

From DESMOND TIGHE, Reuters, representing Combined British Press,
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With the Fifth Army on
the banks of the Volturno
River.
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The swiftly flowing waters of the River Volturno, swollen by heavy rains are at present holding up any further Fifth Army advance.

The Germans, by cutting the banks of the Regi Lagni Canal, also flooded a considerable area of the terrain, turning it into sodden marshes. Activity is at present confined to patrolling and probing the enemy positions. The Germans, hidden by high rising ground north of the river, have many fire-posts covering the roads.

As a British Colonel told me at advanced command overlooking the river "it is a pretty dangerous move in the daytime. Apart from large 500 millimetre guns, mortars and machine guns, the Germans are employing Nebelwerfers. These six-barrelled wheeled mortars are electrically fired. They have a smoke projector and a range of six thousand yards. We see them flying over in bunches of six at a time - most unpleasant."

Despite the weather, the forces moving up to take up positions for the next phase of the battle are in great fettle. Muddy roads make it very difficult for the guns, tanks, lorries and reinforcements for the infantry pouring forwards. The demolitions carried out by the retreating Germans have been most thorough. Railway bridges spanning the high-road have been blown up and dozens of burnt-out lorries and trucks which blocked the roadway have been hurled over the side into the fields.

Enemy air activity still remains absent. I am told not a single enemy plane has been sighted since the first landings on the beaches. The Fifth Army movements are considerably hampered by thousands of civilians carrying their belongings who, trapped in the fighting areas, managed to escape, roaming southwards.

It is expected there will be grim, bitter fighting to effect the crossing of the Volturno. The banks are steep and slippery with mud and the Germans destroyed all the bridges. Meanwhile the position is static. The only signs of warfare I noticed were the occasional rumblings and crumps of artillery fire from both sides, with shells landing in the town of Capua, which is virtually no man's land.