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THE RUBICON CROSSED

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NEW ZEALANDERS' PROGRESS

ONLY SLIGHT RESISTANCE

(N.Z.E.F. Official War Correspondent)

(Rec. 7 p.m.) RUBICON, Sept. 27.

The progress of the New Zealanders up the Adriatic coast is steady but not yet spectacular. The Rubicon proved no obstacle and our troops were delayed only a few hours before strong bridgeheads, supported by armour, were established on the northern bank. This morning our armoured car patrols are probing forward in the face of light resistance and have reached positions less than five miles short of the next fair-sized coastal town of Cesantico. This represents an advance of some two miles in 24 hours.

Yesterday afternoon our armour reached the mouth of the Rubicon and found that a steel bridge spanning the deep tidal stream was damaged but quite negotiable. Armoured cars and infantry went across and thrust on through Bellaria. This morning I went by jeep up the coast road and passed over the bridge to this gutted collection of seaside villas, which is representative of many wrecked resorts along this coast. The bridge, a substantial girder structure spanning the deeply-banked stream, bears marks of hurried attempts at demolition, but they accomplished nothing beyond a few holes in the decking. The river itself is cluttered with pitiful wrecks of schooners, caiques, and steel fishing vessels. They have been blown up as part of the elaborate fortification which was to protect the beach from a seaborne landing, which never eventuated. Up ahead mortars are dropping among our most forward armoured cars and from time to time enemy shells whistle overhead and fall on the road behind.

Last night New Zealand tanks and infantry forced a passage across the stream on our left flank. It was regarded as a manoeuvre which might result in serious clashes with the enemy, but surprisingly little opposition was encountered. Few prisoners were taken, resistance being confined to spandau and sniper fire, together with artillery.