

Shells and Some Medics

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ON THE SIEGFRIED LINE, GERMANY [By Cable] —The Germans are shelling this hillside heavily, and to the bearded soldiers digging foxholes in the mist that is a source of ironic satisfaction. Now at last the Germans are shelling their own soil.

We are in the Siegfried Line, occupying some of the concrete bunkers won by the Americans after hard fighting. The fighting is not over yet; the Germans know this terrain well, and they have managed to infiltrate behind our bunkers with grenades, machine guns and flame throwers. And the fighting has begun again within the bunkers themselves. From the German side, flame-throwing tanks are attacking the very pillboxes that were shelled a short time ago by American artillery on the other side.

Our ridge is one among many, only a few hundred yards apart, and every gun—Jerry or American—echoes a thousand times, the sound bouncing back from the hills like the voice of a Swiss yodeler.

Last night was a terrible night of German fire and infiltration. But through the heavy fog and the darkness, medics came up the mountainside to get the casualties. They shoved their jeeps through the mud and across the narrow Ouren River, past a stone marking where three countries meet—Luxembourg, Germany and Belgium. They climbed slowly around the mountain along a corkscrew road and up onto the bare slope where the infantrymen were inching forward—and where you are so exposed to German fire that you feel naked.

Through the confusion of men moving in the dark, of the rattle of machine-gun and small-arms fire and the roar of artillery, the medics hunted for casualties, loaded them into jeeps and brought them down the mountainside.

This morning the men on the hill were digging themselves in deeper and Maj. Benjamin Owens of Carbondale, Pa., walked around the hill from foxhole to foxhole where his men were working. He knew many of them by name and greeted them and said "good morning" in a gentle voice. They looked up at him, grinned and said: "Hello, major, how are you?" The major pointed to T. Sgt. Joseph Passel, a tall, thin, bearded boy who was passing by. "There goes what used to

be a pretty big boy," the major said. Passel walked slowly, like a sleepwalker.

Capt. Hans Shiffman of Santa Rosa, Calif., a medical officer, came up the hill looking for some of his missing medics. He went into the CP in one of the concrete bunkers and spoke to Lt. Col. Benjamin Trapani of Scranton, Pa. The colonel and his unit had been in action from Normandy to the German border.

The leveling effect of combat had been working on the colonel and, with his tired eyes, his beard and his lack of insignia, he was just another weary soldier, talking slowly with the distinct effort that is necessary at moments of extreme fatigue.

A jeep came up the hill to the CP and a soldier jumped out waving two letters and yelling: "Here's some mail for you, Joe." Another soldier came over to a lieutenant and said: "The doctor's orders are for you to eat a hot breakfast this morning." The lieutenant held up what looked like a sandwich and said: "I've already got it, and you tell him 'thanks'."

Capt. Shiffman had scouted the mountainside and had found all the lost medics except one. He was probably holed in with one of the companies and would show up eventually.

A soldier came over and said: "Captain, I had some shrapnel brush along my chest here and it hurts."

"Pull up your shirt," said the captain. The soldier pulled it up and the doctor looked at his chest and at the faint mark along the ribs. "It's just a bruise," said the captain.

The soldier stood there expectantly.

"I suppose you want me to say you can go down, but I can't," said the doctor, not unkindly. "Do you really think you're hurt badly enough to go down below? You know, if there's one less on this hill—Do you think you ought to go down?"

The soldier didn't say anything for a moment. He stared around at the other soldiers digging in on the slope, then said, "No, sir," in a small voice and trudged off.

"All an infantryman ever needs," said the captain, "is a hot breakfast, a night's sleep, a pair of dry socks and the feeling of men to the right and left of him. He rarely has all of them at the same time."

We went down the slope, past the Ouren River and the stone marker, to a farmhouse across the border in Luxembourg, where the medics had rigged up a little aid station.

On the way down the hill, Pfc. Edward Crumback of Chicago, Ill., an Infantry scout who had been sent down to the valley for a rest, talked about the refugees in this area. They were a new

kind of refugee—German civilians. There were 48 of them from the other side of the border and they had hidden in pillboxes in the woods when our shells started dropping on their town. But German soldiers had kicked them out and told them to go farther into Germany or else "go over to the Americans and get killed."

"So they came over," Crumback said, "and hid in houses until it became clear they weren't going to be killed. There was a pretty school teacher with them. She said the war would soon be over, but she was probably saying what she thought we wanted to hear."

Crumback paused and he looked thoughtful. "I was holding her hand the other day," he said broodingly, "until I figured she was a Nazi; then somehow I just couldn't go on doing it."

WHEN we reached the aid station, two of the medics—T-5 Emery Pendergrass of Lamar, W. Va., and T-5 Joseph Goodrum of Ohio, Ill.—were working on a man with a head wound. He was Pfc. Abraham Leiter of New York, N. Y. Shell fragments had ripped through his helmet, inflicting superficial scalp wounds—ugly and painful but not dangerous. All you could see of Leiter's face through his beard and the dirt were his eyes.

"I guess we'll wash away the dirt," said Capt. David Kaplan of Elmira, N. Y., "and cut the hair off around your wounds."

"A haircut? Okay," said Leiter, "but leave my beard, doc, will you?"

"Dammit, Leiter," said the doc, "you're just the way you were in garrison. You've got an answer fight away. Sit still now."

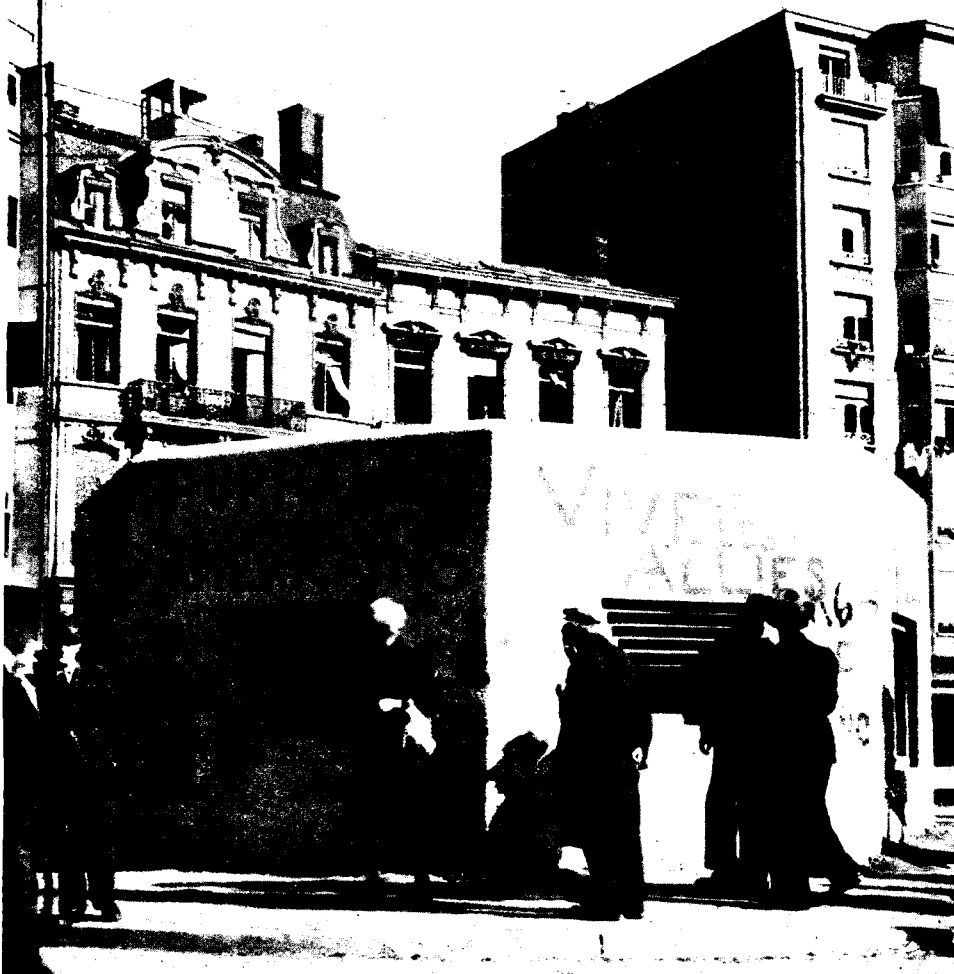
Leiter puffed at a cigarette in short, quick puffs. "You want to know the story, doc? You can't take a hill that's zeroed in and you can't take it with replacements."

"Getting pessimistic, eh?" said Capt. Kaplan.

Leiter lifted his head quickly and said: "No. That Jerry, there's only one thing wrong with him. When he gets a lot of lead thrown at him, he gets yellow. Right now we need some air to soften him up. Then we could take him."

He bent his head down in his arms so the medics could work easier on his wounds. From the bent head came the phrase, again and again: "Those guys on the hill—it's gonna be hell this afternoon."

As if Jerry had heard him, there was a single air-bursting shell over the valley. A little cloud of gray smoke settled over the Ouren River, an announcement of the impending battle. It was sunny now and the mist was gone. After that first shellburst came others, and little gray masses of smoke hung all over the blue sky.



A German pillbox in Liege, Belgium, is converted into an Allied publicity display. Townspeople covered it with "welcome" signs to greet advancing Yanks.



Americans move into part of Germany's much ballyhooed Siegfried line. GIs on one side of a concrete tank trap cover comrades in a jeep across the way.

1 UNDER THE EYES OF FREE FRENCH GUARDS, 10 MEMBERS OF THE VICHY MILITIA STAND TRIAL IN THE GRENOBLE COURTROOM. ALL WERE FOUND GUILTY OF WORKING WITH THE NAZIS, CAUSING DEATH OF FRENCH PATRIOTS. SIX WERE EXECUTED; TWO OF THEM GOT HARD LABOR FOR LIFE; THE OTHER TWO, FIVE YEARS IN PRISON.



TRAITOR

Six young French collaborators of the Vichy militia who had helped the Nazis in the liberation of Grenoble. In this scene, they are being executed. 22 French patriots had been killed.



2 ONE OF THE SIX SENTENCED TO DIE IS BOUND TO A STAKE BEFORE THE WALL WHERE HE WILL FACE A FIRING SQUAD OF FREE FRENCH SOLDIERS.



3 ALL SIX MEN HAVE BEEN TIED. THE VICHY PROPAGANDA SIGN ON THE BUILDING IN THE REAR HAS BEEN MARKED OVER BY PATRIOTS.