



THE MOSELLE

The Crossing

On the 8th of the month, the Regiment assembled in secrecy on the west bank of the Moselle near Cattenom. By daylight of the following day the First and Third Battalions had crossed the river in assault boats, and begun the attack on the enemy's river defense. The Second, crossing later in the morning, experienced difficulty in finding necessary boats and was subjected to Jerry's observed artillery fire. Meanwhile, the once serene and peaceful Moselle broke into a raging torrent whose flood waters threatened to overrun the entire landscape. Bridging operations by the Engineers came to a standstill. At the same time, the enemy plastered the entire river line with all the artillery he could muster. The situation fast became critical. Medical supplies, rations and ammunition had to be rushed across by boat. On the east bank of the river there were no vehicles, and all supplies were hand carried to the fighting men on the line.

Fort Koenigsmacher

Confronting the First Battalion loomed the mighty bastion of Fort Koenigsmacher that stood defiant before any attacking force. "A" Company was in a hot spot after having launched a determined assault on the great fort. It finally reached the top only to sit there under a murderous hail of enemy fire. For three days and four nights "A" Company, later joined by "B" Company, sat exposed on top of the Fort, all the while subjected to heavy artillery adjusted from within the Fort itself. "C" Company and the Regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon occupied and secured the town of Basse Ham on the Division's right flank.

At All Costs

The men on the Fort refused to back off. They had decided to take the Fort at all costs. At last badly needed demolitions to crack the Fort were flown over by artillery liaison planes and dropped to the assaulting forces. On the third day "A" Company literally blew the enemy from the west end of the Fort and forced them through the tunnels into the waiting arms of "G" Company on the other end. The fall of Fort Koenigsmacher was brought about by unequalled courage and tenacity of the small "A" Company force that had originally gained the top and refused to leave until the job was completed. The battle is recorded as one of the greatest achievements of the 358th Infantry.

The Bridge At Last

The battle against the raging waters and the Moselle continued as hard pressed supply men and engineers worked continuously at the river bank. As the water began to recede on the 4th day after the attack, a new menace was uncovered, in the form of mines, and bridging operations were held up again while they were removed from the river bed.

Finally, the long fight against the mighty Moselle River ended when, on the sixth day the bridge was completed and vehicles and guns rolled across to the beleaguered Regiment on the other side. As the Regiment and other elements of the Division pushed southeast the fortress of Metz to the south gradually became sealed in an inescapable pocket. Allied forces were now entering the city from all directions.

Counterattack At Distroff

While other forces dealt finishing blows to Metz the 358th Infantry continued its thrust southeast with the Second and Third Battalions leading. The renowned “K” Company, “Kraut Killers”, so named because of their reputation for killing five Krauts each, led the Third Battalion in the capture of Inglange while the Second pushed through to Valstroff, later capturing Distroff.

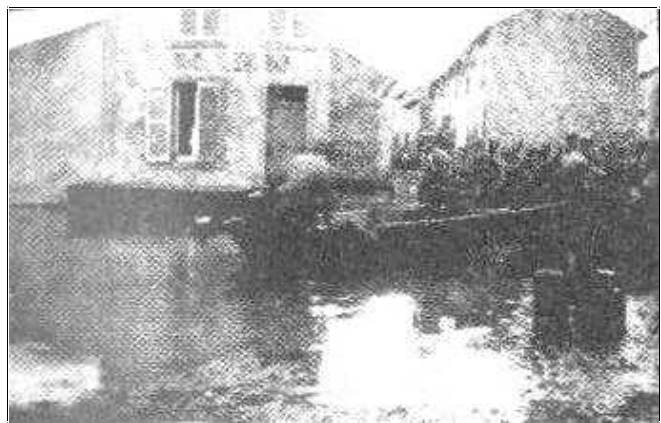
After the capture of Distroff the Second Battalion was subjected to a fierce counterattack by elements of the crack 150th Panzer Brigade. After a fierce battle, climaxed by the entry of the attached armor of Company “B” of 773rd TD battalion and Company “A” of 712th Tank Battalion the attackers were severely beaten and dispersed. Wrecked tanks and armored cars were everywhere to be seen and in a field in “F” Company’s area 120 enemy dead were found. This was the punch that failed and broke the enemy. As German forces withdrew, the Regiment was placed in Division reserve and assembled in three towns, Luttange, Metzereche and Metzervisse.

The Gate To The Siegfried

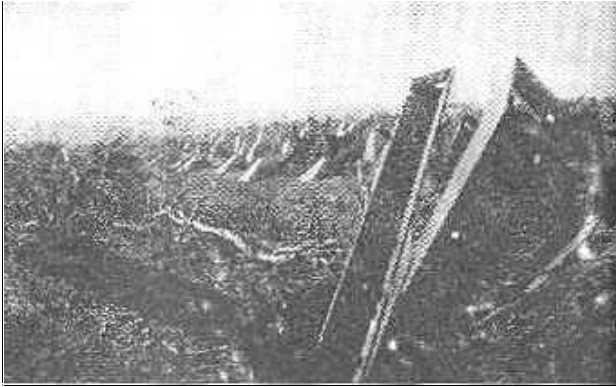
Attachment to the 10th Armored Division on the 19th of November had the outfit retracing its steps toward the Moselle where it turned north towards Sierck and Borg, to find the armor waiting for the doughboy to tear down all the pillboxes, blow up all the mines and booby traps, and install a swinging gate on the Siegfried line. Until the 27th November, the Regiment butted against the steel and concrete Siegfried line while the armor waited for its breakthrough, and the enemy poured in fresh troops to man the fortifications. The task proved too great for one Regiment, however, and the 358th Infantry was withdrawn and returned to the Division in the vicinity of Veckring, France – stopping off place before the Saar River.



Supporting Artillery of the 344th Battalion
near Koenigsmacher



Loading Supplies on the flooded Mozelle in Cattenom, France



Siegfried Line



Men of 1st Battalion moving forward
in rain near Borg, Germany



A River Again

The navy had nothing on the 358th Infantry; for river crossings were forever on the schedule and the assault boat became as familiar as the jeep. At a quarter past four on the morning of the 6th of the December, the First Battalion with “B” and “C” Companies in the assault crossed the Saar River in the vicinity of Wallerfangen, Germany, home of Franz von Papen. Farther down the river, the Third Battalion led by “I” and “L” Companies, scrambled down the steep banks near Oberlimberg, Germany, quietly loaded into assault boats, and made its way across the Saar. The Second Battalion, crossing after daylight on the footbridge, faced heavy mortar and machine gun fire from enemy pillboxes commanding the river line.

“88” Street

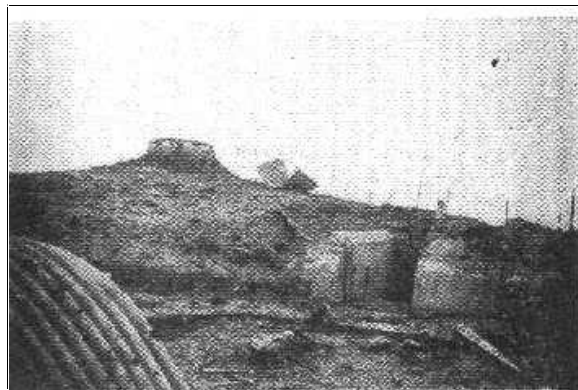
Once across the battalions faced the fortified cities of Pachten and Dillingen, bulwarks of the Siegfried line. The main thoroughfares took on names like “88” street and “Purple Heart Avenue”. It became a war against steel and concrete. Troops were raked by fire from pillboxes cleverly concealed in harmless looking barns and shops. Once again supply men and engineers battled against a river. The Regiment’s supporting tanks and TDs and the guns of the Anti Tank Company, had to be ferried across, for Jerry’s heavy shelling prevented the construction of a bridge. Supply men pushed supplies of ammunition and rations across on every type of boat: alligators, ducks, assault boats and storm boats. Wiremen struggled day and night to maintain communications across the river despite a swift current and constant shellfire. For sixteen days and nights the battalions hit again and again into the enemy fortifications. Continuously hammered day after day, the enemy was systematically blown out of one pill box after another, as all three battalions were employed to clear the major portion of Dillingen.

Rundstedt Strikes

Then one day came the startling news of the great German counteroffensive in the Ardennes. Where they would strike next no one knew. During the hours of darkness on the 21st of the December the Division quietly withdrew across the Saar, forsaking its sizable dent in the Siegfried line and moved to a defensive position in the Saar-Moselle triangle, facing the Siegfried line again. The holidays were days of patrolling and constant alert for unusual enemy activity.



Crossing the Saar in Dillingen, Germany



Concrete observation post and pillbox
knocked out in Dillingen, Germany