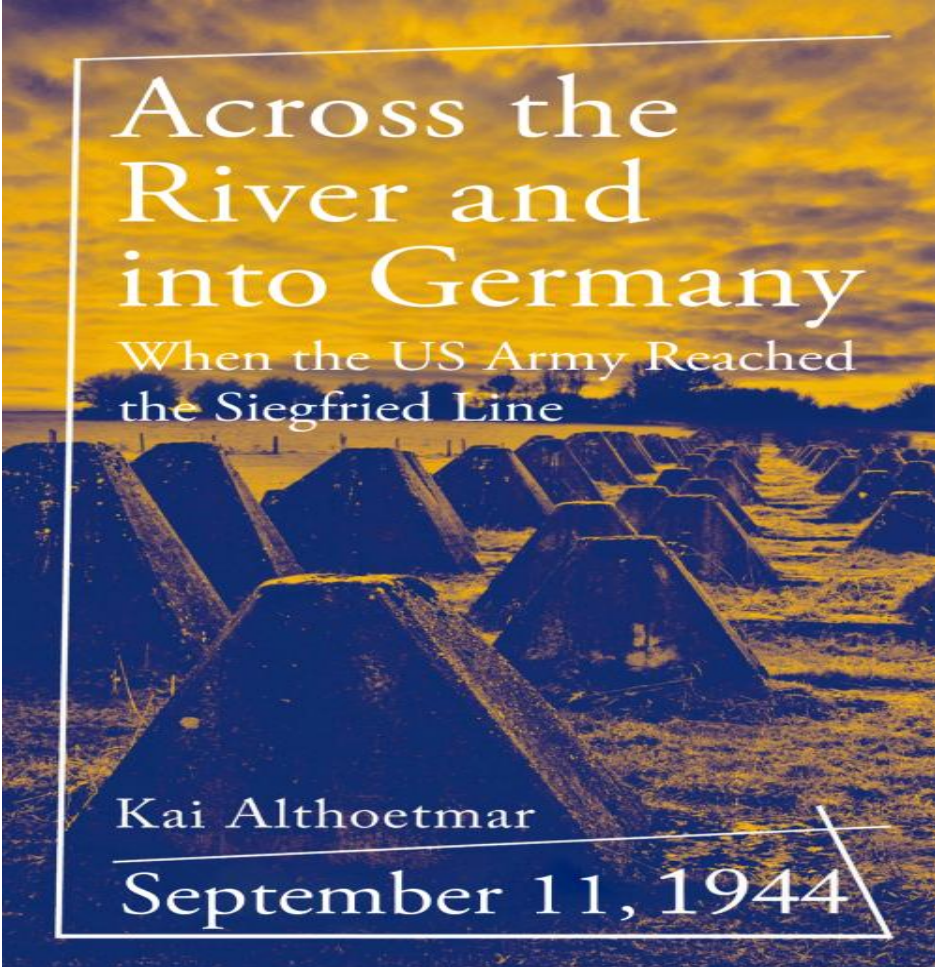
A photograph of a field filled with rows of concrete anti-tank obstacles, known as 'Hedgehogs' or 'Siegfried Line' obstacles. The obstacles are arranged in neat rows, receding into the distance. The sky is a mix of blue and white clouds, suggesting a bright but slightly overcast day. The overall tone is historical and somber.

Across the River and into Germany

When the US Army Reached
the Siegfried Line

Kai Althoetmar

September 11, 1944



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Cover photo: line of dragon's teeth, Ardennes. Photo: Archangel 12, Creative Commons.

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Stolzembourg, municipality of Putscheid, is a village of one hundred and ninety people on the German-Luxembourg border, five kilometres north of Vianden, less than ten kilometres from Diekirch. The Our separates the Grand Duchy from the southern Eifel in the dense Ardennes valley, with Bitburg twenty kilometres to the east. Anyone looking for big cities has a long way to travel here.

Two flags hang languidly there, 'Stars & Stripes' and red-white-blue, that of the liberators and that of the liberated. The Our moves slowly southwards. In Wallendorf, ten kilometres south of Vianden, it flows into the Sauer, which joins the Moselle at Wasserbillig. The modern castle towers over the village and the parish church from a hill; only the bell tower from 1585 is old. The castle of Stolzembourg was destroyed in 1454. When it was rebuilt, Louis XIV's siege troops reduced it to rubble again in 1679.

The old school in Rue Principale 5A—Haauptstrooss in the idiom of the Luxembourgers—houses the 'Musée Koffergrouf', the copper mine museum, and a kilometre away from the village, a tunnel leads into the centuries-old history of copper ore mining. The mine was closed in 1944. The German occupying forces were the last to extract the ore.

A stone's throw from the bridge over the Our, three dragon teeth are embedded in the ground—anti-tank barriers, symbols of the Siegfried Line. The concrete is weathered, the floor is covered with stone slabs of Ardennes slate. At