

Volume 8

Number 103

Battle of the Bulge - I

Lead: Determined to take back the initiative, Adolf Hitler and his generals launched a surprise counterattack against allied forces through the Ardennes forest in the winter of 1944. The Bulge had appeared once again.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: After a shaky start in the weeks following the D-Day invasion, allied armies had broken out of the Normandy hedgerows and for most of fall 1944 had battered German armies into retreat. As winter deepened,

however, General Eisenhower's 48 divisions were stretched thinly along a 600 mile front from Switzerland to the North Sea.

In that disposition opportunity beckoned and the German High Command was quick to seize it. To do so they returned to an old friend, the Ardennes Forest in southern Belgium. In 1914 and in the 1930s the French mistakenly assumed that no effective attack could be mounted through that densely packed hilly and forested region. They were wrong both times as were the allied staff planners in 1944. Eisenhower's men were so confident the Germans were beaten that in the eighty-five mile line that fronted the forest they positioned

mostly exhausted, battle weary troops and rookie, untested units. The so-called “ghost front” was an open invitation which Hitler accepted. Into it he poured what was left of his western reserve.

Just before dawn on December 16, with allied air forces grounded by snow and fog, three German Panzer armies, nearly 24 divisions attacked the American lines all along the Ardennes front. Within 48 hours allied command recognized this as no feint. Already U.S. units were being forced back and some, such as parts of the 101st Airborne Division at the market crossroad village of Bastogne, were surrounded and cut off. Next time: The tactical intuition of George

Patton.

**At the University of Richmond,
I'm Dan Roberts.**

Resources

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<http://www.battleofbulge.com>

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