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THE OPERATION OF THE 88TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
IN THE PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN 15 APRIL-2 MAY 1945  
(Personal Experience of a Division G-4)

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THE OPERATION OF THE 88TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
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(PO VALLEY CAMPAIGN)  
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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 88th Infantry Division in the breakthrough of the German winter line in the Appenine Mountains just south of Bologna, and the Po Valley exploitation during the Po Valley Campaign 15 April to 2 May 1945.

In order for the reader to properly understand and evaluate this operation it is necessary that he have some knowledge of past events leading up to this offensive.

The 88th Division was an all-selective service division and, as such, was the first to be used against the enemies of the Allies. A large percentage of its officers were Officer Candidate School graduates. After its training <sup>in</sup> at Oklahoma and Louisiana, it was shipped overseas to Africa, thence to Italy. The division as a whole received its initial indoctrination to combat in a defensive sector along the Garigliano River, west of Cassino, between 5 March and 10 May 1944. On 11 May 1944 at 2300 hours it took part in the main Fifth Army offensive. During this offensive the Gustav Line was broken; junction of Fifth Army's main front and the Anzio Beachhead occurred; Rome fell; and the Gothic Line was smashed.

The offensive rolled to within nine miles of Bologna where the whole Fifth Army bogged down. Due to rain and heavy traffic the bottom fell out of all road nets within the Army's zone; troop units were in extremely poor condition to carry the offensive into the Po Valley; Army supply points could not move up within a reasonable supporting distance of front line

divisions; no replacements were available for the now under-strength divisions; and the Army's right flank was exposed for approximately twenty miles. (1) The divisions on the front line used mule trains to accomplish supply and evacuation to subordinate units. Supply and evacuation trails became impassable to the mule trains as the weight of the mules forced the animals to go belly deep in mud. The animals would then have to be destroyed after the loads were transferred to other mules.

About twelve (12) miles south of Bologna the 349th Infantry had taken Mt. Grande, which was the most critical terrain feature along the Fifth Army's front. (2) This point afforded the holder observation on all terrain within twenty miles, including the city of Bologna. This terrain feature was difficult to take and extremely difficult to retain since it afforded the enemy direct observation on our zone of action.

Late in October 1944, orders were received from II Corps to "hold up" and the division prepared to take up a defensive position. (3)

The 88th Division was relieved in this sector by troops from the British Eighth Army. This shift in troops was brought about by a change in the boundary between the Eighth and Fifth Armies. (4) The division was then ordered to Montecatini-Terme for a ten (10) day rest period. (5)

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

The winter line ran generally northeast from Massa on the Ligurian Sea to Ravenna on the Adriatic Sea. (See Map A) The Fifth Army left flank was hinged on the Ligurian Sea at Massa

(1) A-2 p. 21; (2) Personal knowledge; (3) A-7 p. 80; (4) Pres. Know; (5) A-4 p. 162.

with the right flank in the Appenines about twelve miles south of Bologna. At this point the British Eighth Army took up.

The Fifth Army's left flank was not a threat to the enemy but rather followed up the enemy withdrawal, keeping pressure on him in so doing. (6) This allowed the enemy to man his defenses in this sector with a minimum of units. (7) The right flank of the II Corps zone of action was opposed by nine (9) German Divisions, none of which were at full strength. (8) These divisions had the primary mission to occupy the prepared positions south of Bologna and stop the Fifth Army's threat which was directed at entering the Po Valley. During the following months the defenses in this sector were built up considerably. (9)

Both friendly and enemy patrols were active during the cold winter months that followed. (10) The patrols supplied a steady stream of information, such as identification of units, locations of strongpoints, mine fields and capture of many prisoners of war. (11)

Air reconnaissance reports and aerial photographs told us that the Germans were prepared to fight to a finish south of Bologna, and that positions had been prepared along the Po River and Adige River line to allow the enemy two succeeding lines on which they could fall back when the Allies decided to attack. (12)

In order to improve the positions along the Fifth Army front the recently arrived 10th Mountain Division was ordered to attack and capture Mt. Belvedere, a key feature which dominated Highway 64 to Bologna and the surrounding area. (13) This action took place in February.

(6) A-2 p. 8; (7) A-2 p. 8; (8) A-2 p. 8; (9) A-3 p. 14;  
(10) A-9 p. 5; (11) A-9 p. 5; (12) A-3 p. 16 (13) A-9 p. 7.

## PLANS FOR THE ATTACK

The spring offensive was designed to destroy the Axis Armies in Italy. Lines of action were limited to the 15th Army Group. There were three routes of communication to the Po Valley - Highways 12, 64 and 65. The American Fifth Army was in a position to open up all three routes of communications to the Po Valley. It was decided that it would make the main effort. (14) The attack was divided into three phases. Phase I was for the Eighth Army to capture Bastia and Budrio and attack northwest in order to isolate Bologna, while the Fifth Army was to debouch into the Po Valley via Highways 64 and 65 and either isolate or capture the City of Bologna. Phase II was to encircle and destroy all enemy forces south of the Po River. Phase III was to cross the Po River, capture Verona and destroy the Adige River line defenses. (15)

The Fifth Army's plan of attack was to attack with II and IV Corps abreast. However, in order to obtain full support from the Air Forces they would not both attack simultaneously. The IV Corps would attack with the 1st Brazilian Division, 1st Armored and 10th Mountain Division abreast. The Brazilian Division having the mission of securing IV Corps left flank. (16) The II Corps was to jump off twenty-four to forty-eight hours after IV Corps, with the 6th South African Armored, 88th, 91st, and 34th Infantry Divisions abreast and was to make the main effort. (17)

A scramble plan was put into effect on 1 April 1945 in order to deceive the enemy. The plan was to give the enemy the impression that II Corps with the 85th and 88th Divisions was moving to the Eighth Army sector and that IV Corps had taken over the Fifth Army front. (18) In conformance with

(14) A-9 p. 9; (15) A-3 p. 18; (16) A-5 p. 24; (17) Personal knowledge; (18) A-3 p. 26.

this plan the 85th and 88th Divisions were blacked out; that is, all insignia and vehicular markings were removed. At this time both divisions were in reserve, the 85th in Army reserve and the 88th in II Corps reserve. (19)

#### THE DIVISION SITUATION

Early in March the 88th Division was ordered to a rest, rehabilitation and training area near Florence. (20) While in this area a strenuous training program was undertaken; replacements received to bring the division to full strength plus ten per cent; vehicles and equipment were exchanged and rehabilitated; and artillery units went to calibration areas. (20) On 1 April the division was blacked out and units of the division were ordered to move to various locations along the Allied lines in compliance with the Army deceptive plan. Radio stations of the division were closed down in the Florence area, moved with troop units, and set up using dummy traffic. On 5 April the division moved to its assigned zone and by 10 April had completely closed into its sector west of Highway 65. This move took place under cover of darkness under a screen provided by the 91st and 34th Divisions. (21)

The 91st Division was on the right of the 88th and the 6th South African Armored Division on the left. (22)

The terrain to the front of the division was extremely difficult. Furcoli Ridge, Monterumici, and Mount Mario lay in its sector which were three of the strongest fortified positions along the line and they blocked Highway 65. (23) These features were defended by the German 8th Mountain Division along with Mt. Sole in the 6th SA Armored Divisions zone on the left, and Mt.

(19) A-3 p. 26; (20) Personal knowledge; (21) A-4 p. 191; (22) A-4 p. 191; (23) A-3 p. 67

Adone in the 91st Division sector on the right. (24)

#### THE DIVISION PLAN FOR ATTACK

The division sector was occupied by the 349th Infantry on the left and 350th Infantry on the right with each regiment having attached one reinforced 4.2 mortar platoon of the 100th Chemical Mortar Battalion and supported by one platoon of "A" Company, 432nd AAA AW Battalion. Company "C", 757th Tank Battalion, less one platoon and one platoon of 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion were attached to the 349th Infantry. The remaining platoon of tanks and Company "C", 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion (-) were attached to the 349th Infantry. The reserve unit was the 351st Infantry. (25) (See Map B)

The two front-line regiments were to attack abreast with the 349th Infantry having as their objective Furcoli Ridge, thence along the ridge to the slopes of Monterumici. The 350th Infantry's objective was Mounterumici and was to support by fire from the south the 91st Division's attack on Mt. Adone. After the capture of Mt. Adone, the 350th Infantry was to relieve the 91st Division on their objective. (26) When the 349th and 350th Infantry had taken their objectives and had relieved the 91st Division on Mt. Adone, the 350th Infantry was to attack north and take Mt. Mario and in so doing would squeeze out the 349th Infantry. The 88th Division was to swing left and pinch out the 6th SA Armored Division which would then revert to Army reserve. The 6th SA Armored Division would be relieved by two regiments of the 88th Division. (27) This was planned in order to have the armored division to exploit the breakthrough once a foothold had been taken on the Po Valley. (28)

(24) Personal knowledge; (25) A-3 p. 67; (26) Personal knowledge; (27) A-5 p. 34; (28) Personal knowledge.

Two phase lines were set by II Corps. The Brown phase line was the squeeze-out of the 349th Infantry and the Black phase line was set at Praduro where the 6th SA Armored Division would revert to Army reserve. (29) (See Map C)

Artillery and air support were planned. Air support was to knock out enemy strong points in the rear of the enemy positions; however, there would be no artillery preparation in order to retain the secrecy as to the time of attack. (30)

#### THE ATTACK

On the night of 14-15 April the screening force from the 91st and 34th Divisions was relieved by troops of the 88th Division. (31) All day of 15 April was quiet except for last minute preparations and the Air Corps which flew many pre-planned missions along Highway 64 and 65. (32) Rover Pete, the close support dive bomber, was extremely active all day long.) Late in the afternoon Mt. Sole in the 6th SA Armored Division's zone was given a thorough going over. (33)

At 2230, 15 April the 349th and 350th Infantry jumped off, supported by the Division and Corps Artillery. (34) Although the Armored Division had success in capturing Mt. Sole on the left, neither the 88th nor the 91st Division on the right encountered much success, but rather were pinned down at every movement. Consequently, at daybreak both divisions were caught out in the open with the enemy having direct observation on their positions. (35) Elements of the 349th Infantry had been in Furcoli but found it untenable due to fire from the caves above. At 0700 however, the 349th Infantry had one company in the Furcoli area moving eastward. (36)

(29) A-5 p. 34; (30) Personal knowledge; (31) A-4 p. 192; (32) A-4 p. 192; (33) A-3 p. 66; (34) Personal knowledge; (35) Personal knowledge; (36) A-3 p. 69.

The 350th Infantry attacked toward Monterumici with one battalion and the 2d Battalion moved to within supporting distance of Mt. Adone. At daybreak the regiment had some troops on the saddle north of Monterumici but were held down due to the inability of the 91st Division to take Mt. Adone. (37)

During daylight hours, 16 April, both regiments did their absolute best to accomplish their respective missions with little success. The 349th Infantry had elements of three companies at different times on the ridge northeast of Furcoli but were repelled on each occasion, suffering heavy casualties and elements were surrounded and taken prisoner. The 350th Infantry succeeded in getting one battalion on the forward slopes of the ridge southwest of Mt. Adone and four companies of one battalion up against the defenses of Monterumici. Late in the afternoon both regiments held up temporarily in order to reorganize. (38) During the day tanks and tank destroyer units had been literally pouring round after round into the caves of Monterumici. After their fires would lift, infantry would make another assault, but the Germans would again man their weapons to repel the attack. (39)

Throughout the night of 16-17 April assault after assault moved forward, each time trying to take the objectives from a different direction. Both regiments used maneuvering elements, however little gain was made in the Division sector. Each assault did manage to reduce some of the enemy strongpoints and inflict casualties which the enemy could not very well afford. (40) Shortly after daybreak the 350th Infantry reported that the 1st Battalion had taken the small town of

(37) A-3 p. 69; (38) Personal knowledge; (39) Personal knowledge; (40) Personal knowledge.

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Di Sopra. Later they reported that one company was in the cemetery beyond which was the key enemy position. It was in the cemetery that the major portion of G Company, 350th Infantry was taken prisoner during the night. (41) At 0910 the 350th Infantry had four companies dug in on top of Monterumici after thirty-six (36) hours of continually hard fighting. Their position now was excellent for supporting the 91st Division in their mission to take Mt. Adone although the Germans had direct observation on the positions. (42)

The 349th Infantry had practically no success during 17 April. At dusk the regiment was practically in the same positions as it held in the early morning with minor exceptions. (43) The 88th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop was attached to the 349th Infantry and at 180300 April, relieved the 3d Battalion. (44) The 3d Battalion had been employed on the left portion of the regimental sector with little success gained toward its objective. (45) At daybreak the 3d Battalion passed through the 1st Battalion and at about 0955 reported the capture of Hill 427. (46) Hill 427 was an enemy strongpoint about midway between Furcoli and Monterumici. (47) The capture of Hill 427 stabilized the division's front lines. The sector, being secure, assisted the 91st Division to take Mt. Adone which fell at 181000 April. (48) The German defenses south of Bologna had begun to crumble after a constant pounding by artillery, air support and the incessant assaults of infantry troops.

The strongpoints, Mt. Sole, Furcoli, Monterumici, and Mt. Adone, in the II Corps sector, all had been taken.

(41) A-4 p. 194; (42) Personal knowledge; (43) A-3 p. 71; (44) A-4 p. 195; (45) A-3 p. 70; (46) A-4 p. 195; (47) Personal knowledge; (48) Personal knowledge.

The Mt. Adone hill mass, being the last and most important to the security of the zone of action of the 88th Division, allowed the two front-line regiments to move more rapidly. (49)

Resistance amounted to little more than rear guard action. (50)

The 10th Mountain Division in the IV Corps sector to the west of Highway 64 had met with a great deal of success and had penetrated the enemy lines. This breakthrough had reached such a proportion that the 85th Infantry Division which was in Fifth Army reserve was released to IV Corps and in turn committed on 18 April on the Corps right flank. (51)

II Corps, desiring to take advantage of the IV Corps penetration, swung its main effort to the left along the boundary, rather than continue up astride Highway 65. (52)

#### SHIFT OF EFFORT

At 181025 April, twenty-five (25) minutes after the breakthrough of the defenses in front of the corps sector, II Corps ordered the 88th Division to move to a new zone of action on the Corps' left boundary rather than take over the 6th SA Armored Division's sector as planned. (53) (See Map D) In order for the division to comply it was necessary that the 351st Infantry, in reserve, move immediately to the new sector and that the 350th Infantry speed up its relief of the 349th Infantry. The 350th Infantry was to go under operations control of the 91st Division. (54)

The division, (-) plus attached troops, moved across the rear of the 6th SA Armored Division zone, closing into the Vergato area within twenty-four hours and resumed the attack. (55) One (1) Quartermaster truck company was attached to the division so as to speed up the move.

(49) Personal knowledge; (50) A-3 p. 71; (51) Personal knowledge  
(52) Personal knowledge; (53) A-5 p. 50; (54) Personal knowledge;  
(55) Personal knowledge.

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The 351st Infantry passed through the 338th Infantry of the 85th Division in an effort to take over its assigned sector. (56) The 351st Infantry in conjunction with the 4/13 FFR of the 6th SA Division planned a coordinated attack on Lagune Ridge, not knowing that the 337th Infantry of the 85th Division had taken the ridge the previous night. The consequence was a fire fight. (57) This action was caused by the fact that the 10th Mountain Division, farther west, had gone into the 85th Division's zone and in turn the 85th Division had gone into the II Corps zone. This is further explained by the confusion that existed at the time. (58) It was finally corrected after the agreement was reached that 88th Division units would relieve in place any 85th Division unit was overtaken.

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A small village about one (1) mile south of Gesso was the first real sign of enemy action in the new sector. The 351st Infantry with its 2d Battalion was held up by automatic weapons fire and 120-mm mortar fire. After a first attempt to assault the enemy dug-in positions had failed, tanks and artillery supporting fires were brought to bear on the positions. The second attempt proved successful and the enemy positions yielded 500 prisoners and 27 enemy dead. The division was now in a position to enter the Po Valley. (60)

#### THE PURSUIT TO THE PO RIVER

The terrain in the Po Valley was flat, rich, farm land. Highways and road nets were superior, unlike any encountered in Italy to this time. The Po River was the only large obstacle to overcome, although there were some irrigation ditches, canals and many rivers of much less importance

(56) A-3 p. 83; (57) A-3 p. 83; (58) Personal knowledge; (59) A-4 p. 204; (60) A-3 p. 84.

than the Po, yet if defended, would prove to be of major importance. (61)

On 20 April 1945 the division came down out of the mountains, attacked northeast and cut Highway 9 west of Bologna. (See Map E) The 6th SA Armored Division on the right received a change in orders. Rather than being ordered into Army reserve they were attached to II Corps and given the mission of moving to the Corps' left boundary. This move was scheduled across the front of the 88th Division on Highway 9. (62)

The enemy resistance on the II Corps' left flank and IV Corps' right flank had been smashed. Units in this sector, 10th Mountain, 1st Armored, 85th, and 88th Divisions stepped up the speed of the advance. Consequently, the movement of the 6th SA Armored Division did not go as planned. Instead, the Armored Division proceeded to cross in rear of the 88th Division's supporting troops. II Corps had originally given the Armored Division road priority for this move but had later instructed the 88th Division that it had priority. The movement caused a traffic jam, with vehicles bumper to bumper for approximately 10 miles. (62) What a wonderful opportunity for the German air corps had it been active.

For the next few days small villages and towns fell in rapid succession with enemy resistance consisting of rear-guard action and sniper fire.

On 22 April the division was held up along the Panaro River line by small pockets of enemy troops. The enemy had blown all crossings of the Panaro River. Our troops crossed on a bridge that had not been completely demolished, east of Compasanto, after heavy artillery fires had been laid down on the enemy positions. (63)

(61) Personal knowledge; (62) Personal knowledge; (63) A-3 p. 104.

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The Commanding General, General Paul W. Kendall, knowing the importance of speed in this operation, kept constant and continual pressure on his regimental commanders in order to reach the Po River at the earliest possible date. (64)

The speed with which the Infantry advanced brought the matter of supply into prominence. The operations of a tank, and a tank destroyer battalion, the constant shuttling of reserve battalions of front-line regiments, and the Division reserve regiment, required vast quantities of gasoline. (65) Fifth Army, seeing that the division transportation was over-taxed, attached a Quartermaster truck company to the Division. The ammunition requirements were light, however all units were required to keep up their basic loads. In addition, Fifth Army authorized Divisions to organize a provisional truck company using German captured vehicles. The reserve regiment of the Division was kept up by use of its own transport plus one provisional truck company. (66)

The biggest problem was one of evacuation of Prisoners of War. This was overcome by diverting transportation to the rear areas through the division PW enclosure. Every possible vehicle was used on this mission - even Corps, Army and Base transportation. Trucks were loaded with anywhere from eighty (80) to two hundred PWs, a 2½-ton 6x6 carrying eighty (80). (67)

On 23 April the 350th Infantry passed through the 351st Infantry with the assault elements now comprising the 349th and 350th Infantries. (68)

The 349th Infantry having the 88th Reconnaissance Troop attached, organized a force consisting of the 2d Battalion, (64) Personal knowledge; (65) Personal knowledge; (66) Personal knowledge; (67) Personal knowledge; (68) A-4 p. 207.

one platoon of the Reconnaissance Troop, four tank destroyers and five tanks. (69) This force reached the Po River at about 232000 April and by 2330 hours the two assault regiments had closed on the south bank of the Po.

The Air Force had been extremely active in the past week. The evidence of their operations could be seen everywhere along the south bank of the river. Literally thousands of pieces of equipment were strewn for miles along the river, some demolished, and others abandoned due to crossing sights being knocked out. (70)

#### THE RIVER CROSSING

The Po River averaged from a 1200 to 1500 foot wet gap with a sand bar of about one hundred fifty (150) yards extending on the north shore before a gradually sloping bank. The south bank was steep and the water was deep just off shore. On the far shore line lay the town of Ostiglia which was within the division boundary. Between our own Air Force and enemy demolition teams all crossings were demolished. (71) A railroad bridge which crossed the river east of Ostiglia had been partially destroyed having only one span cut on one end. (72)

It was over this bridge that assault elements of the 351st Infantry moved shortly after noon on 24 April while artillery placed fire on the town of Ostiglia and by 1600 hours the 2d Battalion was across. (73) Elements of the 350th Infantry on the right had to cross in rubber reconnaissance boats and in captured enemy floating equipment. (74) The main body crossed in Dukws and alligators. (75) The two

(69) A-3 p. 104; (70) Personal knowledge; (71) Personal knowledge; (72) Personal knowledge; (73) A-3 p. 116; (74) Personal knowledge; (75) A-3 p. 116.

assault regiments across were ordered to hold up for the night since no bridging was available to get supporting troops across in any great numbers. In the meantime however, light vehicles, 105-mm artillery pieces, and a few tanks were moved across on Dukws and on improvised rafts. (76) A three-day division supply of rations, gasoline, and ammunition were pushed across the river throughout the afternoon and night of 24 April and morning of 25 April. (77) The holdup of assault regiments also allowed the divisions on the right within the II Corps zone to close on the south bank of the Po River.

Elements of IV Corps had arrived at the river on 22 April. The bridging equipment which had been allocated to II Corps was diverted to IV Corps in order that they might cross without delay. (78) On 25 April the II Corps bridging equipment was assembled on the Po River and the II Corps, 19th Engineer (C) Group started erection. (79)

#### THE FINAL DRIVE

While the M2 Treadway bridge was being erected the assault regiments were reorganizing in preparation for the final drive to the Alps Mountains.

The mission of the 88th Division was to attack astride Highway 12 north to Verona which was about thirty-four (34) miles north of the Po River. (80)

On 250600 April the division jumped off with two regiments abreast, 350th on the left and 351st Infantry on the right. The troops were on foot since supporting tanks and vehicles were south of the river. In the late afternoon the tank elements joined the infantry after having crossed the river on the completed bridge. After an all-day march the 351st (76) Personal knowledge; (77) Personal knowledge; (78) A-3 p. 109; (79) Personal knowledge; (80) A-3 p. 166.

Infantry was held up by fire from the rail yard on the southern perimeter of Verona. (81) The 10th Mountain Division of IV Corps moved up at 0600 on 26 April to assist in clearing the city.

The fall of Verona marked an important event in the war in Italy, for now the German army was split in two parts with no route of escape.

II Corps ordered a change in direction after taking Verona. The division was to attack east astride Highway II to Vicenza, then north to Bassano, thereby blocking the only alternate route to the mountains and Brenner Pass. (82)

Along Highway 11 to the north and parallel to the highway were the foothills of the Italian Alps Mountains. Also along the highway were the main positions which made up the defenses of the Adige Line, the line to which the German Army hoped to retreat in the event it was evicted from its positions south of Bologna. (83)

The division crossed the Adige River via a partially destroyed railroad bridge which was in the sector of the 85th Division on the left. Within twenty-four (24) hours the 1st Battalion, 350th Infantry was fighting to take Vicenza. (84) After house to house fighting the city fell and the division attacked northeast toward Bassano, thence along Highway 47 to Borgo and Trento. (85)

During the move from Verona across the foothills of the Alps Mountains along Highway 11, the rear elements were continually being attacked by remnants of German troop units trying to work their way north. As long as two days after front-line elements had passed an area, Germans were still

(81) A-7, p. 88; (82) A-3 p. 118; (83) Personal knowledge; (84) A-7 p. 90; (85) A-7 p. 93.

infiltrating across Highway 11. It was not uncommon during night motor marches to find that German vehicles had filtered into the columns only to surrender at the destination. (86)

The 351st Infantry had advanced beyond Borgo when at 021400 May a small group of German officers came through the lines to advise Colonel Franklin P. Miller, the Commanding Officer, that the war was over and that both lines were to remain as they were at that moment until final surrender plans were put into effect. (87)

Colonel Miller notified the Division Commander, General Kendal who in turn talked on the 'phone to the II Corps Chief of Staff. General Kendall was notified that no such arrangement had been made and that he should continue the attack. (88)

Upon resuming the attack, the 351st Infantry was stopped by heavy fire. The war went on for another four hours, four men being killed. In the meantime General Kendall talked to the Corps Chief of Staff again and asked him to get in touch with Fifth Army to insure that he was correct. (89)

At 021800 May 1945 the Division Commander was informed that the information the group of German officers had told Colonel Miller, four hours previously, was correct. The war in Italy was over. (90)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In studying this operation, as a whole, it was in my opinion executed extremely well. The missions were carried out by the division in each instance far in advance of the time estimated by higher headquarters.

The first and basic criticism is that Fifth Army directed its main effort up Highway 65 after allowing the enemy six (6)

(86) Personal knowledge; (87) A-4 p. 219 and Personal knowledge; (88) Personal knowledge; (89) Personal knowledge; (90) Personal knowledge.

months to prepare his positions. The information gathered from our patrols indicated beyond a doubt that the enemy's strongest positions were in this sector. Also our higher headquarters did not have an alternate plan in the event that the plan which was ordered executed was unsuccessful.

Highway 65 was not essential in the initial phases of this operation. Highways 12 or 64 were first class roads and would have supported sufficient troops to encircle the city of Bologna, after which Highway 65 could have been opened.

The initial jump off of the 88th Division was well executed. Coordination between adjacent units, higher and subordinate headquarters and the Air Corps could not have been better.

An artillery preparation before the attack jumped off would have softened up the enemy positions and should have been planned. It would not have given away the secrecy as to the time of attack any more than the bombardment by the Air Corps which took place all day long on the day of the attack. The enemy knew the attack was imminent from the time the first plane dropped its bomb load.

After the shift in sectors, which moved the 88th Division to the left boundary, coordination with elements of the 85th Division, part of IV Corps, was extremely poor. The fact that two divisions went out of their sectors did not authorize the 88th Division to "plow" through them and become entangled in a fire fight with elements of the 85th Division.

Lack of coordination again was evident when the 6th SA Armored Division proceeded to cross in rear of the 88th Division which resulted in the two divisions' march units becoming entangled. This was as much the fault of the 88th

Division as II Corps in that the liaison officer from the South African Division who was on duty in the Command Post was not informed of the change in orders.

River crossing doctrine teaches that the near shore must be either occupied or at least controlled by friendly forces prior to a crossing. The crossing of the Po River conformed to this doctrine which was the first time, to my knowledge, that the doctrine was practiced in the Italian campaign. Here-  
tofore, it had been a practice for Infantry elements to lay back several thousand yards using only patrols to the river line. This practice allowed the enemy to cross to the near shore and plant mine fields and place obstacles. In addition it allowed him to build up his strongest positions along the banks of the rivers.

The front-line soldier in the German Infantry was informed as to the time and date that the war was over. Higher headquarters in the Allied Armies withheld this information for reasons unexplained. True enough, communications were not too good but radio contact had never been interrupted during the pursuit. A division is commanded by a Major General. It would appear that a man with such a position in the United States Army would get such information at the end of the war. Yet, the Division Commander was not given such information until about four hours after it had been disseminated to the front-line units of the German Army.

### LESSONS

1. Coordination is essential to the success of an operation. It is imperative that complete coordination be obtained with higher and lower headquarters.

2. Alternate plans should always be made and should be disseminated down to the regimental level or at least to the division level.

3. Thought should be given to isolating a sector rather than attempting a frontal attack, particularly when it is definitely known that the sector is heavily fortified.

4. Mobility and speed of movement is of prime importance in exploiting an initial breakthrough and in the pursuit.

5. The tank-infantry team with air support is necessary in pursuit operations.

6. Thought must be given to shuttle of foot troops during a pursuit in order to allow time for sleep.

7. In order for a river crossing to be a success without unnecessary casualties no time should lapse between closing on the near shore line and movement across the river.

8. The faster that infantry elements move forward the more important is the mobility of supplies.

9. During fast moving situations, each unit, no matter how small, must consider all around defense.

10. Control of subordinate units is of prime importance in any type of operations, whether it be attacking a fortified position, during movements, movement to contact, pursuit, or in a river crossing.