

The cat and the whale

Prologue

The bombardment had lasted long time. Violent, harsh and ceaseless as usual. Nothing had been spared. Not the field hospitals, not the foxholes where the men lived huddled, not the front line. When the guns stopped firing, Sergeant Sidney Gilian, First Armoured Division, got down on his knees, looked at the sky above and exclaimed: "God, help us! You come yourself. Do not send Jesus: this is no place for children."

Corporal Christopher S. Hayes, *Royal Scots Fusiliers*, First Infantry Division, Second Battalion, "A" Company, reached the shores of the landings around two a.m. It was late January. Seen the season, the temperature was not very cold. Before the landing, a short but heavy bombardment had hit the coastline and the inland. Once ashore, the Scots advanced in the darkness amid mountains of rubbles, their finger on the trigger of their *Enfields*. There was no sign of the enemy. Before the sunrise, an officer arrived. He pointed an objective on his military map, lighting it by his flashlight: a wood on the road to the village of Carroceto. Here the *Scots* should have gathered for advancing inland.

The unit had just moved towards its new objective, when Hayes heard something. It was a kind of groan, a strangled and repeated sob. The cry of a wounded animal? The rattle of a dying? It was coming closely. Advancing with great caution, Hayes went to see.

That one was no place for children. However, in that place, there was a child. A little girl. She was, perhaps, five or six years- old. Her blue eyes were full of tears. She was sobbing. On her black dress there was embroidered a name: Angelina Rossi.

Corporal Hayes took her in his arms and came back to his comrades.

The wild cat.

About the Campaign of Italy, the Allies were divided. The Americans would have done without it willingly, the British, instead, did not want to renounce to fight in Italy. The Americans were concentrated on *Overlord*; the British betted on the fall of Italy, the "soft underbelly" of the Axis; the Americans looked at Normandy, the British at Ljubljana: the first wanted to enter Germany, passing through the main door; the latter through the back door. According to Churchill, Great Britain was to continue to rule the seas, Mediterranean included. And, in addition, it was to make every effort to enter Balkans and Austria before the Soviets. According to him, the shortest way to gain these goals was the way leading to Rome.

He treated, schemed, arose his voice, used all his oratory art and his capacity to convince, exploited Eisenhower's departure to England for increasing the presence and the power of Britain within the Allied High Command in the Mediterranean area and finally, even partially, he won his victory. The Americans gave up, but they put some conditions. The most important of them was the following: we will fight in Italy, but only to keep afar from Normandy as many German soldiers as possible. Translation: forget Ljubljana and remember this: the "soft underbelly" of the Axis will never become the main front.

Italy was not very "soft". In those days, at least. The Country of the Sun per excellence was battered by the rains, swept by wind, flooded by full rivers. The mud slowed down the advance, an impossible geography blocked the armoured tanks. And it was Autumn. In Winter things would have gone worst.

In addition, the Germans had not abandoned the centre-southern Italy. On the contrary, they were fighting harshly and they would have fought harshly inch by inch before withdrawing behind the *Gothic Line*. They had fought behind the *Bernhard Line* (for the Allies, the *Winter Line*) for bypassing which the Allies had paid a very heavy blood tribute; they would have fought behind the formidable *Gustav Line*, centred on the town of Cassino and on the surrounding hills. Reaching Rome would have cost blood and time. Finding a solution was necessary. And it was necessary to find it in a hurry. The more the time was going by, in fact, the more Ljubljana was becoming unattainable.

Shingle.

Already in Fall 1943 the Allies had thought about a landing on the coastline of Latium for bypassing the *Gustav Line*. The original idea to land only a division at Anzio for supporting the advance of the Fifth Army beyond Cassino and towards Rome had been immediately rejected. The fundamental condition lacked: the Fifth Army had not broken through the *Gustav Line* and was not marching towards the Eternal City.

That deadlock, however, could have been solved by planning a coordinated military operation for engaging the Germans on three fronts: general Bernard Law Montgomery (Eighth Army) should have attacked in the zone of Pescara, general Mark W. Clark (Fifth Army) in the Liri Valley and an amphibious force, landed south of Rome, supported by parachuted troops, should have reached the Alban Hills (Colli Albani or Laziali). Forcing the Germans to scatter their forces, weakening their defences and cutting their supply lines were the goals of this operation.

If the Germans had moved troops from the *Gustav Line* to face the landing, Clark could have broken through at Cassino; if they had not moved troops from Cassino, the landing force could have headed towards Rome, threatening to encircle the Germans; if, finally, the Germans had chosen to engage the Allies on both fronts, they would have been forced to move troops from the other fronts in Europe, making them weaker. Or, at least, this was the conviction of the Allied High Command.

This had been an idea of general Harold Alexander, commander in chief of the operations in Italy. Clark in a first moment had accepted it; then, around December 20th, he had changed his mind: Montgomery was having more than a trouble in the Sangro Valley; there were no landing craft enough; the *Gustav Line* had been neither affected; the town of Frosinone was farther away than the moon; the whole operation seemed a damned trap. It was not the moment for landing other men ashore.

But Clark had not reckoned with Churchill. From Morocco, where he was treating a bad pneumonia, the tough Sir Winston revived the plan, imposed it with the code name *Operation Shingle* to the reluctant allied commanders; he was able to obtain the valuable landing craft and got ready to launch on the Anzio beaches a fierce "wild cat". According to him, the senior officers thought too much about the supplies and the food for the troops: now the moment to give word to arms was arrived. With his usual irony, when he knew the details of the plan, told Alexander, more or less: "After all those lorries, General, take care to put ashore even some infantry soldiers. To guard the lorries, at least."

Nero's hometown.

In the bay of Naples and in the port of Castellammare there is much coming and going of ships, men and boats in the shade of an unusually restless Vesuvius. In the previous days, at Salerno, some proof landings had been made; the reliability of men and materiel had been checked. Something had been gone wrong, but, by now, stopping the operation was impossible.

On January 21st , at five o'clock a.m., fifty thousand men and more than five thousand vehicles loaded on the landing craft and on the ships put out to sea towards Capri. Why Capri? To avoid the mines spread in the sea and to deceive the Germans about the real destination of that mission. Actually, it would not need to deceive the foe. Field Marshal Albert Kesselring had received a communication by the OKW, the German High Command: there will be no allied landings in the next months, not in Winter, at least. It is a huge mistake, but the Allies are not aware of it.

The minesweepers are sailing ahead; on the flanks, the cruiser and the destroyers for preventing an eventual attack of submarines. Onboard, the men are killing their time by reading, checking their weapons, writing letters. The darkness comes. The fleet changes its course and steams eastward. The sea is calm, the night is silent.

A B24 bomber returning from a mission over Pisa, flies over the convoy. The crewmen have few doubts about the destination of all those ships: southern France. The next morning, taken off for a new mission, the crew of the same B24 sights the fleet again. The ships are at anchor in front of a small town in the coastline of Latium. The pilot asks which is that small town. The navigator replies: a town of ancient origins, dating at the times of the Roman Empire. I doubt it has any military value.

That ancient small town, that town dating to the times of the Roman Empire, birthplace of the emperor Nero(37- 68 AD), is the town of Anzio.

Major General John P. Lucas, American, is in command of the operations. He has vague orders, few time. He is pessimistic. In his opinion - and also in Clark's opinion, in truth -- two divisions are insufficient for that operation: four divisions , at least, would be necessary. He has been burned by the experience of Salerno, where the Germans had counterattacked immediately, when the bridgeheads had not been still strengthened. He does not want to make the same mistake. And along with him, even Clark does not want to repeat the nasty experience of Salerno. Thus, here are the orders: once ashore, Lucas has to size a beachhead; then he must advance towards the Alban Hills.

Advancing, all right. But when? After having consolidated the line? Some days after the landing, when the armoured tanks and the heavy weapons will have arrived ashore? Must I or must I not advance immediately towards Rome? Clark's orders are not clear about this. And, still before coming ashore, Lucas realizes he is holding a hot potato. Why - he wonders - the objectives originally assigned (to seize and to secure a beachhead; to reach and *to occupy* the Alban Hills; *to be ready for marching in Rome*) have been changed? Why has nobody asked my opinion when the plan has been planned? Why have not the times and the stages of the whole operation been indicated entirely? Is this a deliberate omission? Has anyone wanted to attribute to me the entire responsibility to decide what is to do after the landing in order to find a guilty if something goes wrong? And what about the supplies? Could they arrive regularly? The landing craft will remain here a couple of weeks, then they will reach England in preparation of *Overlord*. Will Clark's Fifth Army supply us? And if Clark does not break through at Cassino, who will supply my divisions? No, in this plan there too many wrong things. I have spoken about it with Patton. He has answered me: *Shingle?* A huge rubbish!

In my opinion, it is even worse than a rubbish. For me, this operation seems the perfect copy of Gallipoli. And with the same *beginner* leading it.

Smiling Albert.

If Churchill is, in Lucas' opinion, a *beginner*, *Generalfeldmarschal* Albert Kesselring , under a strictly military point of view, is not a beginner. Be clear: on Kesselring's actions some appalling facts weigh and will weigh forever: the massacre at Ardeatine Caves and

the massacres of civil population perpetrated by the Germans in Italy according to his *Bandenbefehl* order. Nobody has forgotten them, nobody will forget them. They are horrific crimes without any justification. Neither on the military plane, nor on the political plane. And those crimes must be considered even when we speak about Kesselring as a military commander.

Kesselring was an artillery officer passed to the *Luftwaffe*. He had learned to fly a warplane when he was forty; he had made a quick career; had commanded the *Luftflotte 2* during the Battle of Britain, when he wanted the bombardment of London (the so called *Blitz*), in pursuit of destroying " those fifty Spitfires" which, according to him, remained to the British.

Because of a neurologic problem, his lips seemed half-open in a kind of smile. Not only he looked as an incorrigible optimist: he was an incorrigible optimist. For these reasons, he was nicknamed " Smiling Albert". He had been the responsible of the operation in the Mediterranean sector at the times of the Operations *Torch* and *Husky* (the allied landing in Tunisia and in Sicily). Now he was in command of the German troops in Italy.

So, the Allies, although with more than a difficulty, were going up the Italian Peninsula. What to do? Waiting for them behind the Gothic Line? Or fighting them, trying to slow their advance? Rommel, commander of Armies Group B(Northern Italy) supported the first solution; Kesselring, commander of the Mediterranean sector, the latter. When Rommel was sent to Normandy in order to reorganize the Atlantic Wall, Kesselring had free hand in Italy. He promised to Hitler he would have prevented or delayed as much as possible the allied conquest of Rome and he made build two formidable defensive lines - the *Gustav Line* and the *Bernhard Line* - in addition to many other "minor" lines, in order to fight the Allies always and everywhere. Hitler, of course, agreed. Even if Kesselring was not one of his favourite generals. In those times, at least.

But there was also something else. Kesselring expected some allied landings to support the troops already engaged in Italy (at Cassino, for example). Thus he had individuated some possible sectors in which the landings could have been made and he had acted in order "to cover" every possible place with a flying - intervention force. Not for repulsing the Allies immediately into the sea, but only for delaying the formation of the bridgeheads so that to gather sufficient forces to prepare a large scale counterattack. The coastline of Latium, in particular the zone between Anzio and Nettuno, was, in Kesselring's geography, one of these "sensitive points". So, the German Field Marshal considered that an allied landing at Anzio were possible, but , as we have seen, even because of the huge mistake of the OKW, he did not consider it likely.

From the letter sent by corporal Christopher Hayes, Royal Scots Fusiliers, to the mayor of Anzio. February, 15th , 1961

Dear Sirs,

I trust you will forgive me writing to you, also for writing in English but I would like to know how Anzio and Nettuno are going today.

You see, I was one of the British troops who landed on Anzio Beach head and our Head Quarters was in the Cork Factory. What I am most interested is in the fact and background of one little girl called Angelita Rossi then about 5 years of age.

We found her on the Beach crying[...]when we could we tried to find her Parents or Guardians but no one in Anzio or Nettuno could give us any information so we came to the conclusion that with all the Civilians killed her Parents or Guardian were among them; we cared for her and gave her all we had as regards comforts also with the help of the American Red Cross [...]

The Salerno syndrome

The zone of the landing is formed by a flat belt, overhung by the Alban Hills. The Hills are, in reality, extinct volcano, in the craters of which there are the lakes of Albano and Nemi. On the eastern side, the flat zones are flanked by the Mussolini Canal (*Canale Mussolini*), beyond which there are the Pontine Marshes (*Paludi Pontine*), for the most part dried out and reclaimed by the Fascist Regime. Before flowing in the Tyrrhenian Sea near Nettuno, the Canal divides in two forks: the first flows northwest towards Cisterna and the Alban Hills, the latter towards the locality of Padiglione. The plain is dotted by villages and isolated farmhouses and it is crossed by many ditches and irrigation canals. North of Anzio, the most important residential area is the town of Aprilia, founded in 1937. In Aprilia there are a cinema, a pharmacy, a school and some shops. Here the local seat of the Fascist Party is overhung by a high bell-tower, very similar to a smokestack of a factory. For this reason, it will be nicknamed "The Factory" by the allied troops. The small towns of Anzio and Nettuno, very close one another, form an only administrative unit (*comune*, in Italian): Nettunia.

Few kilometres west of Aprilia, on the road which from Anzio leads to Rome - the so called Via Anziate- there is the small locality of Carroceto. The Via Anziate is flanked by the railway Rome - Naples, that crosses the small station of Campoleone. Westwards, in the zone of Moletta river, the landscape becomes rougher because of the presence of steep rocky gullies. North of Anzio and south of Aprilia, there are the thick woods of Padiglione, in which the tall trees - for the most part oaks - are surrounded by a very thick and often impenetrable undergrowth.

The Via Anziate links itself with the more important Via Appia (Highway number 7) near the locality of Albano. The Via Anziate is the only available road. The other roads in the area (Via Appia, of course, excluded) are few and they are, for the most part, dirt paths or cobbled paths. Moving along them is difficult in normal conditions, is impossible in wartime. The artillery, deployed on the heights, can hit everything moving along them. In Summer it is cold, in Winter it often rains. In short, as the official historian of the Irish Guards wrote, that one is a zone avoided, during the centuries, by the sensible men.

On January, 22nd, at two o'clock a.m., the first landing crafts reach the shores of Anzio and Nettuno. In practice, there is no resistance. The Germans have been caught completely by surprise. Colonel Darby's rangers secure the Anzio harbour; the paratroopers of the 509th battalion occupy Nettuno; in the southern sector, the Third Division reaches its own objectives quickly and easily; in the northern and central sector, the Allies advance almost undisturbed; the allied Air Force carries out more than thousand missions, hitting strategic and tactical objectives around the landing zone.

The beaches become crowded with men, lorries, guns, bulldozers. In few hours more than three thousand vehicles and thirty thousand men are ashore. It seems more an exercise than a war operation. A British colonel with an umbrella on his left arm is looking at that coming and going with the same expression of a missionary arrived in the Southern Seas and bewildered because he has found no cannibals(D'Este). Two engineers on their jeep arrive in the surroundings of Rome. The casualties are paltry(thirteen fallen, about one hundred wounded, forty missing in action). The roads, the important roads number 6 (Casilina) and number 7 (Appia) are unguarded. An unexpected stroke of luck.

Wasted completely. Later, General Siegfried Westphal, chief of Kesselring's Staff, will assert: at the moment of the landing, there were no defences between Anzio and Rome. Thus, there are no defences, the way is free. Lucas, however, does not exploit this opportunity. Instead of exploiting the surprise effect by marching forward, he stops and

begins to strengthen the beachhead. An obvious choice? A fatal mistake? An excess of prudence? Among the historians there are some who justify Lucas' choice and some who blame him for having wasted time and, along with it, an unique opportunity. However, General Ronald Penney, commander of the British First Division, usually very critic towards Lucas, will say: if we had advanced to Rome, we would have stayed for eighteen hours in the Eternal City and eighteen months in a German POW camp.

And what about the terrain? The area in front of the Alban Hills was crossed by a lot of canals, ditches, streams. Could the armoured tanks advance quickly on that terrain? The Alban Hills, then, under this point of view, were perhaps worse. If had Patton been the commander instead of Lucas? The same thing would have been happened. Only some miles more forward, as an Anzio's veteran said. Anyway, a fact is certain: when Lucas stops, the wildcat launched on the Anzio beaches turns itself, according to a famous Churchill's sentence, into a stranded whale.

Kesselring, in fact, sends immediately some units of the 4th Parachute Division and of armoured division *Hermann Goering* to block the roads towards the Alban Hills; asks and obtains, in twenty four hours, reinforcements from France, from Yugoslavia, from Germany. From Berlin, Hitler screams and shouts: "the Anzio abscess" must be eradicated at every cost. Kesselring, however, is pessimistic. In a first time, at least. The Allies' success is full; the bulk of allied troops is by now ashore; stopping them is very difficult. But as the reinforcements arrive and Lucas' inactivity increases, "Smiling Albert" becomes more optimistic.

The Allies are wasting their time and are hesitating. They occupy, in truth, Aprilia (*The Factory*, as it has been nicknamed), overstep the Mussolini Canal, but they are stopped in front of Cisterna and in front of the railway station of Campoleone. Those are not large scale offensives, but reconnaissance more or less "in strength" for testing the enemy forces and for receiving, in the same time, news from Cassino.

But while the Allies are consolidating the beachhead at Anzio, forty thousand German soldiers are reaching this sector; general Eberhard von Mackensen, commander of the Fifth Army garrisoned in Verona, has taken command of the operations; at Cassino, Clark is blocked. On January 30th, Lucas decides that the beachhead is strengthen enough and , thus, he launches a large scale offensive. Goals: Cisterna and Campoleone, the doors of the Alban Hills.

It is a disaster. Darby's rangers fall into a trap and are literally swept away(of two battalion only six men will return to the starting point); the Third Division after some initial success, is forced to stop; Cisterna is not reached. At Campoleone, where Penney's First Division is in action, things go a little bit better. The British are able to create a six kilometres deep bulge. But for how much time will they be able to hold it?

The hunting of the guilty is open. Lucas is under fire. Before the landing, Clark had told him to be prudent("*Don't stick out your neck*"). Now, according to him, Lucas is irresolute, uncertain. Alexander seems to agree. Many officers wonder: why has Lucas delayed his advance, by delaying twenty four hours the offensive against Cisterna and Campoleone, originally planned for January 29th ? Why has he wasted so much time on the beaches? Carlo D'Este writes: had attacked on January 29th , Lucas would have found a light resistance: the Germans were still few. On January 30th , they are even too many. Kesselring and Mackensen, in fact, have moved reinforcements near Cisterna and Campoleone, closing all the gaps in their deployment.

After the failure of the offensive, Lucas presages his destiny is doomed. " For having obeyed the orders", as he will write on his diary.

It is not time for attacking, now. Now it is time to defend the beachhead. The line drawn by Lucas goes from Moletta stream to the Mussolini Canal. The Germans outnumber the Allies and they attack in force. Many times, during the whole month of February, they try to eradicate the Anzio "abscess" and to repulse the enemy into the sea. They arrive very

close to obtain their goals. They conquer again the Factory and Carroceto, eliminate the British salient, split in two parts the allied deployment and threaten to surround the whole landing force. But they make also many mistakes. The worst: attacking a too wide front, with the result to have not, in every part of the front, sufficient force and troops for breaking through. They meet, also, a huge resistance. At the Caves, south of Aprilia, for instance, a battle is being fought in savage and inhuman conditions, as cave men. The soldiers are forced to drink the water of the streams, but it is red by the blood of the enemy; the struggles hand-to-hand are not rare. Finally, the Air Force and the devastating shots of the naval guns stop Mackensen's advance. On February 23rd , Lucas pays for all and is replaced by Major General Lucian Truscott.

He will die some years later. Of a broken hearth, according to some people.

Interview of Corporal Christopher Hayes, *Royal Scots Fusiliers*, to the tabloid *Newsweek*, September 1964.

Some days later we left the woods. Our destination was a railway station called Carroceto[...] There in the square, alongside a beautiful asphalt road, was a Red Cross van and several wounded people waiting around. At last, we thought, the child will be safe. And so, sadly, but according to our agreement, we handed Angelita over to an American nurse who was giving aid to the wounded. I can still see her, sitting in the cabin, her eyes filled with tears, waving goodbye to each one of us as we filed by on our way south.

Suddenly there was a terrific explosion behind us. I turned around. Horrified, I could see that the whole piazza, right where the Red Cross van had stood, had been struck[...] Angelita had been thrown out of the vehicle. I picked her up and clasped her to me, but she was already dead.

From the letter sent by corporal Christopher Hayes, *Royal Scots Fusiliers*, to the mayor of Anzio. February, 15th , 1961.

[...]during one heavy bombardment of the Beach head, she (Angelita) was in a trench with three British soldiers and an American Red Cross nurse, when a German 88-MM shell hit inside their trench, all were killed...

The siege

The deadlock is general. At Cassino no progress is made; at Anzio planning any offensives is impossible. For his part, Truscott does not have the magic stick and cannot do miracles. On February 29th, he blocks a German attack towards Nettuno, by anticipating Mackensen's move. But he cannot do more else. His men are exhausted, nearly worn out. But also the Germans are worn out. They have had appalling casualties. Only during the attack around late February, they have had more than three thousand losses. Both the deployments, then, stop in order to reorganize and breathe.

But the fire does not stop. The beachhead is in practice besieged; moving in daylight is the same as committing suicide. *Anzio Annie* and *Anzio Express*, two powerful 280 MM railway guns, strike from afar and do not spare anything and anyone. The deadly *Butterfly* bombs throw thousands of shrapnel in any direction. The field hospitals become " half acres of hell" . Who is lightly wounded refuses to be admitted to hospital, not because of an act of heroism (or not only because of it, at least), but in order to avoid the German bombs.

The rear lines do not exist. The whole beachhead is, at the same time, a huge first line and a huge rear line. The watchword is "to dig". By night, the allied soldiers, bent, move through the field with that typical gait, later known as "Anzio gait". And they dig in. They dig small foxholes, inside which they hold up, waiting the bombardment, powerless or nearly against it. They dig trenches, build entanglements of barbed wires, face night bayonet attacks, are under the continuous threat of the snipers. They are afraid. All are afraid. One who says the opposite is a liar.

When it rains, the foxholes are filled with water and using the helmet as a bucket is the only way to empty them. It seems that the days of the WWI have come back. There are many cases of "trench foot"; a lot of soldiers suffer the combat stress; the lice give no truce; the artillery and the airplanes hit ceaselessly. The *Luftwaffe* uses radio-controlled bombs and sinks a couple of cruisers and a hospital ship; the allied air force tries more and more to eliminate *Anzio Annie* and *Anzio Express* without any result. When the warplanes appear in the sky, the gunners drag the two guns inside unshakable caves. When the planes have gone away, the guns are repositioned and the bombardment begins again.

Milton Briggs, a survivor, has written: "Describing Anzio? And how could the hell be described?"

It is a very bad situation. And not only on the battlefield. The Germans call the Allies "barbarians" when Monte Cassino Abbey is razed to the ground by the allied aircraft (Feb. 15, 1944); the rangers captured at Cisterna are made parade through the streets of Rome as a sign of contempt: are these the allied crack troops? When Colonel Darby - their commander - hears about it, is unable to keep back his own anger, his own pain and his own indignation.

Other troops arrive, many units are alternated, the stream of the supplies does not stop. The lorries are embarked already loaded in Naples, are landed at Anzio and sent there where the supplies are necessary. On the docks of Anzio harbour, the empty lorries of the previous voyage are ready. The LSTs take them aboard and sail back to Naples for disembarking them and for taking aboard other lorries already loaded. Then they sail again towards Anzio, disembark the loaded lorries and take aboard the empty lorries of the previous voyage. And so on. This system was working from the late January, despite it were forbidden by the regulations. And it was kept also thereafter, thanks to the obstinacy and the good sense of some commanders of regiments and battalions.

The senior commanders are not often seen at the front. When they arrive, make a short appearance and then they leave, with their resentments, their ambitions, their dreams of glory, their desire of renown. Clark wishes to go down in history as the conqueror of Rome and does not hide this desire. He talks about it continuously. Why? Because of a personal ambition? In order the merits to be given to his soldiers? Only this is sure: around him there always is a staff of fifty people taking care of his public relations. When the journalists, in their articles, write about the Fifth Army, must always add "of the Lt General Mark W. Clark". Someone slanders: if von Clausewitz were still alive, he would write his famous sentence in this way: "War is the continuation of *publicity* by other means." Pay attention, however: Clark is intelligent, brave, determined, beloved by his soldiers. The British are his problem: in his opinion they are haughty; Alexander is a *peanut* or a *feather duster*; Penney an excellent telephonist.

Lucas, at last: until he stays in command, he is seldom seen at the front, feeding in the soldiers the impression that he does not know what has to do, or, worse, that he does not *believe* in what he is doing.

Fatal decision.

Days go by, months go by. The soldiers live hold up into the foxholes, eat the cold food of the "C" rations, are always on alert. Sometimes, in the front line where the men are in

contact one another, an unspoken agreement works: I do not shoot to you, you do not shoot to me. The stream of supplies is continuous. Now, at Anzio, there are nearly hundred fifty thousand allied soldiers. Truscott has reorganized them. The defences have been consolidated; the Staffs are working about a plan for breaking the siege and for encircling the Tenth German Army, in action on the *Gustav Line*, into a huge trap.

Alexander, in fact, after three failed attempts, has decided to come to an end with Cassino and has gathered a huge force in that zone. On May 18th, after heavy fights, the Poles plant his flag on the Abbey's rubble. The Tenth Army withdraws. But it does not withdraw in disorder. The Germans fight inch by inch, withdrawing towards the *Cesar Line* (or *C line*) made built by Kesselring from the mouth of Tiber river to Pescara, passing through Valmontone. It is necessary to close every escape way: for Truscott the time to move has arrived.

In which direction? The options are two. The first, codenamed *Buffalo*, is an offensive towards Cisterna through the Alban Hills, with the goal to cut the important Casilina road (Highway n. 6) at Valmontone. The latter, codenamed *Turtle*, considers an attack on the left side of the Alban Hills towards Campoleone and Albano. Goal: Rome.

Alexander chooses *Buffalo*, Clark wants Rome and would prefer *Turtle*. He reports to Alexander: Truscott has no sufficient forces to close the pocket at Valmontone. Alexander does not decide. His reply is: ok, if we should find some difficulties acting *Buffalo*, we put in practice *Turtle*. It is exactly what Clark was waiting for: he orders Truscott to be ready to put in practice both the solutions.

We know the conclusion. Come out with more than a difficulty from Anzio's beachhead, Truscott's men were stopped by Clark while they were very close to Valmontone. Clark ordered Truscott to make a diversion and to head towards Rome. The Tenth German Army avoided the encirclement. Months of war were waiting the German soldiers, the GIs and the Italian militaries and civilians.

Clark entered Rome on June 4th. He held a press conference and did not allow the British to be present. The conquest of Rome was an exclusive American affair. More exactly, an affair of the US Fifth Army, led by " Lt general Mark W. Clark". However he had no time to taste the success and the notoriety which he wished. A couple of days afterwards, Rome disappeared from the front pages of all the newspapers: the landing in Normandy had begun.

Epilogue

According to Corporal Hayes, Angelita died on January 31st, 1944. Today at Anzio, Angelita seems to flutter in the air, held up by a flight of seagulls. According to historian Carlo D'Este, her story is, probably, a legend without any foundation. The second battalion of the *Scots* did not belong to the First Division -- the only British Division landed at Anzio on January 22nd -- but to the Fifth Division. Captain W.E Pettigrew, Company A's commander, and by whom, according to Hayes, the Scots were allowed to take care of Angelita, was not in service at Anzio, but on the Garigliano River (front of Cassino), where he was wounded and from where he was repatriated. Hayes' versions of the facts about Angelita's death are different and in contrast each other.

Anyway, legend or not legend, true story or untrue story, Angelita of Anzio remains and will remain the symbol of all the innocent victims of all the wars.

From the letter sent by corporal Christopher Hayes, *Royal Scots Fusiliers*, to the mayor of Anzio. February, 15th, 1961.

I would like to visit Anzio and Nettuno again and possibly find little Angelita's grave along with other Civilian and troops who were also killed. But I am married now and have 5 children and I cannot afford to visit but I would appreciate any photo of the area and any information which you can give me. I am sure it is all changed now, let's hope there will never be another Anzio through the world.

So, Shingle failed and Lucas became the only- or almost the only- guilty. He did not dare enough, lost the favourable moment for attacking, hesitate too much: those are the charges. But did Lucas be the real only guilty? Is Churchill, for example, blameless? He wanted at all costs Shingle, but he did not want to see its flaws, its weakness. The goal of the landing at Anzio should have been to weaken the Germans and to force them to move troops from Cassino to Anzio.

It was a right goal. But in order to realize it, a force much more powerful than the two infantry divisions originally foreseen would have been necessary. A force able not only to advance, but even able to repel a German counterattack. In short, using Kesselring's words, Shingle was a "half measure", doomed, for this reason, to fail.

With the forces available in the early moments of the landing, Lucas could do very little.

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The direct and indirect quotes that you find in this post are caught from "Fatal decision by Carlo D'Este.

