platoon, cautiously and slowly up the knoll. Each house and outbuilding on the knoll was made into a strong point by the enemy and were defended vigorously until the first platoon had reached the road. Then under pressure from two sides the resistance was reduced. The first platoon had sent a few men on west across the road and had completed the encirclement of the knoll.

The third platoon, the only platoon to be fired on before entering the town when it received fire from houses on the road as it crossed the stream bed, went to Hill 303 without difficulty. Only four enemy riflemen were on Hill 303 and they surrendered after firing a few rounds. When Hill 303 was secure two squads were sent back into the town to systematically clear all buildings of the enemy. Some were found hiding, but offered no resistance.

By 1700 the action was over and the prisoners were collected in the square. The prisoners were Italian Bersaglieri troops, with the exception of a German Captain and some German noncommissioned officers. There were one hundred twenty-five prisoners. Several radios, horses, an aid station fully equipped, and other equipment were also taken.

At about 1800 hours the Partisan commander for the area appeared and demanded to be allowed to take the shoes off the prisoners. He knew nothing of any promises he had made to have the town cleared, but did

(34) Personal knowledge, statement of 1st Lt K. Yamato, then second platoon leader, E Company 442d Infantry, 15 December 1947.

remember "promises" of the American battalion commander that he was to be furnished rations and equipment for his group. He was assisted to the edge of town and was not seen again.

The next morning the battalion marched to Aulla.

Casualties for the period included thirty wounded and five killed. (35)

There was no attempt made to count the German and Italian dead.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In making a choice of actions upon which to base a study, it was not my intention to choose one in which the company had been outstandingly successful. There were many instances in which the company was able to make greater gains faster. There were instances in which progress was much slower also. The action of these few days did involve necessity of decision and initiative on the part of the small unit leaders. The outstanding characteristic of E Company was the high quality of platoon and squad leaders. Not once did a platoon, squad, or patrol leader fail to exercise his judgment and arrive at the best possible decision. When Lieutenant Inouye was wounded on Colle Musatello Technical Sergeant Takasaki immediately took over and the platoon continued to function without any break. The same was true when Takasaki was killed and Sergeant Pastana assumed command.

The fact that one platoon had as many good leaders as it did is a testimonial to the high grade of individual in the organization as well as the reflection of good training. The cool-headed thinking of Lieutenant Yamato on Hill 270 enabled him to withdraw all his men from a bad situation. The quick, aggressive thinking and actions of Lieutenant Inouye and Technical Sergeant Takasaki made successful moves of two attacks that might have been much more costly had they not been as aggressive as they were.

The command liaison between the battalion commander and the company (35) roster of casualties in personal possession of company commander.

commander was poor. Some of the fault lies in the nature of the situation, in which the battalion had companies scattered over wide areas, making communication very difficult. Too, the battalion commander was faced with an ever changing situation which detached companies from his command and which caused changes in his mission frequently. However, the company commander of E Company was without order, on several occasions, which could have been helped by specific directions concerning patrolling, etc.

The use of Partisans and information gained from them has a limited value. The guide furnished the second platoon in its attack on Hill 270 was either ignorant of the situation or made an attempt to lead the platoon into a trap. It is thought that the information of the Partisans was not actually gained by ground reconnaissance, as they said, but was conjecture on their part. The use of Partisans at all had to be tempered with our own knowledge of the terrain and the enemy.

The use of a column of platoons formation as an attack formation is good only in certain situations and should not be used unless either terrain, the enemy situation, or weather conditions dictate its use. The fact that we were able to successfully use it on Colle Musatello and San Terenzo emphasizes how two different types of terrain can indicate the use of this formation.

The use of patrols in this situation may be criticized. However, experience had taught us by that stage of the war that there were many advantages in being constantly brushing against the enemy. All G-2 information pointed to a complete withdrawal of German forces across the Po Valley. The fact that we were not able to learn, in time, of that withdrawal was because of the German use of Italian troops and of the appearance the Germans gave during 20-23 April of defending in strength. Had the town of San Terenzo been defended by Germans it would never have been taken as easily as it was. This town was not well defended by only occupying the high ground around it. A proper defense would have denied our

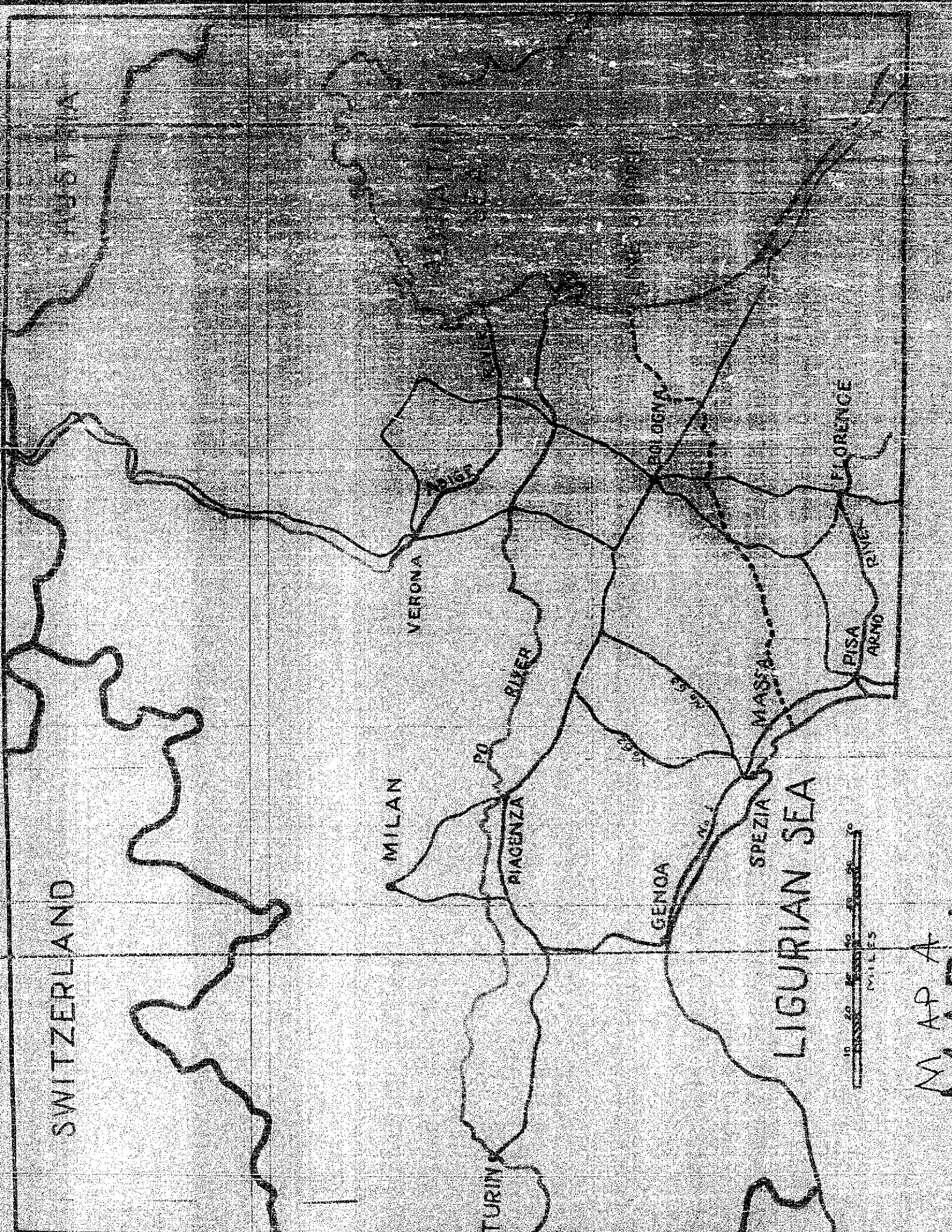
entry into the town.

The Germans could not be depended to defend the same manner in every situation. The defense on 20 April was unexpected by us. The fact that the defense might be made anyway and any where forced us, as the attacker, to move slower and with caution. This was accomplished by using patrols, as mentioned above, even in the extent of using a complete platoon as the patrol.

### LESSONS

Lessons from this operation are:

1. Aggressive action by platoon and squad leaders is essential in offensive combat.
2. Information gained by patrolling is more accurate and timely than that received any other way.
3. Squad leaders and even private soldiers must be trained to assume responsibility of command immediately upon suffering of casualty by platoon leaders and assistants.
4. SCR-638 cannot be depended on and alternate means of signalling should be arranged.
5. Surprise is essential in the attack and other elements can be sacrificed to obtain surprise.
6. Movement up and down mountain sides is time consuming and fatiguing and must be considered in attacks in mountainous terrain.
7. Smoke and fog can both be used in concealing movement.
8. The nuisance value of long range machine gun fire is considerable and must be taken into account in terrain such as this operation covered.



SWITZERLAND

AUSTRIA

MILAN

VERONA

GENOA

PIAGENZA

TURIN

PO RIVER

BOLOGNA

SPEZIA

MASSA

LIGURIAN SEA

FLORENCE

PISA

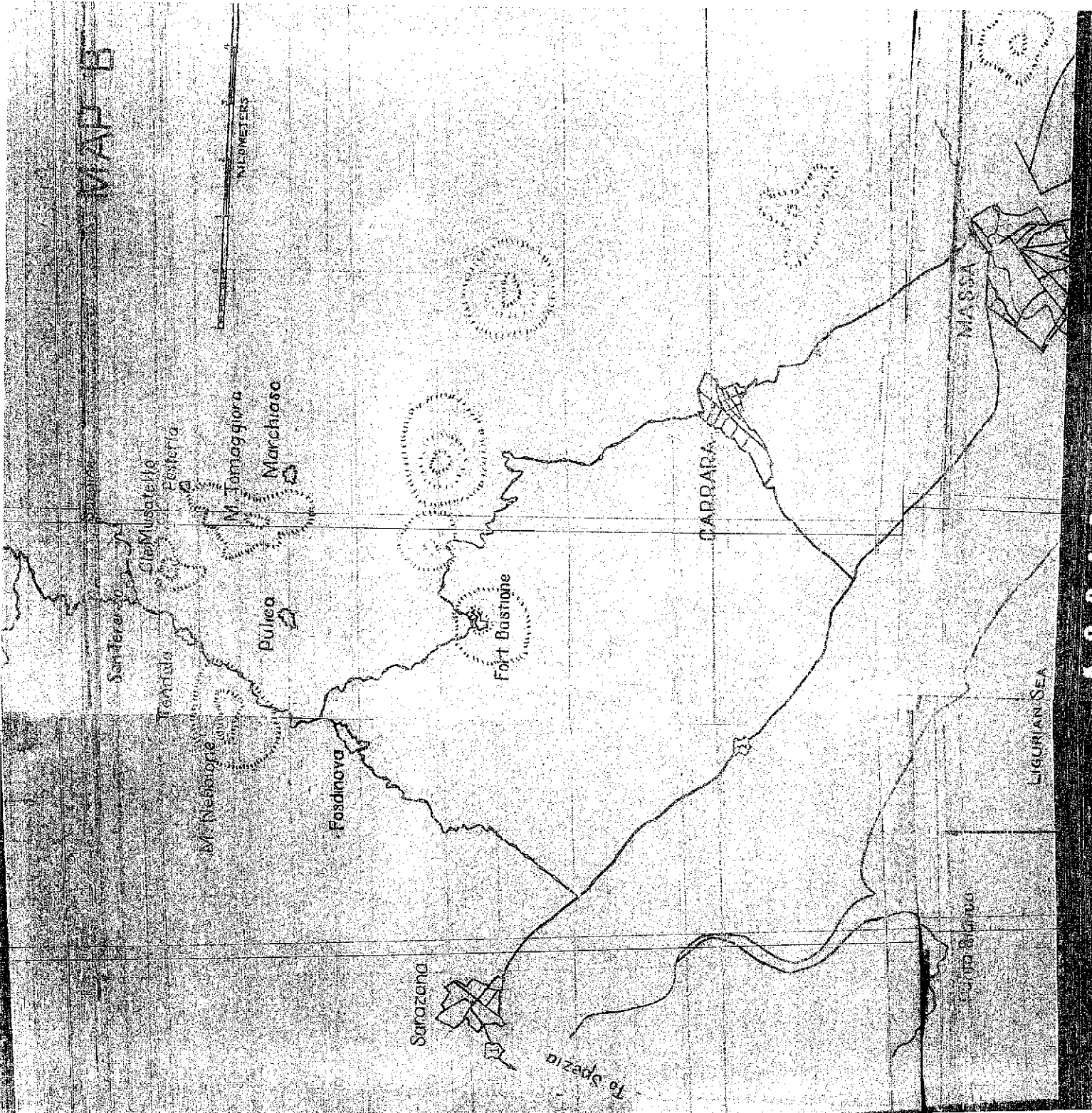
ARNO RIVER



MAP A

MAP B

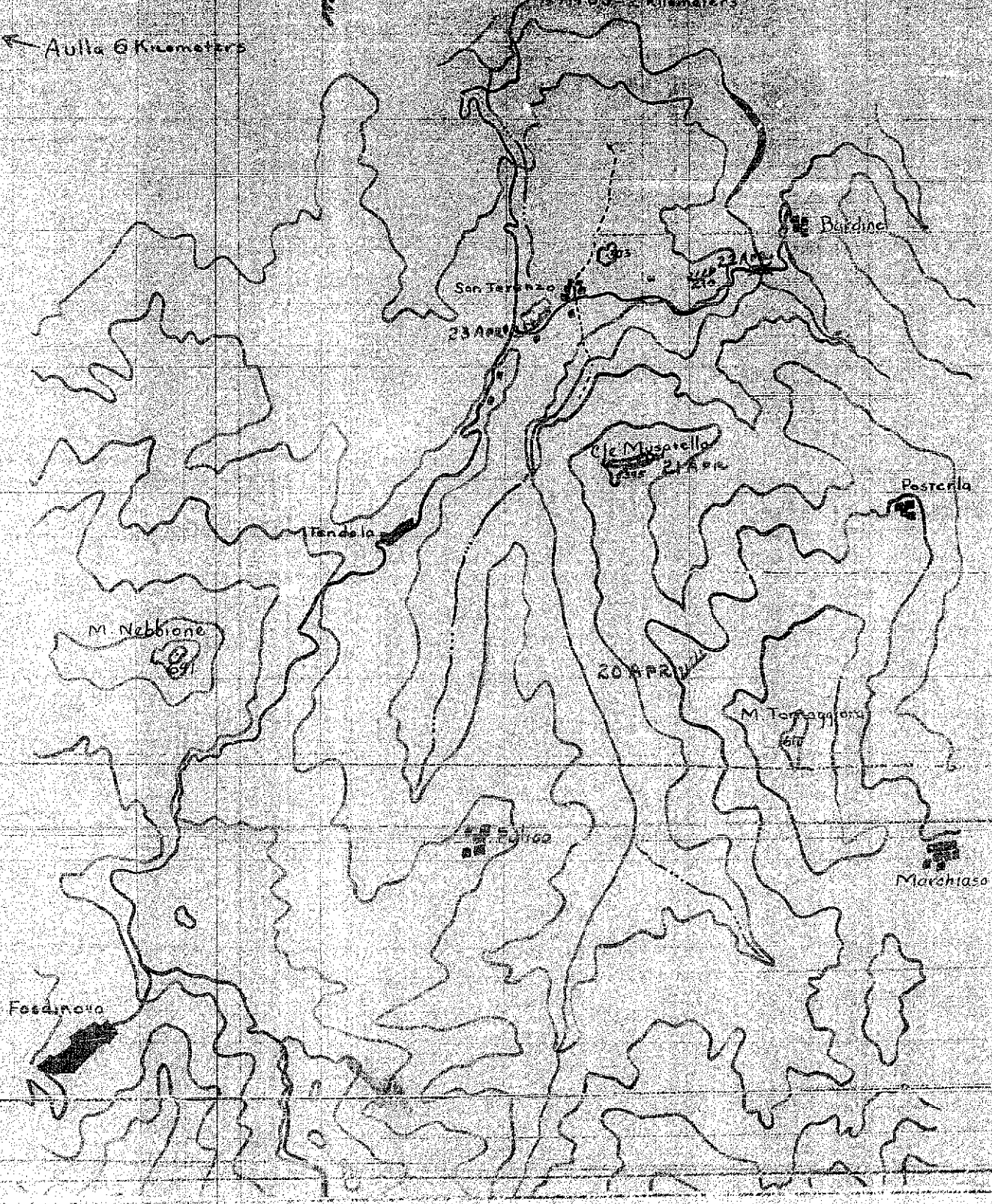
METERS



# MAP

← Aulla 6 Kilometers

Casertana 2.5 Kilometers  
15/15 6.0 Kilometers



M. Nabbione

San Terenzo

Bardine

C. Musavella

Pesteria

Isola

20 APR 1944

M. Taraggora

15 15 15 15

Marchiaso

Fossanova