

INVASION OF ITALY

Add Daniel Deluce (See issues No. 14 and 43)

The British amphibious attack on Bagnara however failed to prevent the Germans from destroying a stretch of coastal highway which winds in hairpin turns on the face of sheer cliffs.

Engineers, already expecting that this Eighth Army thrust up Italy would become a "sappers' war", quickly went to work with bulldozers, portable steel road frames and other equipment to bridge the exasperating obstacle.

It is apparent that only a few German elements are still left in the Italian foot with most of the German survivors of the Sicilian defeat drawn farther into the interior where they are resting and attempting to regroup.

The devastation of Italy's communications by the Allied air force is strikingly evident in the German shortages in such items as mines. They lavishly used mines in Sicily but are believed to have received virtually no fresh supplies since the evacuation. As a result one of the most important beaches along Messina Straits was guarded by only seven mines.

German eighteights deep in the Calabrian hills are still active occasionally and along the west coast beyond Bagnara some machineguns hidden in caves strafed British transport.

Routing out Germans from the spiny ridge of mountains between Italy's two coasts is a hot muscle aching job for the Eighth Army infantry which are depending on mule trains for food and water.

It is the equal of the toughest Sicilian terrain and the speed of the British advance through the centre of the Italian foot is necessarily limited by how far a man can hike in a day carrying a heavy pack over the mountains.

"It's topography, not enemy strength, that slowed us down", commented one British Staff Officer. "The enemy didn't have to fire a shot to stop us at the edge of Bagnara. All he had to do was to blow up the road".

What became of the German tanks reported in the toe of Italy late in August is something of a mystery along with the question when and where the Germans will make a determined stand. It seems obvious that the rearguard facing the British is one of the weakest that the Germans have ever left behind in the Mediterranean war.

Scylla, legendary home of the sirens, is a quiet village of gray stone overtaken and left behind by the war all within the space of a few hours. Italian prisoners are pulling up the barbed wire they laid for shore defences. Italian women and their children devoutly visit the tall spired church each day.

"We like you because you're gentlemen. We don't like those Dutchmen", said an elderly landowner welcoming the Tommies to spend the night on his Estate.
