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THE OPERATIONS OF THE FIFTEENTH ARMY GROUP  
IN THE PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN  
APRIL - MAY 1945

Type of operation described: LARGE SCALE ATTACK

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index.....	1
Bibliography.....	2
Introduction.....	4
The Po River and its Tributaries.....	6
Weather.....	7
Enemy Forces.....	8
Allied Forces - Fifteenth Army Group.....	9
Final Preparations.....	11
Terrain.....	11
Deceptive Measures.....	12
Allied Strategy.....	13
Plans of the Fifteenth Army Group.....	13
Plans of the Eighth Army.....	15
Plans of the Fifth Army.....	15
Preliminary Operations and Diversionary Attacks.....	16
The Initial Attack.....	18
Capture of Bologna.....	24
The Race to the Po River.....	30
Crossing the Po.....	36
The Exploitation.....	44
Western Coast.....	56
Analysis and Criticism.....	56
Lessons.....	60
Map A - Allied Strategy	
Map B - Eighth Army Front	
Map C - Fifth Army Front	
Map D - Crossing of the Po River	
Map E - Exploitation in Po Valley	

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE FIFTEENTH ARMY GROUP  
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INTRODUCTION

The long, rigorous Italian Campaign, which had commenced 3 September 1943 with landings at Salerno, continued on up the peninsula for many months.

Late in October 1944, the general offensive, which had begun in May 1944, south of Rome, grinded to a halt in the rugged Apennine Mountains approximately eight (8) miles south of the key city of Bologna. The offensive of the Spring and Summer of 1944 had carried the attack almost 250 miles without interruption. (1)

A determined enemy, taking full advantage of the rugged mountainous terrain and the extremely bad weather, contained two (2) armies almost at the edge of the Po Valley for five (5) long winter months. (2)

However, this was not a period of complete inactivity. The Allied soldier was kept busy and alert. Enemy lines were probed daily. Patrols and raids, varying in size from reinforced squads to companies, and occasionally battalions, struck the enemy along the entire front. Concurrent with this activity, training, rehabilitation of men and equipment, build up of supplies and ammunition were accomplished. (3)

Several limited advances were made during the Winter of '44-'45. The most notable was the capture of Monte Belvedere by the 10th Mountain Division on 19 February 1945. (4)

(1, 2, 3, 4) A-7, p. 45

Neither did the enemy, during this period, hibernate. All Allied patrols and advances were fiercely resisted. But more important, these five (5) months gave the Germans time to strengthen their positions. The defenses guarding Bologna were strengthened to the southeast, south, and to a lesser extent, the southwest. This later was an important factor in the conduct of the campaign. Also it was believed that the Germans had constructed defensive lines along the Po and Adige Rivers. (5)

On other European fronts the Germans were not faring well. By April the Russians on the Eastern Front had driven their Armies to a point thirty-seven (37) miles from Berlin. At the same time the Americans and British were closing in on the Elbe River from the west. Nevertheless, the Germans appeared determined to resist any advance in Italy. (6)

This monograph covers the offensive operations of the Twelfth Army Group in Italy in the Po Valley Campaign, April-May 1945.

The Po Valley comprises the largest part of Northern Italy extending from the Apennine Mountains to the Alps. (See Map A) It is the most productive part of Italy, both in agriculture and industry. Its fertile plains produce wheat, corn, rice, and many other food products. Virtually all of Italy's modern industry is concentrated in this beautiful valley. Hydro-electric power from the streams in the Alps is abundant. (7)

(5, 6) A-9, p. 89; (7) A-12, Vol. 12, p. 753

Milan, its largest city, is the chief financial center and wealthiest manufacturing city in Italy. Locomotives, railway trucks, steam motors, turbines, and many other products of military value, are manufactured here. (8)

Turin is the automobile center of Italy. The Fiat Plant supplied the German Army with many trucks and cars. The Spa-Fiat Plant produced the mounts of the famous self-propelled German 88's. (9)

Brescia is noted for its ironware industry, especially firearms and weapons. Trieste has large shipbuilding yards, petroleum refineries and steel works. Bergamo is an important textile center. Genoa is Italy's largest port. (10)

Perhaps the desire to keep this source of industrial and agricultural power, no matter now curtailed by the war and Allied bombings, was one of the chief reasons for the German decision to retain a sizeable force in Italy when the Allies were nearing the very heart of Germany itself.

#### The Po River and its Tributaries:

The Po River traverses the entire valley flowing from its source in the Ligurian Alps east to its mouth in the Adriatic Sea. In a direct line it travels 280 miles. However, in its meanderings it is estimated that it flows 417 miles. The Po is a large river with an average width of 400 to 600 yards and a mean depth of 6 to 15 feet. In its course it drains all the streams and rivers, which flow north from the Apennines, and all those south from the Alps as far east as

(8) A-12, Vol. 15, p. 475; (9) A-12, Vol. 22, p. 588;  
(10) A-12, Vol. 4, p. 92; Vol. 22, p. 471; Vol. 3, p. 433; Vol. 10, p. 117

the Mincio River. (11)

East of the Mincio the Adige River flows from the Alps, parallels the Po, and enters the Adriatic Sea by a separate mouth. Further to the northeast is the Brenta, cutting north-east Italy from the Alps to the Adriatic. (12)

The rivers, flowing from the Apennines north to the Po, are generally smaller and less important streams that dry up considerably in the summer. However these rivers had an influence on the planning and conduct of the Po Valley Campaign. These rivers are from west to east: The Taro, the Secchia, and the Panaro. (13)

The next river to the east apparently contradicts an earlier statement. The Reno River flows northeast from the Apennines, west of Bologna, well into the valley where it suddenly turns from its northern course and flows southeast to enter the Adriatic Sea south of Lake Comacchio. The course of the river was artifically changed after the Roman days to the Po di Premaro River. Now the entire river bears the name, Reno River. All of the rivers east of Bologna flow into the Reno. From west to east they are the Idice, Sillaro, Santerno and Senio Rivers. (14)

Weather:

Northern Italy normally has little rain the early part of the year. However, the rainfall usually increases in April. This, coupled with the thaw of snow in the Alps, usually

(11, 12) A-12, Vol. 12, p. 753; (13, 14) A-12, Vol. 12, p. 754



raises the level of the rivers in April and May. (15)

The weather from late January 1945, on was all that could be desired. There was practically no rain. The snow in both the Alps and Apennines had melted early. Consequently, the rivers had not risen as much as might have been expected. The mud and snow of the winter vanished leaving the ground and roads hard and firm which greatly facilitated the movement of troops and supplies. Visability was excellent greatly aiding the conduct of artillery fires and air strikes. (16)

Enemy Forces:

The Germans valued the possession of the Po Valley enough to defend it with the Army Group Southwest commanded by General Vietinghoff. The Army Group Southwest was comprised of three armies: the Tenth, commanded by General Herr; the Fourteenth, by General Lemelsen; and the Ligurian Army, commanded by Marshall Graziani. This force was made up of twenty-three (23) German divisions and six (6) Italian Fascist divisions. Graziani's Army of two (2) German divisions and five (5) Italian divisions was disposed in the Ligurian Alps blocking the mountain passes leading from France. However, the bulk of enemy strength, nineteen (19) German divisions and one (1) Italian division, opposed the Allied Armies on the main Italian Front. (17)

The western mountain sector was lightly manned. Southwest of Bologna to Lake Comacchio the line was strongly defended. Along the entire front the Germans were well entrenched. (18)

(15) A-8, p. 3; (16) A-9, p. 12; (17) A-9, p. 89; (18) A-8, p. 4

Allied Forces - Fifteenth Army Group:

The Allied forces in Italy were commanded by Lieutenant General (now General) Mark W. Clark. Two great international armies, the Fifth and the Eighth, comprised the Fifteenth Army Group. (19)

The Fifth Army, commanded by Lieutenant General L. K. Truscott, Jr., directed the efforts of two corps, the II Corps and IV Corps. The Fifth Army had nine (9) complete divisions and the equivalent of a tenth, consisting of seven (7) infantry divisions, two (2) armored divisions, and one (1) Italian group. (20)

The Eighth Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Sir R. L. McCreery, was composed of four corps, one of which was a Polish Corps. In all General McCreery had at his disposal seven (7) infantry divisions, one (1) armored division, three (3) Italian groups, and a Jewish Brigade. The effective strength was about equal to that of the Fifth Army. (21)

The Fifteenth Army Group represented many nationalities and countries. New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Brazil, India, Jews, Poles, Italians, Great Britain, and the United States were involved in a united nations' effort to rid Italy of Axis domination.

In addition to these ground forces the Fifteenth Army Group was to be supported by the Tactical Desert Air Force, the Fifteenth Air Force and the Twelfth Air Force. (22)

A troop list is included here to aid the reader in following the narrative.

TROOP LIST - 1 April 1945

Fifteenth Army Group

Lt. Gen. M. W. Clark

(19) A-9, p. 89; (20,21) A-9, p. 89; (22) A-8, p. 14.

TROOP LIST - 1 APRIL 1945 (continued)

Fifth Army	Lt. Gen. L. K. Truscott, Jr.
II Corps	Major. Gen. G. Keyes
1st Armored Div. (US)	Maj. Gen. V. E. Prichard
34th Inf. Div. (US)	Maj. Gen. C. L. Bolte
88th Inf. Div. (US)	Maj. Gen. P. W. Kendall
91st Inf. Div. (US)	Maj. Gen. W. G. Livesay
Legnano Group (Italian)	Maj. Gen. Utili
IV Corps	Maj. Gen. W. D. Crittenberger
10th Mountain Div.(US)	Maj. Gen. G. P. Hays
1st Brazilian Div.	Maj. Gen. Marscareñas
In Army Reserve	
6th South African Armored Div.	Maj. Gen. W.H.E. Poole
85th Inf. Div. (US)	Maj. Gen. J. B. Coulter
Under Army Control (but not in reserve)	
92nd Inf. Div. (US)	Maj. Gen. E. M. Almond
Eighth Army	Lt. Gen. Sir R. L. McCreery
V Corps	Lt. Gen. C. F. Keightly
56th Inf. Div. (British)	Maj. Gen. J. Y. Whitfield
78th Inf. Div. (British)	Maj. Gen. R. K. Arbuthnolt
2nd New Zealand Div.	Lt. Gen. Sir B. C. Freyberg
8th Indian Div.	Maj. Gen. D. Russel
Cremona Group (Italian)	Maj. Gen. Primuri
II Polish Corps	Maj. Gen. Bohusz-Szyszko
3rd Carpathian Div.(Polish)	Maj. Gen. Duch
5th Kresowa Div. (Polish)	Maj. Gen. Sulik
X Corps	Lt. Gen. S.L.T. Hawkesworth
Jewish Brigade	Brigadier E. F. Benjamin
Friuli Group (Italian)	Gen. Scatlini

TROOP LIST - 1 April 1945 (continued)

XIII Corps	Lt. Gen. Sir J. Harding
10th Indian Div.	Maj. Gen. D. W. Reid
Folgore Group (Italian)	Maj. Gen. Morigi
In Army Reserve	
6th Armored Div. (British)	Maj. Gen. Muncey

(23)

Final Preparations:

All units in both armies received periods of rest during which time they were rehabilitated, reorganized and retained for the last offensive in Italy. Whenever possible, within divisions and regiments, battalions were rotated between training areas, reserve areas, and front line positions. (24)

Key officer personnel were flown in liaison type planes over the territory in which they were going to fight. (25)

Divisions conducted engineer mine schools for platoon leaders and non-commissioned officers teaching the methods of handling mines. (26)

To facilitate the replacement problem each combat division maintained an automatic five (5) percent overstrength reserve that was pooled and trained within close proximity to the division forward areas. (27)

Terrain:

The terrain along the entire front varied considerably.

The entire Fifth Army front was located in the rugged, precipitous terrain of the Apennine Mountains. However, the attack upon the Gothic Line and the winter operations had carried the army through the greatest part of these mountains.

At the nearest point the city of Bologna and the entrance to the Po Valley lay only seven and one-half miles away. To the west more and more mountains separated the front lines from the valley.

(23) A-9, p. 101; (24) A-13, p. 55; (25,26) A-13, p. 53;  
(27) A-2, p. 26.

However, in the sectors where the main effort was to be made only a few higher elevations to the north had yet to be climbed. From that point on the Apennines would become foothills that would rapidly descend into the valley. Once in the valley the attack could progress parallel to the rivers until the Panaro River finally blocked further advance to the north. (28)

The Eighth Army was faced with a different problem. The main portion of the Eighth Army was already in the Po plain. However, across this front and perpendicular to the route of advance was a series of rivers: the Senio, Santerno, Sillaro and Idice Rivers. These would have to be crossed before any exploitation could be made. On the right flank was shallow Lake Comacchio. The strip of land some 4,000 yards wide between the Reno River and Lake Comacchio is the Argenta Gap. To restrict maneuver even more the Germans had flooded large areas on either side of the gap. (29)

#### Deceptive Measures:

Surprise would be difficult to attain in this operation. The German knew that a spring offensive was in the offing. About all that could be accomplished was to deceive him as to how, when, and where the attack would be made. To accomplish this many elaborate and detailed plans were carried out.

Deceptive artillery barrages were fired on succeeding days. The time, location and intensity of barrages were changed each day. Dummy tactical headquarters were realistically installed and operated to include visits by commanding generals and high staff officers. Fifteenth Army Group plans included a diversionary attack and naval operations along the western coast. The Eighth

(28) A-4, p. 15; (29) A-8, p. 3.

Army also played up sea invasion fears and attempted to make the German believe the attack would come along Highway 9. (30)

### ALLIED STRATEGY

#### Plans of the Fifteenth Army Group:

The Allied strategy planned an initial penetration of the German lines by the Fifth and Eighth Armies followed by a pincers movement designed to destroy the Germans south of the Po River. (See Map A) Accomplishing this, Northern Italy was to be divided in two by a rapid exploitation north to the Austrian border thereby blocking all Axis forces in Northern Italy.

The Eighth Army would advance generally along Route 16 to Ferrara and Bondeno. The Fifth Army would attack north in the Bologna area to the Po River. Crossing the Po the Fifth Army was to exploit north to Verona-Lake Garda as the Eighth Army drove northwest to Venice and Trieste. The Fifth Army was to make the main effort. (31)

The operation was divided into three phases but there would be no pause between them.

During the first phase the Eighth Army was to breach the Senio and the Santerno River lines making two thrusts: one toward Bastia in the Argenta Gap, the other toward Budrio to influence the capture of Bologna. The Fifth Army was to attack north, between the Panaro and Reno Rivers, break through into the Po Valley and then capture Bologna as a secondary mission.(32)

In phase two the Eighth Army was to break through the Argenta Gap and secure crossings on the Po near Ferrara and Bondeno. In the event the gap could not be forced, a strong

(30) A-2, p. 63; A-8, p. 5; (31) A-9, p. 89; A-8, p. 3; A-10, p. 9; (32) A-9, p. 90.

arm would be pushed out toward Bondeno. The Fifth Army in this phase was to join forces with the Eighth Army near Bondeno and simultaneously cross the Panaro River. Then the Fifth Army would drive north in the area between the Secchia and Panaro Rivers reaching the Po at Ostiglia. (33)

The third phase would carry the Allied Armies over the Po. The Fifth Army would exploit northward, capture Verona and the Lake Garda region. Conditions permitting it would also cross the Adige River and continue on to the northeast. The Eighth Army would cross the Adige to the southeast and drive toward Venice and Trieste. (34)

To make maximum use of Allied air power and to draw enemy reserves from the Fifth Army front the attack by the armies was to be staggered by at least three days.

For the first time since Anzio and Cassino heavy bombers were to bomb front line areas. The Eighth Army would make the initial attack supported in the air by the Desert Air Force, heavy bombers from the Fifteenth Air Force, and fighter bombers from the Twelfth Air Force. (35)

As part of a deception plan to make the Germans believe that amphibious landings might be made from the Ligurian Sea naval operations and deceptive measures were planned. Throughout the entire Italian Campaign the enemy was weary of flanking sea invasions. At the same time the 92nd Division, reinforced by the 442nd and 473rd combat teams, was to make a diversionary attack along the west coast four days prior to the main attack. (36)

(33) A-9, p. 96; (34) A-10, p. 9; A-8, p. 3; (35) A-8, p. 7;  
(36) A-9, p. 90.

#### Plans of the Eighth Army:

The Eighth Army planned to attack with two corps abreast, the 5th Corps on the right and the 2nd Polish Corps on the left, to secure a bridgehead over the Santerno River. The main effort of the Eighth Army would then be made in one of two directions, either to the north through the Argenta Gap or northwest in the direction of Budrio. However, since General Clark wanted to continue a thrust toward Budrio to assist in the fall of Bologna, even if the Argenta Gap attack were successful, it appeared probable that one corps would hit the gap while the other concerned itself with the right flank of the Fifth Army. On the right the 56th Division and 2nd Commando Brigade, aided by the partisans, would outflank the Argenta Gap. South of the main effort the 10th Corps and the Jewish Brigade were to execute deception south of Highway 9. The 13th Corps, on the left flank, was to hold Monte Grande and be prepared to reinforce a thrust in the valley. (37)

In many places the Eighth Army line was as much as one-half mile away from the Senio River especially in the Polish Corps sector. In fact further north the Germans were generally holding the east bank. Undoubtedly the east bank would have been advantageous to the attack. But it was decided that to do so before D-Day would have greatly jeopardized surprise since such an operation would have involved so many units. (38)

#### Plans of the Fifth Army:

Designated by Fifteenth Army Group to make the main effort the Fifth Army planned to attack with two corps abreast generally

(37,38) A-8, p. 7.



astride Highway 64, break through the mountains into the Po Valley, between the Panaro and Reno Rivers, and capture and isolate Bologna. (39)

II Corps would debouch into the Po Valley, operating east or west of the Reno River, depending upon the dictates of the situation. Bologna would be captured or isolated as the enemy was pursued across the Po Valley. A crossing of the Po would be made at Ostiglia. Following this separate thrusts would be made: one toward Verona-Lake Garda and another northeast to cross the Adige and Brenta Rivers and continue on. (40)

Although IV Corps would launch the attack initially it was not contemplated that IV Corps would make the main effort. Its mission, however, was to capture the heights west of the Reno River and clear Highway 64 up to an east-west line along 370 Northing. Accomplishing this IV Corps would protect the left flank of the army and aggressively follow up any enemy withdrawal. (41)

Fifth Army held one division in reserve, the United States 85th Division. (42)

#### PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS AND DIVERSIONARY ATTACKS

Before the offensive could be launched on the Eighth Army front two preliminary operations had to be accomplished. Any preliminary operation would obviously sacrifice surprise but it was a risk that had to be taken.

The first attack by the 2nd Commando Brigade on the night, 1-2 April, drove the enemy from the spit of land between Lake Comacchio and the Adriatic Sea. (See Map B) Despite several

(39) A-4, p. 8; (40) A-3, pp. 3,4; (41,42) A-4, p. 8.

difficulties and heavy rifle, machine gun, mortar, artillery fire and mines, the operation was a success. By 3 April the entire spit, up to Port Garibaldi, and more than 1,000 prisoners, were in Allied hands. Buffaloes, used in this same operation, became stuck in the mud of the lake. Plywood powered storm boats, each towing two assault boats, were floated in the southeast corner of the lake after being carried as much as a mile into the lake by men wading in knee deep mud. This group stormed the west shore of the spit; another group struck from the sea on the east shore. (43)

On the night, 5-6 April, elements of the 56th Division began the other operation, against moderate resistance, to win a bridgehead over the Reno River south of Lake Comacchio. By 7 April the bridgehead was well established. (44)

The Eighth Army was now ready for the final offensive.

General McCreery and his staff feared that these operations might cause the Germans to retire to the more logical Santerno River defense lines and thus upset the effect of these elaborate preparations. These fears were increased when the Germans fired an intense artillery barrage, of over 6,000 rounds, on the forward light artillery positions during the night, 5-6 April. Fortunately most of the artillery had moved to new positions for the impending attack. To everyone's relief the enemy was observed on the banks of the Senio River in force the next morning. (45)

The diversionary attack on the extreme left flank of the Italian Front, entrusted to the 92nd Division with the 442nd Infantry (the famous regiment of Americans of Japanese ancestry)

(43) A-8, pp. 5,6; (44,45) A-8, p. 6.

and the 473rd Infantry Regiment, a converted antiaircraft regiment, jumped off at 0500, 5 April. Attacking north through exceptionally rugged mountainous terrain, just east of the coast line, the 442nd Infantry and the 473rd Infantry met a determined enemy. At the same time the 370th Infantry moved up the coast line. By 10 April, Massa was in the hands of the 473rd Infantry. (46)

#### THE INITIAL ATTACK

H-Hour for the Eighth Army attack was fixed at 1920 hours, 9 April 1945. This would allow the infantry one (1) hour before dark to cross the Senio River. Bridging operations would then be carried out under the cover of darkness. It was hoped that sufficient tanks and heavy weapons could be built up west of the river before dawn to assist in fighting off the counter-attack that would undoubtedly be launched at dawn. (47)

Preceding the main attack by some five (5) hours the air assault began. Seven hundred heavy bombers laid a carpet of fragmentation bombs on enemy positions 3,000 yards west of the river on the front of the 2nd Polish Corps and the 5th Corps. One group of twenty-seven (27) bombers erroneously released its bombs on the Polish Corps side of the river causing 200 casualties in one battalion that was assembled for the attack. (48)

The heavy bomber attack was immediately followed by massed artillery fire from more than 1,200 guns on likely enemy positions and installations. Each barrage lasted twenty (20) minutes. In the lull between artillery barrages medium bombers and fighters took up the attack. In all it was a tremendous demonstration of air and artillery support. (49)

(46) A-10, p. 12; A-11, p. 2; (47,48,49) A-8, p.8.

At H-Hour the last wave of fighter bombers flew a dummy run as the men of the Eighth Army advanced to the river and began to cross it. (See Map B) Preceded by Wasps and flame throwing tanks the 5th Corps and the 2nd Polish Corps crossed the Senio River on a ten (10) mile front. (50)

The 2nd New Zealand Division, the only unit which held positions on the east bank of the Senio, had the greatest initial success and suffered fewest casualties. By darkness four (4) infantry battalions had crossed west of Cotognola. Meanwhile the bridging had begun. (51)

The 8th Indian Division, attacking north of Lugo, ran into more difficulty. The Germans on the flood banks allowed the leading troops to cross before they decided to open up with machine gun fire that caused many casualties and much delay. Each strong point had to be neutralized separately. In spite of this four (4) infantry companies crossed before darkness. Cotognola itself was to be "mopped up" by the 78th Division. (52)

The 3rd Carpathian Division, the right flank unit of the 2nd Polish Corps, had to fight its way up to the river banks before a crossing could be attempted. Consequently its attack progressed more slowly. However, two (2) companies managed to establish a shallow bridgehead that was finally reinforced with another battalion after bitter fighting on both sides of the river. (53)

Within twenty-four (24) hours, and just before dark, 10 April, the Santerno River was reached by the 2nd New Zealand Division after the way had been paved for it by another carpet

(50) A-8, p.8; (51) A-8, p.7; (52,53) A-8, p.8.

bomb attack in which 700 heavy bombers participated. (54)

Aided by the heavy bomber assault of 10 April and the presence of the Polish Unit, Rudforce, the attack of the 3rd Carpathian Division started to gain momentum and by dark of the 11th the Poles were at the Santerno near Mordano. (55)

In the meantime the 8th Indian Division had also pulled up to the Santerno River by dawn on the 11th in the S. Bernadino area. (56)

In this short time 1,200 prisoners were taken. (57)

On either side of the main attack things were going very well. The Cremona Group in the north crossed the Senio River against light resistance, captured Alfonsine and rolled on toward the Fusignano Canal, while the 10th Corps on the south crossed at Cuffiano, threatening Imola. (58)

Once the barrier (Santerno River) now facing the 5th British and 2nd Polish Corps had been crossed the first phase of the Eighth Army attack would be nearing successful completion.

Early on 11 April the 2nd New Zealand Division started the attack for a bridgehead over the Santerno. That night, as the 8th Indian Division reached the river, another small bridgehead was won. By 12 April the 8th Indian Division, the 2nd New Zealand Division and the 3rd Carpathian Division had crossed the Santerno in force. The 2nd New Zealand Division had, in the meantime, cleared Massa Lombarda. The same afternoon one (1) brigade of the 78th Division, the 5th Corps reserve, was committed. Reinforced with armor it passed the 8th Indian Division in the northern sector of the bridgehead to exploit the crossing to the north. (59)

(54) A-8, p.8; (55) A-8, p.9; (56) A-8, p.9; (57) A-10, p.23;  
(58) A-10, p.24; (59) A-10, p.9.

The Santerno had been breached. The Polish Rudforce made a significant advance along Highway 9 capturing Castel Bolognese. (60)

In spite of the failure of the amphibious Buffaloes in the operations on the night, 5-6 April, General McCreery employed them in the flooded areas south of Lake Comacchio. Achieving tactical surprise and outflanking the enemy's forward position in an unorthodox maneuver of six (6) miles, Menate was captured. One (1) battalion of the 56th Division made the amphibious crossing of the flooded ground the night of 11 April while the 2nd Commandos protected the right flank by marching on the south bank of the lake. (61)

In an effort to outflank the Argenta Gap another, and more daring amphibious assault, was executed the night, 13-14 April. Elements of the 56th Division and the 2nd Commandos were assigned the mission of seizing a foothold in the gap in the Chiesa del Bando area. This force of Buffaloes was given a "warm" reception by the Germans. Casualties, upon landing on the southwest shore of Lake Comacchio, were heavy. However, a foothold was established. (62)

The 78th Division was nearing Bastia from the south. Conselice was captured. The 2nd New Zealand Division continued on north and northwest and approached the Sillaro River. The Poles were closing on Imola as patrols from Friuli Group were clashing with the enemy near the city. (63)

Originally the Fifth Army attack was to follow the Eighth Army offensive by three (3) days. However, poor visibility and bad weather, restricting air operations, caused several delays. Finally, after a total delay of forty-eight (48) hours the (60) A-8, p.9; (61,62) A-8, p.9; (63) A-10, p.30.

Fifth Army attack was launched at 0945 hours, 14 April, southwest of Bologna. (64)

In spite of extensive bombardments from the air, and devastating artillery fires, the enemy was still in his entrenchments determined to make a dogged and stubborn stand. The enemy had wisely taken a maximum advantage of the rugged mountainous terrain combining it with effective methods of employing mines, self-propelled weapons, machine guns and mortars. In all he had a well organized defense that would take its toll of Allied forces. (65)

For the first three and one-half ( $3\frac{1}{2}$ ) days the enemy resisted fiercely and stubbornly. However, by this time his local reserves had been committed in several unsuccessful counterattacks. Our efforts were having a telling effect. Enemy casualties were mounting. Prisoners of war started to become a problem. (66)

Heading northeast from its line of departure (occupied line position) in the vicinity of Castel D'Aiano the 10th Mountain Division was forced to cross a valley strewn with antitank and antipersonnel mines of all varieties including the detectless glass topped Schu mines. (See Map C). By nightfall the two (2) mile ridge of Roffeno Ridge was in the hands of the 10th Mountain Division. (67)

The First Armored Division, left of Highway 64 on the corps' right flank, pushed its tanks forward toward Vergato and Mt. Pero. The Brazilian Expeditionary Force on the other side moved on to Montese. (68)

Slow as it was at no point did the attack stop. Thus,  
(64) A-4, p.14; (65,66) A-4, p.17; (67,68) A-10, p.41.

by determined aggressive fighting the following could be reported as of the night of 15 April. The First Armored Division had taken Vergato while elements of the 10th Mountain Division had captured Mt. Mantino. The Brazilians had advanced beyond Montese capturing several important hills. (69)

The night, 15 April, was another milestone in the final defeat of the German Armies in Italy. At 2230 the II Corps sector suddenly came to life belching out with a tremendous demonstration of artillery power reinforced with heavy mortars, tanks and self-propelled weapons. Seventy-five thousand rounds were fired in thirty (30) minutes. (70)

Soon after the barrage lifted the 6th South African Armored Division and the American 88th Division rose out of the holes, which had been manned for five (5) long months, and steadily advanced on the right of the IV Corps. (71)

At 0300, 16 April, the remainder of the II Corps took up the attack. Once again the Allied Armies in Italy were moving in mass to destroy a common enemy and to drive him from the Italian Peninsula. This latest attack threw the American 91st and 34th Divisions into the fight. (72)

It was the same story -- a slow, costly advance over rugged terrain through mine fields, defensive artillery and mortar fires against a well organized, determined entrenched enemy. Apparently the extensive, elaborate and well planned combinations of air strikes and artillery fires had not blown the enemy from his Apennine fortress. The last task then of engaging the enemy on the ground he chose to defend had to be

(69) A-10, p.41; (70,71,72) A-10, p.44.



left to the doughboy with his rifle and bayonet. This he was accomplishing with an aggressive, determined well planned assault. (73)

This newest attack moved generally astride Highway 65 toward Bologna which was soon to fall.

Both armies were well started on the way of accomplishing their mission in Italy.

#### CAPTURE OF BOLOGNA

By 14 April it was clear that the 5th Corps would concentrate on the Argenta Gap. The 13th Corps was reconstituted and assigned a new sector. Comprising the 10th Indian Division (taken from the old 13th Corps sector), and the fast moving 2nd New Zealand Division, it had the mission of advancing on the Budrio axis. The 10th Indian Division was committed on the right. (74)

The old 13th Corps sector was given over to the Italian troops. (75)

The 2nd New Zealand Division in the meantime was enjoying almost spectacular success. (See Map B). After crossing the Santerno it advanced day and night so that by 14 April it had reached the Sillaro River. The next night it attacked across and by the evening of 16 April was four (4) miles beyond. (76)

The British, in crossing this troublesome series of streams, employed an unusual technique.

The crossings began in the late afternoon so that a firm bridgehead could be established and consolidated before darkness. Then, under the cover of darkness low level bridges were put in. Before daylight armor and antitank guns would be crossed and

(73) A-10, p.44; (74,75) A-8, p.10; (76) A-8, p.11.

the attack taken up again the next morning. (77)

The elements of the 56th Division and the 2nd Commando Brigade, which had made the amphibious crossing of Lake Comacchio, were engaged in stubborn fighting for three (3) days. (78)

Bastia was captured on 16 April in wake of the 78th Division's advance as the enemy withdrew to Argenta. (79)

The Polish Corps was also attaining success in its assault. The first large town to fall in this campaign was Imola on Highway 9. The 4th Wilenska Brigade stormed into the city on 14 April. Medicina also fell victim to the 2nd Polish Corps on 17 April as the attached 43rd Gurkha Brigade swarmed in from the south. (80)

The next obstacle in front of the 2nd New Zealand Division was a minor stream, the River Gaiana. Here the Germans decided to make another vigorous stand, evidently attempting to delay as long as Monte Grande was in his hands. (81)

The 10th Indian Division, in its new sector, reached the Sillaro River on the 16th. By the 17th it had crossed the river and was closing on Porto Novo and Buda. (82)

On the IV Corps sector the attack was progressing steadily.

By the evening of 16 April, one regiment of the 10th Mountain Division captured Tole, an important road center, after a bitter fight that reduced the town to rubble. (See Map C) (83)

The German was slowly being pushed out of the mountains where his tremendous advantage of defending difficult terrain would vanish. By dark 17 April, after making substantial advances, the 10th Mountain Division could report that it had

(77) A-8, p.10; (78,79) A-8, p.9; (80) A-10, p.31; (81) A-8, p.11; (82) A-10, p.31; (83) A-4, p.18.

taken Montepastore and San Prospero. With each succeeding advance the terrain was becoming more suitable for the use of armor. (84)

About this time it was perceived that the caliber of German resistance was weakening. It was entirely possible that he might be considering withdrawing. If so, the breakthrough would soon be accomplished. (85)

Along Highway 64 Mt. Pero was captured by the 1st Armored Division at 0845, 16 April. The same day the reconnaissance squadron cleared Vergato. (86)

After capturing Montese in a sharp fire fight on 14 April, the Brazilians were pounded by severe artillery fire for several days. This prevented them from accomplishing any further significant advances. A prepared attack was disorganized by enemy artillery and mortar fire on 16 April. As a result 17 April found the Brazilians regrouping in preparation for new attacks at the first opportunity. The left sector of IV Corps was relatively inactive except for patrol clashes. (87)

As previously noted the efforts of II Corps were stubbornly resisted along the entire front and only limited gains were made. However, the 6th South African Armored Division enjoyed the greatest success and was able to capture Mt. Sole by daylight 16 April. (88)

Two (2) of the highest peaks standing between the II Corps and the Po Valley were captured on two (2) successive days. During its hardest day of fighting in this advance the 88th Division captured Monteramici on 17 April. By 1000, 18 April, the 91st Division captured Mt. Adone, the corps objective. (89)

(84) A-4, p. 18; (85) A-4, p. 19; (86) A-4, p. 24; (87) A-4, p.28; (88) A-10, p. 44; (89) A-10, p.47, A-6, p.194;A-5,p.283.

On the 18th the attack everywhere started to gain momentum. By noon on the 17th General Truscott, the 5th Army Commander, decided to commit the army reserve. Accordingly the 85th Division, less one (1) regiment, relieved the 1st Armored Division on the right of IV Corps sector and continued the mission of clearing Highway 64. (90)

The 10th Mountain Division continued on its advance. However, resistance on the left part of the division sector was more stubborn. Counterattacks from the west bank of the Samoggia River were numerous and artillery fire heavy. However, by the evening of 19 April two (2) combat teams had pushed their way to Monte Avezzano which represented a gain of more than six (6) miles in one day. Here they awaited to attack into the valley at dawn on the 20th. (91)

The 1st Armored Division (after shifting to a new sector) found itself operating in terrain more suitable for the use of armor than that along Highway 64. Good road nets did exist and most of the streams in the Panaro-Samoggia River Valley were fordable. (92)

At this time (the 17th) with the IV Corps progressing steadily with the 10th Mountain Division in the center, and the 85th Division on the right, it was felt that a thrust to the northwest to broaden the corps sector might hasten the break through. Accordingly, on 18 April, one combat command sent out two (2) thrusts -- one north, the other west. Resistance to the north was lighter and the advance went three

(90) A-4, p. 29; (91) A-4, pp. 35-36; (92) A-4, p. 32

(3) miles beyond S. Prospero that day. (93)

Elements of the 10th Mountain Division riding tanks, jeeps, and trucks descended into the Po Valley during the morning of the 20th thus winning the distinction of being the first American unit in the Po Valley. The advance continued northwest toward Ponte Samoggia and Highway 9, and by nightfall one (1) regiment held the town and a two (2) mile section of the highway to the southeast. (94)

The 85th Division continued its advance along the mountains and entered the valley at Gesso a few hours behind the 10th Mountain Division and moved on to cross Highway 9. (95)

IV Corps now had cut Highway 9 between Bologna and Modena isolating Bologna from Northwestern Italy. (96)

The presence of IV Corps in the Po Valley, with a sizeable bridgehead over Highway 9, undoubtedly had a great influence on the German decision to pull out of Bologna.

In the II Corps sector the 6th South African Armored Division, progressing steadily, crossed the Reno River in the Praduro area on 19 April. The 88th Division, pinched out by the Reno River and the 91st Division, shifted to the west (left) of the 6th South African Armored Division. The 34th Division captured Mt. Ca dell'Albero directly south of Bologna. Resistance along the entire front was weakening. Continuing against light resistance the 6th South African Armored Division advanced seven (7) miles to reach Casalecchio. (97)

(93) A-4, p. 33; (94) A-4, p. 38; (95) A-4, pp. 38-39;  
(96) A-4, p. 39; (97) A-3, p. 10

On the morning of 21 April one (1) battalion of the 34th Division, riding tanks along Highway 65, entered the city of Bologna amid the wild cheers of the populace who were crowding the streets. The Germans had evacuated the city the night before. (98)

Almost simultaneously with the Americans, Polish and Italian units had entered Bologna from the southeast along Highway 9. (99)

Turning back time a few days the narrative of the Eighth Army continues.

The 2nd New Zealand Division of the 5th Corps had crossed the Sillaro River and had advanced to the River Gaiana where they were engaged rather heavily. Again attacking across a river at night the 2nd New Zealand Division crossed on the 18th and advanced rapidly to Budrio. (See Map B). There another river, the Idice, stood as a barrier to further advance. However, on 20 April, it was learned that the enemy was not occupying his known defense along the river. (100)

The 2nd Polish Corps experienced the same type of resistance on the Gaiana River. After storming the river they continued, arriving in Bologna early on 21 April. (101)

The 5th Corps, in forcing the Argenta Gap, had the 78th and 56th Divisions fighting through the corridor east of Highway 16. (102)

On the 18th a brigade of the 78th Division bypassed Argenta to the east and reached Boccaleone. Another brigade of the 56th Division on the right also made exceptional gains.

(98) A-3, p. 10; (99) A-8, p. 11; (100)(101) A-8, p. 11; (102) A-8, p. 9

This was the decisive day in the defense of the Argenta Gap. An exploitation force of infantry and armor, organized and launched this day, enjoyed outstanding success. It pressed on night and day, crossed many canals and neutralized many enemy strong points. (103)

The Army Commander decided on the 18th to commit the reserve 6th Armored Division releasing it to the 5th Corps. On the afternoon of the 19th this division arrived in its assigned sector and passed through to the left of the 78th Division but was stopped at Tragheto that evening. Evidently the Germans realized that the 5th Corps had to be contained to keep open their escape routes. It now seemed apparent that they had decided to withdraw across the Po. The attack was resumed on the 20th and began to pick up momentum on the 21st. By dark Poggio Renatico was reached climaxing an advance of eight (8) miles in one afternoon. The Po River was now well within reach. (104)

#### THE RACE TO THE PO RIVER

The attack was proceeding according to plan along the entire front. The Fifth Army, advancing between the Panaro and Reno Rivers, would soon be forced to cross the Panaro.

On the morning which marked the fall of Bologna, the Fifth Army Commander directed that a strong pursuit was indicated and that commanders would use every possible means to push men, guns and ammunition forward. Tanks were to carry infantry. (105)

(103) A-8, pp. 10-11; (104) A-8, p. 11; (105) A-4, p. 40

Elements of IV Corps, desiring to exploit as rapidly as possible, organized Task Force Duff. One motorized infantry battalion, one light tank company, an engineer company, and one tank destroyer platoon commanded by Brigadier General Duff, would seize the Bomporto Bridge over the Panaro River. The task force had great success and had reached the river and secured the bridge by dark the night of 21 April. (See Map D) (106)

On the 22nd another bridge across the Panaro was seized at Camposanto by elements of the 85th and 6th South African Armored Divisions after a small force, which had crossed the river, was driven back by a German counterattack. However, before being driven back the prepared demolitions had been destroyed. Another regiment crossed at Solera. Motorized, the 85th Division continued to cross the Panaro and reached a point just south of Mirandola early on the morning, 23 April. (107)

In the meantime Task Force Duff was on the move again. Crossing the Secchia River at Sorbara, it continued on to the communication center at Capri, turned north generally along Highway 74 and reached the south bank of the Po north of S. Benedetto at dark. On its way it met many small pockets of resistance although most of the larger towns were bypassed. The 10th Mountain Division, the first Fifth Army unit to enter the Po Valley, now had won the distinction of being the first Allied force to reach the south banks of the Po River. (108)

(106) A-4, p. 40; (107, 108) A-4, p. 41



The First Armored Division, which had been blocked from the valley by the strong point at Bazzano on the 20th, finally cleared the town during the afternoon of the 21st. (See Map C) With its tanks now on flat ground, where no defiles on mountain trails existed, the division could start rolling. By 1900 of the 21st one tank battalion had reached the outskirts of Castelfranco dell' Emilia. During the night the tanks rolled on to attempt a crossing of the Panaro and Secchia Rivers. (109)

On the 22nd one combat command bypassed Modena to the south while another had passed it about one (1) mile to the northwest. (See Map D) At 1730 Modena was declared cleared after a fight between the Germans and partisans had continued for twelve (12) hours. (110)

During the early hours of the 23rd one tank battalion with infantry support had reached the Po at Guastalla blocking an important route of escape for the Germans. One combat command, advancing northwest along Highway 9, encountered bitter resistance at Rubiera. (111)

It was reasonable to expect resistance along Highway 9. As the Germans were compressed in this area they also would be reinforced by troops streaming out of the mountains. (112)

The 34th Division, which had been policing Bologna, was ordered to Castelfranco on Highway 9 in the IV Corps sector on the 22nd. (113)

(109, 110) A-4, p. 42; (111)A-4, p. 43; (112) A-4, p. 44;  
(113) A-10, p. 51

The Brazilians still in the mountains were able to start advancing on 20 April. By 1700, 21 April, two (2) battalions had established a line north of Zocca. On 23 April the Brazilians were ordered to advance and block Highway 12 leading out of the Apennines denying exit from the Panaro Valley. (114)

In the meantime II Corps was also rapidly continuing the race to the Po River. The bulk of the corps, comprising the 88th Division, 6th South African Armored Division and the 91st Division, bypassed Bologna to the west. On the 21st all three (3) divisions had cut Highway 9 after overpowering scattered resistance and capturing many prisoners. (115)

The II Corps' pursuit through the Po Valley continued to meet more resistance on the right as the enemy sought to hold open an escape route over the Po and succeeding rivers for his forces caught between the Fifth and Eighth Armies. (116)

The 6th South African Armored Division operated over the entire corps front as the two (2) infantry divisions advanced abreast with the 91st Division on the right and the 88th Division on the left. The advance was rapid and all three (3) divisions reached the Panaro River by 22 April. Many prisoners and great quantities of enemy material were captured this day. The Panaro was crossed without delay. (117)

The 6th South African Armored Division captured a bridge

(114) A-4, p. 46; (115) A-3, p. 3; (116) A-3, p. 4;  
(117) A-3, pp. 4-10

over the river at Camposanto in the 88th Division sector. The 88th Division crossed the Panaro by having one (1) battalion wade across while other elements used a railroad bridge east of Camposanto. (118)

On the other flank elements of the 91st Division and the 6th South African Armored Division fought a vigorous rear guard action in the vicinity of Finale. However, both units managed to reach the Panaro after overcoming this resistance. (119)

By 0630, 23 April, elements of the 91st Division crossed the Panaro and continued the advance northward while its vehicles and armor headed west to Camposanto to cross the only existing bridge in the corps area. (120)

The bulk of the 6th South African Armored Division was held south of the Panaro unable to cross the river because of the blown bridges. However, moving to the east elements of the division contacted parts of the 6th Armored Division (British) to close the pincers between the Fifth and Eighth Armies. (121)

All units continued to advance throughout the 23rd.

On the basis of the large numbers of prisoners taken, the great quantity of enemy materials and equipment destroyed, and casualties inflicted, the Corps Commander decided that crossings over the Po were to be quickly seized. There would be no pause for a set piece attack. Crossings would be made by any means available. This was to be the keynote for all

(118) A-3, p. 10; (119) A-3, p. 4; (120) A-5, p. 304;  
(121) A-3, p. 11

future river crossings and actions. (122)

On 24 April II Corps reached the Po River.

In the race for the Po River the British Eighth Army had lost by a few hours to the fast moving 10th Mountain Division.

The rapidly advancing 6th Armored Division reached the Po River northwest of Ferrara early on the 23rd followed very closely on the right by the 8th Indian Division. In the meantime the 6th Armored Division had sent elements to Finale where they linked up with Fifth Army troops on that same day. Some 7,000 prisoners were pushed into the arms of the United States Fifth Army. (123)

Elements of the 8th Indian Division, with parts of the 78th Division, were fighting for the Ferrara air field by 22 April. (124)

Upon the capture of Bologna the 2nd Polish Corps and the 10th Corps, which had been following enemy withdrawals in the hills south of Highway 9, were put into Army reserve. (125)

On 24 April Ferrara was captured. (126)

At this time it was apparent that the enemy forces still possessed some strength south of the Po, east of Ferrara. These forces were opposing the advance of the 5th Corps. However, west of Ferrara to Bondeno the 6th Armored Division and 8th Indian Division were already upon the river banks. Consequently the Army Commander decided to cross the Po west

(122) A-3, p. 4; (123) A-8, pp.11-12; (124) A-10, p. 35;  
(125) A-8, p. 11; (126) A-10, p. 37

of Ferrara as quickly as possible. (127)

The Eighth Army reached the Po River along the entire front by dawn on 25 April. As was the case on the Fifth Army front hundreds of destroyed German vehicles, trucks, tanks and self-propelled guns lined the roads leading to the Po. The Desert Air Force was credited with destroying three (3) pontoon bridges over the Po the night of 23 April. These bridges were believed to be the last escape routes on the Fifth Army front. The bulk of enemy strength had been trapped south of the Po. (128)

#### CROSSING THE PO

Fifth Army plans anticipated a crossing of the Po at Ostiglia by II Corps which was making the main effort toward Verona. Consequently priorities for bridging equipment, limited materials and Army specially trained personnel available for combat river crossings were given to the II Corps. The Hannibal Plan of March 1945, envisaged a peaceable crossing by the IV Corps at Piacenza. Under this plan IV Corps was to be allocated one floating Bailey Bridge. (129)

As late as 20 April, when the 10th Mountain Division poured into the Po Valley, no command decision had been made as to whether or not IV Corps would cross. Consequently no equipment was available to IV Corps at that time. (130)

Nevertheless IV Corps Engineer on 20 April requested that 100 assault boats for reconnaissance and patrols be immediately

(127) A-8, p. 11; (128) A-8, p. 12; (129, 130) A-2, p. 81

sent to Anzola. These arrived on 21 April. Sometime during 22 April Fifth Army decided to make the Po Operation a scramble crossing on a wide front as quickly as possible. Therefore IV Corps could have any equipment available. (131)

Task Force Duff of the 10th Mountain Division had arrived on the south bank of the Po at dark, 22 April. During the night 22-23 April the regiment, which had been selected to make the first crossing of the Po, arrived in assembly areas south of the river. (132)

In the meantime an officer guide, dispatched by the Division Commander, reported to the Corps Engineer requesting assault boats. At that time the Corps Engineer had not been informed of the intention of IV Corps to cross the Po. Nevertheless fifty (50) assault boats with paddles were loaded on five (5) 2½-ton trucks and were released to the 10th Mountain Division officer at 2000 hours. (133)

The 1st Battalion of the 87th Infantry Regiment, the unit selected to make the first Allied crossing of the Po River, contemplated making the operation on the night, 23 April. (134)

The fifty (50) assault boats arrived in S. Benedetto Po area at 0600, 23 April. At 0845 the Division Commander made the decision to cross the Po as soon as possible. 1030 Hours was set as H-Hour. (135)

The decision was based on the fact that the enemy was so far off balance by the rapid advance that he was not prepared

(131) A-2, p. 82; (132) A-1b, p. 14; (133) A-2, p. 82;  
(134) A-1b, p. 14; (135) A-1a, p. 5

to make the attack at this time. In addition the enemy was crossing the river over an intact bridge some few miles to the east. Given time these forces could be placed in position to resist the Po crossing. (136)

According to the Commander of the 87th Mountain Infantry Regiment, Colonel M. Fowler - "This crossing is the first crossing of a major river our Army has made without 'preparation', i.e., securing of flanks, aerial and ground reconnaissance, photos, artillery preparation, etc." (137)

At the time the decision was made to cross no liaison had been established with the engineers or the supporting artillery and armor.

The time allowed for the preparation of the crossing proved to be insufficient. Consequently H-Hour was postponed twice finally being set for 1200 hours. By this time the engineers had placed the assault boats on the river's edge. (138)

Two (2) companies were deployed along the bank of the river behind the scant cover of the levee. At 1205 the crossing began as the men of the two (2) companies ran from the levee to the awaiting assault boats. (139)

At this very moment the enemy began to shell the south bank of the river with 88's and 20-mm flak guns. Many of the 88's went over the south bank and levee, landing in the final assembly areas where they caused damage. Mortars and machine guns covered the river itself. Casualties were considerable

(136, 137) A-la, p. 5; (138, 139) A-lb, p. 15

but the troops of the first wave continued the crossing, stormed the north shore, and quickly silenced the machine guns and mortars. Succeeding waves therefore were not subjected to small arms or mortar fire. However the 88's and 20-mm anti-aircraft guns were not picked up or neutralized. (140)

It should be noted that the Battalion Commander repeatedly called for air support. Unfortunately the air corps had selected this day to move forward from their position south of the Apennines. (141)

A five (5) mile per hour current caused a considerable amount of drift downstream. This proved to be of value to succeeding waves as they were thereby accidentally driven into a position along the south bank where a considerable amount of defilade existed. (142)

By 1300 the bridgehead was secured. Later it was expanded to about one (1) mile deep and four (4) miles wide with the Mincio River roughly forming the northern boundary. (143)

During the 24th supplies, artillery and armor were brought across the river on rafts and Dukws which had arrived on the scene after the operation began. A bridge over the Mincio River was also captured in fair condition this day. (144)

As has been previously noted IV Corps Engineers were not fully prepared for a bridging operation. Much confusion and delay resulted. Corps Engineer had repeatedly requested

(140) A-1b, p. 15; (141) A-1a, p. 5; (142) A-1b, p. 15;  
(143) A-4, p. 54; (144) A-4, p. 55



a M-2 Treadway bridge which would carry armor. However, it was still felt that the M-2 Treadway would be constructed in II Corps area. Despite the utter confusion surrounding the bridging operation it was successful in the end. (145)

At 1700 hours, 23 April, in Bologna, 1,200 feet of M-1 Treadway bridge was turned over to an officer guide who was to take it to the vicinity of Uingentole in the 85th Division area. Higher headquarters had selected this site although no one knew why. At this time a rapid check of the equipment revealed that anchor cables and manila rope were not included in the convoy. Army engineers immediately ordered that this equipment be sent forward from Florence some four (4) or five (5) hours to the south behind the Apennines. During the night this convoy was intercepted and diverted toward San Benedetto Po presumably under orders of higher authority. At this time another difficulty, causing a delay of several hours occurred, when the entire convoy stalled on the highway with empty gasoline tanks. (146)

However, construction began at 1300 on the 24th and the bridge was officially opened at 1230 the 25th. The construction itself was slowed down because the troops had not received training in swift water operations. Six (6) hours after the construction started the missing anchor and cables arrived at the bridging scene. (147)

In the meantime a German ferry with the capacity of two (2) 2½-ton trucks was put into operation. Three (3)

(145) A-2, p. 83; (146) A-2, pp. 55-56; (147) A-2, p. 56

Quonsett barges arrived on the scene. One (1) was entirely inoperative and before long a second developed motor trouble. (148)

A heavy pontoon bridge was built north of San Benedetto Po about one (1) mile west of the Treadway. At 1730 hours on the 25th the first tank rolled across the heavy pontoon bridge. In the next ten (10) hours 500 vehicles consisting mainly of the tank supporting elements of the 10th Mountain and 85th Divisions and advance elements of the 1st Armored Division crossed. (149)

Once across the Po River all units were confronted by the Mincio River. One (1) bridge at Governolo had been captured intact on the 24th. (150)

The Germans, usually experts at blowing bridges, in their haste performed poorly in this instance, and as a result the wood and steel trestle bridge, about 1,200 feet in length and 30 feet above the water, was not seriously damaged. The most serious damage occurred in a lateral displacement of the girders and in the destruction of the structures that gave rigidity to the bridge. However, engineers concluded that it could withstand Class 40 traffic in spite of the fact that it had a considerable amount of vibration and side sway. Nevertheless a command decision restricted its use to jeeps and weapons carriers. (151)

Gradually a traffic jam threatened to develop north of the Po as vehicles poured over the Treadway bridge. When the armor started to roll over the heavy pontoon bridge at 1730

(148) A-2, p. 84; (149) A-4, p. 56; (150) A-4, p. 55;  
(151) A-4, pp. 57-58

hours something had to be done. Another command decision allowed a light tank to cross the Govenolo Bridge as a test. The bridge held and the rest of the armor was pushed over it. (152)

The 85th Division, which in the meantime had received its share of the equipment finally allocated the IV Corps for the Po crossing, started to cross the Po by 0840, 24 April against no opposition between Quingentole and Sabbioncello. The first elements to cross used ferries and other craft available at the scene. (153)

II Corps in the meantime had reached the Po in force on 24 April. On the whole crossings in this sector were more orderly. Enemy opposition was negligible.

The first II Corps unit to cross the Po was the 88th Division. Motorizing its forces it had moved very rapidly from the Panaro to the Po River. Before daylight of the 25th the division had sent four (4) battalions of infantry, along with several tanks and T.D.'s, over using assault boats, Dukws, ferries, captured barges and a partially destroyed bridge at Ostiglia. (154)

In the meantime the 91st Division, meeting stiff opposition from enemy pockets south of the Po, was engaged in mop up operations during the 24th. Using assault boats the first units started across the Po at 2200. However, it was not until later on the 25th that most of the division had crossed the

(152) A-4, pp. 58-59; (153) A-4, p. 59; (154) A-3, p. 10

Po. Except for one (1) minor clash no enemy opposition was encountered in the crossing itself.

The 6th South African Armored Division crossed on the 25th and started to advance to the north against stiffening resistance. (155)

At 0400, 26 April, a corps bridge over the Po at Ostiglia was opened.

The first elements of the Eighth Army to reach the south bank of the Po River arrived during the night, 22-23 April. However, it was not until 25 April that the army had reached the Po in force. The Po proved to be more of a barrier to the Germans than it was to the Eighth Army. No great difficulty was experienced by any Eighth Army unit crossing the Po. The crossing was effected by using D.D. tanks against extremely light resistance. (156)

The decision to cross the Po west of Ferrara had been made on the 24th. Accordingly 13th Corps had swing north to cross the Po with the 2nd New Zealand Division on the left and the 6th Armored Division on the right. By morning of 25 April the division had secured a bridgehead. The 2nd New Zealand Division crossed with infantry and tanks. (157)

The 8th Indian Division's crossing was harassed by artillery fire from north of Ferrara. The 56th Division crossed east of Ferrara against no opposition. (158)

Floating pontoon bridges were rapidly put into operation. One (1) pontoon bridge 620 feet long was completed in twelve (12) hours. (159)

(155) A-3, p. 10; (156) A-8, p. 12; (157) A-10, pp. 37-38; (158) A-8, p. 12; A-10, p. 38; (159) A-10, p. 39

The site at Pontelagoscuro for a Class 40 bridge had been selected from aerial photographs before the operation began. South African Engineers started construction on the remains of an old railroad bridge on the 26th. However, the bridge, which was more than 1,000 feet long, was not completed until 4 May ... too late to have any influence on the remainder of the Po Valley Campaign. (160)

#### THE EXPLOITATION

As soon as the Po River had been crossed and a bridgehead secured, the IV Corps ordered the 10th Mountain Division to continue the pursuit and capture Verona as the next objective. To spearhead the advance another task force, Task Force Darby, was organized. (161)

During the night of 24-25 April, one battalion, reinforced with tanks of the 10th Mountain Division, broke out of the bridgehead over the Po and advanced rapidly to the north. (See Map E) Bypassing Mantova to the east it arrived in the vicinity of Villafranca at 0945. Here the first enemy were encountered. However, as was later determined, they were only a small surprised detachment. By 1700, 25 April, the Villafranca air field was secured. (162)

The task force, which had been delayed south of the Po due to the inability of its armor to cross the Po, finally arrived at Villafranca by nightfall on the 25th. By 2000 hours it was on the move again. With its armor leading the task force reached Verona at 0745 on the 26th having met no enemy. (163)

As will be mentioned later the 88th Division of II Corps had outraced the 10th Mountain Division and had already captured Verona. Once in Verona the task force was ordered to continue advancing and capture Trento in an attempt to cut off the large number of Germans trying to flee Italy through the Brenner Pass. Moving rapidly west to Lake Garda the column turned north along the highway east of the lake. The remainder of the division was to follow as closely as possible using a time schedule for shuttling troops by motor and foot in order to move the division sixty (60) miles a day. (164)

The 85th Division, after crossing the Po, continued the advance to the north and during the afternoon of the 26th reached the Adige River. Foot columns crossed the river over two (2) bridges -- a foot bridge west of Verona and a railroad bridge south of town. Continuing on the division was soon well behind the Adige line which was reported to be the last prepared defensive position south of the Alps. The rapid advance of the Allied Armies at this time prevented the Germans from manning their positions. (165)

Continuing to advance on the 28th by leapfrogging its regiments the 10th Mountain Division met enemy resistance along the east shore of Lake Garda in the form of road blocks and a series of tunnel defenses supported by self-propelled guns. The advance was momentarily stopped when it was discovered that two (2) bridges between two (2) tunnels were so effectively blown that they were impassable. This obstacle

(164) A-1c, p. 68; (165) A-4, p. 61

was easily bypassed by the use of Dukws which ferried troops around the destroyed highway. The Dukws had been incorporated into the advancing column for just such an emergency. Evidently the Germans had overlooked this capability. However, the Germans still harassed our troops with accurate 20-mm fire from a ridge just east of the highway and from across the lake which materially slowed their advance. (166)

By the 29th the 10th Mountain Division was nearing the northeastern tip of the lake where they began to run into fierce enemy resistance in the towns of Torbole and Nago. The Germans were defending with small arms fire, armor and S.P. fire. However, one (1) battalion was able to enter Torbole by 2214 that night after engaging in severe street fighting. (167)

At 0050 the Germans launched a determined counterattack with armor and infantry against the town of Torbole and against our troops attempting to take Nago. The Division Commander had given permission to withdraw to a more suitable position just east of the town if such action were necessary. However, our troops were able to hold Torbole but those attacking Nago retired some 1,500 yards where they held fast. This phase of defending did not long endure. By 1115 Nago was in American hands. During the night of the 30th the enemy withdrew permitting our forces to occupy Riva. (168)

At 0230 hours 30 April one (1) company loaded in twelve (12) Dukws crossed Lake Garda without meeting enemy resistance. Later in the day another company was ferried across the lake.

(166) A-1c, p. 71; (167) A-1c, p. 74; (168) A-1, p. 76

Amphibious operations over Lake Garda were continued and by 0430, 1 May, one battalion had crossed. Later that day patrols reached Nago where they contacted the forces already there.

(169)

Before the advancing elements could reach Trento the war was officially ended. (170)

In the meantime the 85th Division, which had been paralleling the advance of the 10th Mountain Division on the right consolidated and established east and northeast of Verona where they remained under Fifth Army control. (171)

Beyond the Po to the northeast lay the Adige River. II Corps, without pausing after crossing the Po, turned its efforts toward the northeast, intending to breach the line before it could be manned in strength. (172)

In the meantime the 88th Division continued advancing thirty-five (35) miles and by 2300, 25 April, one of its battalions was fighting for the city of Verona. Without delay the division crossed the Adige. By 0700 on the 27th armor and three (3) of its regiments were across and were racing toward Vicenza. A railroad bridge in Verona had been repaired to carry tanks and T.D.'s. (173)

In the southeast the 91st Division, after crossing the Po, met relatively stiff opposition on its march to the Adige River and Legnano. However, by crossing troops in Dukws a bridgehead was established by four (4) infantry battalions by the end of the day, 26 April. The crossing continued throughout the night and the next day. (174)

(169) A-1c, pp. 77-78; (170) A-1c, p. 9; (171) A-4, p. 62  
(172) A-3, p. 4; (173) A-3, p. 11; A-6, p. 12; (174) A-5, p. 318



The 6th South African Armored Division was greatly hampered by this series of rivers over which only a few suitable bridges were captured intact. Each river caused a delay in its forward movement as the armor waited for bridges to be constructed. On the same day that elements of the 6th South African Armored Division crossed the Po its 13th Brigade crossed the Panaro over a bridge which had just been completed. On 27 April the 11th Brigade crossed the Po over the bridge at Ostiglia. (175)

During the night of the 27th advance elements of the 91st Division, moving toward Vicenza, encountered a series of small groups of enemy who were about to occupy Adige River line positions. (176)

Vicenza fell into the hands of the 88th Division on the 28th after almost fanatical resistance by the Germans was overcome. This swiftly moving motorized battalion, reinforced with tanks, had outflanked the Adige line. (177)

On the 28th elements of the 91st Division also entered Vicenza which was already in the hands of the 88th Division.

The pursuit continued and 29 April found II Corps troops along the Brenta River. By 1250 one (1) regiment of the 88th Division crossed Bassano and cleared the town. Bassano stands at the gateway to that part of Austria that Hitler called his Inner Fortress. (178)

A task force of the 91st Division secured a bridgehead over the Brenta by 1200. By 1430 the foot elements of an entire regiment were ferried across the river in Dukws. Continuing

(175) A-3, p. 12; (176) A-5, p. 321; (177,178) A-10, p. 59

the advance and bypassing enemy pockets of resistance one (1) battalion, riding tanks, entered Treviso by dusk. The tanks had pushed across the river after the foot troops. The tanks soon caught up with the foot troops and once again armor and infantry comprised the team that operates so well in a pursuit. (179)

The 6th South African Armored Division crossed its armor and infantry over the Brenta on the 30th and immediately pushed out to the east against light resistance. The division reverted to Fifth Army control and assembled at Treviso. (180)

In the north the corps planned to race toward the Brenner Pass employing the 88th and 85th Divisions. The 85th Division was attached to II Corps on 30 April and passed through the right of the 88th Division. Both divisions moved along roads toward Austria against sporadic and relatively weak resistance. (181)

On 1 May the 88th Division captured Feltre. (182)

At 1400 hours, 2 May the cessation of hostilities was declared. All II Corps troops were held in place awaiting further orders. (183)

Later one (1) regiment of the 88th Division was dispatched to the Austrian border. Contact was made with the 103rd Division of the Seventh Army a few miles south of the Brenner Pass at 1051 4 May. (184)

Once across the Po the situation developed rapidly for the British Eighth Army.

Early on the morning of the 25th, the day the Eighth Army

(179) A-5, p. 328; (180) A-3, p. 13; (181, 182, 183) A-3, p. 13; (184) A-6, pp. 219-220

began to cross the Po, the Commander of the 76th Panzer Corps surrendered. By midnight the score was nearly 14,000 prisoners taken by the 5th Corps. General von Schwerin claimed there was nothing left in front of the 5th Corps. Apparently his estimate was correct. Within forty-eight (48) hours the Adige River was reached and crossed without delay. (The river, about 120 yards wide and flowing fast, was crossed with Dukws, Buffaloes and D.D. tanks.) (185)

After the Adige the pursuit developed into a race for Venice between the 13th Corps and the 5th Corps. (186)

On 29 April elements of the 13th Corps captured Padua after sharp fighting in the outskirts of the city. The 2nd New Zealand Division captured Maestre and continued on to Venice which was by that time in the hands of partisan forces. (187)

On the 30th the 56th Division relieved the 2nd New Zealand Division in Venice. On 1 May elements of the 6th Armored Division entered Udine. (188)

After an advance of seventy-five (75) miles the 2nd New Zealand Division joined forces with Yugoslavian troops who were advancing from the east in the vicinity of Trieste. The 6th Armored Division reached Udine on 1 May. (189)

General Freyberg of the 2nd New Zealand Division accepted the surrender of several thousand German troops on 2 May in Trieste where they had been fighting Marshall Tito's Yugoslavian troops. (190)

At this time the war had come to an end for the famous British Eighth Army.

(185) A-10, p. 36; A-8, p. 12; (186) A-8, p. 12;  
(187) A-8, p. 13; (188, 189) A-10, p. 39; (190) A-8, p. 13

To complete the narrative it is necessary to roll back time a few days to report what happened in the left of the IV Corps sector. The 1st Armored Division, the 34th Division and the 1st Brazilian Expeditionary Force were also making outstanding advances and capturing thousands of prisoners in these late days of the campaign.

By 25 April IV Corps elements had advanced northwest south of the Po River to the Taro River which meant that all escape routes east of this river would be denied to the Germans. At this time three (3) main roads of escape were still open. They paralleled the main road: Cremona-Brescia, Piacenza-Bergamo and Pavia-Milan. (191)

Potentially the fleeing enemy, despite his terrific losses south of the Po, still had enough artillery and S.P. guns to constitute a threat if he desired to fight his way out. The rapid advance of IV Corps had created a salient six (6) miles wide and twenty-two (22) miles deep by the night, 25 April. The enemy therefore constituted a threat to the corps' left flank. In addition to this the German LXXV Corps, which had been blocking the French-Italian border and which was still intact and prepared to fight, was finally withdrawing. At this time it was in the vicinity of Turin. (192)

Consequently IV Corps had to protect its left flank and prevent any large scale escapes by placing enough strength between the enemy and the Swiss-Austrian frontiers. This could best be accomplished by racing straight to the Swiss

(191) A-4, p. 64; (192) A-4, pp. 64-65

border from west of Mantova. (193)

The 1st Armored Division, which we left south of the Po at Guastalla on 22 April, reconstituted one (1) combat command and closed it north of the Po by 0630, 26 April, crossing the bridge in the San Benedetto Po area. To facilitate gasoline resupply a mobile gasoline platoon with a rolling capacity of 30,000 gallons was attached to it. (194)

From 22 April on, the 1st Armored Division had been very active. One (1) combat command operated south of Highway 9, engaged in many stiff fights and captured many prisoners. However, all efforts to advance to the west were strongly resisted. (195)

The advance forward from the assembly area north of the Po on good roads and flat land, against little organized resistance, along the Brescia-Bergamo-Como axis progressed very rapidly. Communications with corps became difficult and sporadic. That night a halt was made on the outskirts of Brescia while patrols were dispatched to ascertain its status. According to reports Germans were in the town in strength ready to defend it. These reports were substantiated. (196)

Resuming the attack to the northwest the next morning Brescia and its garrison were bypassed. The advance continued and in the afternoon of the 27th the next town along the axis, Bergamo, was also bypassed. Only Como, the famous lake resort town, lay between this force and the Swiss border. By 0200, 28 April, the combat command entered Como where they

(193) A-4, p. 65; (194,195) A-4, p. 69; (196) A-4, p. 70

were royally welcomed by the civilian populace in spite of the extremely early hour of the day. (197)

Without pause elements pushed out toward the Swiss border while others moved toward Varese. (198)

The 34th Division, which had been attached to IV Corps two (2) days after the fall of Bologna, had progressed along Highway 9 fighting stubborn rear guard actions. In its advance the Secchia River had been crossed and the towns of Reggio and Bagnolo were cleared. By the night, 25 April, it was fighting in Parma. As it moved road blocks south of the highway were set up to block any enemy pouring out of the mountains. As the Brazilians advanced south of the highway the road blocks were turned over to them releasing more of the 34th Division for further advances. (199)

On the 26th fierce fighting ensued along Highway 9 as trapped Germans tried to break out from the south. Elements reaching Piacenza and Busseto were also heavily engaged. The entire division was relieved by the Brazilians on the 28th. (200)

Shuttling the entire 34th Division with only organic transportation across the Po at San Benedetto Po, it was recommitted in an area south of the Brescia-Bergamo axis, on the 28th. (201)

On 29 April the Brazilians accepted the unconditional surrender terms of the 148th German Infantry Division after they had severely defeated them in the Fornovo area. (202)

(197) A-4, pp. 71-74; (198) A-4, p. 74; (199) A-4, pp. 77-78; (200) A-4, p. 77; (201) A-4, p. 79; (202) A-4, pp. 80-81

The Ligurian Army, commanded by Marshal Graziani, in northwest Italy had been harassed continuously by partisans. His communications had been seriously interrupted. None existed between Marshal Graziani and his staff. On 28 April his Chief of Staff and also Deputy Commander, General Pemsel, drove to Como where he surrendered to elements of the 1st Armored Division. (203)

On the 29th, in IV Corps Headquarters, Pemsel signed an unconditional surrender for the entire Ligurian Army. Marshal Graziani, captured that same night, endorsed Pemsel's actions. General Pemsel issued orders to put the surrender into effect. (204)

The Lombardy Corps, now consisting of about 2,000 German troops under the command of General Jahn readily complied on 30 April. (205)

The LXXV Corps Commander, General Schlemmer, refused to recognize the surrender claiming himself bound by oath to the Fuehrer to resist any enemy attack. (206)

The IV Corps by 28 April was in position to prevent any break through from the northwest. No such treat developed but numerous groups headed toward the northwest from the Po were intercepted. Some few decided to fight it out but were easily handled by combat units. However, the lines were so elongated that many normally non-combatant units found themselves rounding up retreating Germans. (207)

During this phase the handling of prisoners became a major problem. One solution was to load vehicles going to the rear with prisoners. In many areas long columns of German troops in their own vehicles were "escorted" by a jeep at the

(203,204) A-4, p. 82; (205) A-4, p. 83; (206) A-4, pp.82,83;  
(207) A-4, p.86.

head of the column and a tank or armored car bringing up the rear. Handling enemy Italian troops presented no problem. As the Allies advanced their forces dwindled by large scale desertions. (208)

At this stage of the hostilities the Germans were more concerned about partisans than the Americans and welcomed the security of our prisoner of war enclosures. (209)

Milan fell to partisan hands on the 29th. The work of the partisans in Northern Italy had been extremely valuable to the Allies in this campaign. In this instance the entire city of Milan was handed over to the IV Corps with most of the public utilities in operation. (210)

The 91st Reconnaissance Squadron reached Turin on 30 April. Turin had been in the hands of partisans for twenty-four (24) hours by that time. (211)

On 1 May the IV Corps continued to advance to the southwest. The 1st Armored Division was in control of Milan. Elements of the 34th Division had passed through Novara. The Brazilians had reached Alessandria. (212)

The Reconnaissance Troop of the 34th Division continued on to the west looking for signs of the mysterious LXXV Corps and at about sunset, 1 May, made contact with one of its outposts in the vicinity of Santhia. The LXXV Corps had moved from the French border north of Turin to this point. (213)

The contact was without incident as the Germans claimed they were instructed that an armistice had been effected and that they would fire only to protect themselves. The advance guard commander decided to remain in place while he reported back and requested further orders. (214)

(208) A-4, pp.84,88; A-4, p.93; (209) A-4, pp.84-88; (210) A-4, p.90; (211) A-4, p.102; (212) A-4,p.102; (213) A-4,p.102; A-4, p.98; (214) A-4, p.103.



On 2 May, IV Corps ordered out other reconnaissance troops while it moved the 34th Division and 1st Armored Division into assembly areas from which they could launch a final attack.(215)

The attack was prevented only by an official notification of the surrender of the German Armies in Italy at 1400, 2 May 1945. (216)

#### WESTERN COAST

On the extreme western coast the diversionary attack progressed so well that it became a full scale attack. (217)

La Spezia was captured on 24 April by the 473rd Infantry Regiment after a small force of Marines was overcome.

Genoa, already in the hands of partisan forces, was entered by American forces on 27 April.

On 28 April elements of the 442nd Combat Team rode into Alessandria where a sizeable force of Germans surrendered. On 30 April reconnaissance elements of this combat team entered Turin. (218)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The Po Valley Campaign was a success story from beginning to end. This was no mere accident. It was the logical result of many contributing factors.

The campaign was assured of success actually before it started. The period of relative inactivity of the Winter, '44-'45, provided the Twelfth Army Group with time to prepare elaborate, detailed plans for the offensive. The time was well spent. This detailed planning was by no means restricted to high level headquarters. Each unit in turn down the ladder had made its own plans and preparations. Careful planning had permitted

(215,216) A-4, p.104; (217) A-14, p.91; (218) A-14, pp.91,92.

each unit to rehabilitate men and equipment, build up supplies, reorganize and retrain. When H-Hour came the entire Army Group was prepared and eager for the attack. Every man clearly knew what his task was and how it was to be pieced into the big picture.

Only in one instance can the planning phase be criticized. Fifth Army plans for the crossing of the Po River apparently lacked some degree of flexibility. The possibility of IV Corps making a combat crossing of the Po had not been given due consideration. Consequently, when the decision was made much confusion and delay resulted. However, this had no effect on the final outcome of the campaign.

Perhaps the most outstanding factor in the success of the campaign was the employment of mass to accomplish the break through of the strong German lines. The use of mass was not in the sense of having a tremendous force available in which the enemy is greatly outweighed but rather in the masterful use of limited forces at hand. The Twelfth Army Group was a group in the true sense of the word. Units varied in many ways. There were differences in customs, nationalities and languages but most important there was variation in abilities. In this campaign the most effective units were massed in a relatively small portion of the 200 mile front where they were able to make a deep penetration before the enemy could do much to stem the tide. Less capable units were given secondary missions of holding positions in certain sectors and aggressively following enemy withdrawals.

Plans also enabled air and artillery support to be massed as the initial attack on major fronts was staggered by several hours or days.

The enemy should be commended for the caliber of resistance to the Allied advance and for the excellence of the organization of the defensive position.

Another contributing factor to the success of the Po Valley Campaign was the aggressiveness and boldness of the attack. This was especially true in the phase following the break through.

On all fronts the enemy was actively and rapidly pursued. At no point was the enemy able to completely disengage and man succeeding defensive positions. Once knocked off balance the enemy was never again allowed to regain composure. Although the German suffered many defeats and severe losses throughout the entire Italian Campaign this was the first time that he was unable to reorganize and defend from successive positions. The German was not given the opportunity to man his prepared positions along the Po and Adige Rivers.

In the pursuit phase the armor-infantry task force team came into its own. This campaign proved without a doubt the effectiveness of the tank-doughboy combination. Infantry troops riding tanks was a very effective method of accomplishing sensational advances in short periods of time.

The armored division, greatly restricted in employment in the mountains of Italy, enjoyed a "field day" as soon as the Po Valley was reached.

Another factor in the pursuit was the use of all means of transportation to move troops. By effective methods of leapfrogging battalions and regiments, by shuttling and marching, sensational advances were made.

The decision to cross the Po as a "scramble" crossing in all probability saved many Allied lives.

The Po failed to provide the Germans with the time that is so vital in establishing a new defensive line. Actually it proved to be more of a barrier to the enemy than it did to the Allies. Allied air superiority had taken its toll of withdrawing troops and motor columns. Great quantity of enemy material and equipment had been destroyed by air.

The Germans were to all intents and purposes defeated south of the Po. In this respect they committed a grave error in not withdrawing north of the Po River soon enough to prevent the disaster.

The crossing of the Po emphasized the value of having properly trained engineer troops and suitable engineer equipment available for all river crossings. A more careful selection of bridging sites in IV Corps area, to avoid crossing the Mincio River, might have prevented delay in moving armor north of the Po.

Amphibious 2½ ton trucks, more commonly known as Dukws, proved to be a very effective vehicle in river crossings for troops, some vehicles, artillery pieces and supplies. Dukws were used in all major river crossings in the Po Valley. They also proved to be of great value in the amphibious operations in Lake Garda.

Another contributing factor to the success of this campaign was the part played by partisan forces. Many large cities were in partisan hands many hours before the arrival of Allied troops, greatly facilitating the rapid advance. The partisans harassed retreating German columns. In the final days of the campaign

the most feared enemy, from the German point of view, were the partisans.

The large number of prisoners taken in this campaign was a serious problem which was solved in a number of ways. One of the most common was to load prisoners in supply vehicles going to the rear. Another method was to allow the Germans to proceed to the rear in their own vehicles led by a "token" guard with a jeep in the lead and a tank or scout car following.

### LESSONS

1. Detailed planning and final preparations prior to the launching of a large scale offensive will do much to insure the success of a campaign. Plans are essential and should be flexible enough to meet any eventuality.

2. Proper use of mass is a cardinal principle of war. Limited forces can be effectively massed on a narrow front to accomplish a break through of strong enemy positions.

3. Abilities and capabilities of allied forces should be carefully studied and recognized. Forces of lesser capabilities and abilities can be effectively employed in secondary missions.

4. International armies can function smoothly. The employment of combat troops of ally nations can go far in alleviating the manpower of the United States.

5. Partisan forces have a decided value in modern warfare. Their employment should be included in plans whenever possible.

6. A break through must be aggressively exploited. The enemy, once he has been knocked off balance, must not be allowed to recover.

7. In the pursuit and exploitation phase of battle handling of prisoners of war becomes a major problem. Plans must be made in advance to facilitate and ease this situation.

8. In the last analysis in any large campaign, after the air force has dumped its bombs and the artillery has forced its barrages, it still remains the task of the dough-boy to effect the final defeat of the enemy.

9. Air support is very effective in the destruction and blocking of a retreating enemy.

10. Heavy bomber attacks on enemy positions in support of front line operations are possible and are very efficient. However, planning and coordination must be detailed. Even then there is chance for error with accompanying disaster.

11. Bridging sites should be carefully selected well in advance from aerial photographs and intelligence data.

12. Small rivers can be effectively crossed by assaulting one or two hours before dark. Bridging operations can then be accomplished under the cover of darkness.

13. In an exploitation rivers should be crossed rapidly using all available means.

14. The tank-infantry team is a highly efficient means of exploiting a break through. Infantry riding tanks in the pursuit is practical.

15. Well entrenched positions offer a considerable amount of protection against air assault and artillery fire.