10 Years Ago Today Hitler Launched Last Desperate Attack Against Allies In Battle Of The Bulge

Editor's Note — The following anniversary story on the Battle of the Bulge, as seen from the German side, was written by Willy M. Horbach, a member of the Associated Press staff in Bonn who served three years in the German army.

By WILLY M. HORBACH

BONN, Germany (AP)—On a freezing December morning 10 years ago Adolf Hitler made his last desperate gamble to defeat the Allied armies in the West.

He sacrificed virtually all the mobile strategic reserves Germany still possessed in a bid to snatch the victory he had promised his war-weary people.

At dawn on Dec. 16, 1944 two German Panzer armies moved through misty woods to attack the thinly manned positions of the American 1st Army in the Ardennes Mountains along the German-Belgian border.

It was the start of what the Germans called operation "Wacht am Rhein" (watch on the Rhine) —soon dubbed by the Allies "the Battle of the Bulge."

Within hours the German assault battalions had broken through the American lines and were headed for the River Meuse.

In Germany, people were seized by a mixture of hope and fear. Some hoped the offensive would bring victory. Others feared the agony of war would only be prolonged.

In hindsight, the Ardennes offensive clearly stands out to military historians here as one of the most reckless adventures ever undertaken.

The object was to separate the British and American armies by attacking across Belgium and seizing the important harbor of Antwerp. That would cut the British off from their supply base and force a second "Dunkirk," Hitler believed.

Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, German commander in chief in the West, was shocked by Hitler's plan, he told Allied interrogators after the war.

"We had neither the men nor the supplies for such an ambitious plan," he said.

But the Fuehrer had his way and the offensive was hastily prepared.

The tanks of Sepp Dietrich's 6th Panzer SS army were brought across the Rhine. The 5th Panzer army, under Gen. Hasso von Manteuffel, rumbled into an assembly area in the wooded Eifel Mountains between Bitburg and Kronenburg.

The people there still have vivid memories of that time.

"I have never seen such a lot of tanks and soldiers," says Hans Bosch, a farmer in the Pruem area who lost two sons in the war.

"When I saw all those soldiers that morning I asked them what they were doing. A young officer told me: 'We attack again.'

"I only felt sorry for them. They were so young, as young as my sons were when the army took them."

Many Germans were horrified when word of the offensive reached them. They were the people who had stayed behind in Aachen, Monschau and other border towns when the Americans marched in. They had defied a Nazi order to evacuate their home towns.

Because they had been branded traitors and saboteurs by the Nazi, they had ample cause to fear German recapture of their towns.

The Germans hurled 14 infantry and seven armored division—with 800 tanks—at the weakest section of the long Allied front. "Storm battalions" attacked under covering fire of 2,000 guns.

The American divisions were outnumbered four to one. But deep snow, steep hills and bad roads slowed down the Germans from the start. Manteuffel — now a member of the West German parliament—drove his tanks through the night. But the attackers did not gain as much ground as they expected.

In the North the S.S. Panzer army met determined American resistance around Monschau, on the Belgian border. For days Dietrich was stalled there, giving the Allies time to rush reinforcements to the Meuse—Dietrich's objective.

Manteuffel took over from Dietrich the main punch. His tanks headed for Dinant and Namur while Dietrich was still heavily involved around Monschau, Butgenbach and Malmedy.

It was the unshakeable American defense of Bastonge — where Brig. Gen. (now Lt. Gen.) Anthony C. McAuliffe said "nuts" to a German demand he surrender — that finally stopped Manteuffel.

Failing to capture the city immediately, he bypassed the defenders—the 101st Airborne Division. But then Bastogne menaced the German rear and held out until relieved by Patton's 3rd Army on Dec. 26. It was the turning point of the Battle of the Bulge.

Manteuffel had to retreat when his tanks were only a few miles from Dinant.

Hitler's Christmas present for the hard-pressed Germans was a flop. He had pulled all his tricks, including sending 40 jeep-loads of English - speaking Germans in American uniform behind the Allied line to spread confusion and sabotage.

The skeletons of burned farmhouses still loom against the skyline today on the scene of what Von Rundstedt called Germany's "Stalingrad No. 2."

Doctor Says World To End

EAST LANSING, Mich. (AP)—Dr. Charles A. Laughead, who college officials say believes the world will end Dec. 21, yesterday resigned his position as a staff member of the Michigan State College hospital.

The State Board of Agriculture, the college governing board, accepted his resignation routinely but asked for an explanation.

MSC President Dr. John A. Hannah reported to the board that Dr. Laughead, a staff physician since 1948, was resigning because of his belief the world will end Dec. 21.

"I first heard about this business when a group of students came to me," Dr. Hannah said. "They told me Dr. Laughead had been holding meetings at his home and preaching the beliefs of some peculiar religious sect."

Dr. Hannah said Dean of Students Tom King and Dr. C. J. Menzies, head of the college hospital, investigated and that Dr. Laughead admitted and talked freely about his beliefs.

Dr. Hannah said the group believes that the world will end Dec. 21 and that flying saucers from Venus or Mars—the MSC president wasn't sure which—would rescue some select survivors from mountain tops.

Oregon Issues Fish Leaflet

Salmon of Oregon are the subject of a new leaflet now available free of charge from the Oregon State Game Commission. This 4-page leaflet, giving brief facts about each of the salmon found in Oregon waters, is the second of a series being published by the commission.

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