

PATHFINDER

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Outmaneuvered

In losing Battle of the Bulge, Germany sacrifices 200,000 men according to battle front reports

From the north, south and west, four Allied armies battered back the Belgian bulge. With escape highways cut, Germans withdrew under masterly rear-guard actions, scourged by dive bombers which riddled trucks, splattered troops fleeing toward the Siegfried Line.

Taking the Allies by surprise, the Germans had unleashed enough power to carry clear through to Paris—if they hadn't been stopped. What stopped them were: (1) Superior numbers and equipment, control of the air when weather permitted use of air power; (2) superior tactics, flexible organization which allowed rapid shifting of troops, and the individual soldier whose skill and heroism, in the words of Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, "have been . . . understated."

The Risk. Bradley, to whose generalship Eisenhower gave much of the credit for halting the Germans, explained Allies took "a calculated risk" in leaving the "unstrategic" bulge area thinly held, because we could "meet and stop an attack before it could do too much damage. This is exactly what happened." The timing and strength of the attack were "somewhat of a surprise," "skillfully launched" and "masterfully executed," made possible "by a period of bad weather which restricted our air reconnaissance," he said.

Results. The German drive helped our armies carry out the Supreme Commander's order—"Destroy the enemy." Nazi losses were 90,000 according to Secretary Stimson, 200,000 according to battlefront reports. While our twin drives into Germany have been diverted, in the end, Bradley said, the Battle of the Bulge may "materially affect Germany's ability to resist on the Western Front."