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ROER RIVER CROSSING

General Simpson's 9th Army G.I.s buckle on lifebelts as they get ready for the hazardous job of bridging the fast-flowing River Roer - biggest natural obstacle barring the way to the Rhine.

An unusually short and intense barrage - (it lasted only three quarters of an hour) - swept the assault area with unprecedented thoroughness. All roads to the Roer River lead through ruins.

The use of smoke is a feature of General Simpson's tactics in this operation. Artificial fog screens engineer squads and assault troops as effectively as the news blackout which descended over the first days of the offensive.

Larry-borne pontoons lumber like grounded barrage balloons to the water's edge. Bridging a river of this width, running a four-knot current, and within range of enemy guns, is a tough assignment. Beneath the water the enemy put stakes, wire, and floating mines.

Field Marshal Montgomery describes the River crossing as a "determined break-through attempt." Enemy shell fire and a difficult river were not enough to check it.

The R.A.P's part in the softening up of Germany reaches a new high pitch of intensity in the burning and blasting of Pfersheim, a small but important centre for the manufacture of precision instruments, shell-fuses and similar essentials.

Pfersheim had never been attacked before: it looks as if it won't need to be attacked again.

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