

SUBJECT: Hitler's Impressions of the American Stand at Bastogne.

RE : Transcript from Hitler's Staff Meeting Documents.

In the course of the Ardennes Winter offensive begun 16 December 1944, the 7th Army pushed forward past the northern rim of Luxembourg into Belgium beyond St. Hubert. At the same time the forward elements of the 6th Armored Army, namely, the SS Leibstandarte led by Standartenfuhrer Peiper penetrated to Stavelot.

By this movement the "road octopus" Bastogne, centrally located between the two attacking columns was left occupied by the enemy. The Fuhrer, on several successive days pointed out the extreme importance of establishing contact between the two units. First of all to cut off in this manner the enemy forces remaining in the area of Bastogne, and secondly, to safeguard the route of supplies and reinforcements for the continuation of the offensive, particularly as the best supply routes lead thru Bastogne.

This circumstance appeared of especial importance to the Fuhrer because according to his opinion the Winter offensive in the Ardennes had been started on too narrow a basis and the question of supplies had gained in importance in view of the Allied air superiority.

At the beginning of the offensive, it was believed that the Allied forces would withdraw to the West since it was supposed that no defensive line before the Maas was intended by the Allies. This supposition was supported by the absence of flank attacks which were expected and the fact that the Airborne Divisions behind the front were not deployed.

On the 3rd or 4th day of the attack (about 20 December 1944) the capture of Bastogne actually did seem imminent. At an evening Military Situation Conference, SS Gruppenfuhrer Pegeloin said to the Fuhrer, "We shall take Bastogne tonight." Then it came as a great surprise when intelligence reported that 101st Airborne Division was in line at Bastogne. With this news it became clear to all participants of the Conference that the Allies had re-organized the importance of Bastogne for the continuation of the German Winter offensive in the Ardennes and were resolved to hold the city at all costs.

The Fuhrer had since the beginning of the Winter offensive daily asked the whereabouts of the Allied Airborne Divisions. He mentioned the First British, 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions supposedly located at Reims, Sedan and the maneuver area of Sisonne.

Altho' powerful German forces were employed to eliminate the supposedly five kilometer wide corridor formed by the Allies which led into the surrounded area of Bastogne, all attempts at penetration proved to be futile. The Fuhrer again and again stressed the exemplary stubborn defense of Bastogne and said among other things, "I should like to see the German General who would fight on with the same stubborn tough resistance in a situation which seemed just as hopeless". The Fuhrer soon recognized that the success of the Winter offensive in the Ardennes was based on the taking of Bastogne and it was for this reason that he immediately developed new plans for a new offensive operation at the Lorraine border which was to start New Years' Eve 1944/45.

NOTE: The above is a translation of the word-for-word transcript as taken from notes of Hitler's Staff meetings.

A TRUE COPY

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