



BULGE REMEMBERED

75 Years Later

Presented by Russ Gifford

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- 1. Officially, the name was Ardennes Offensive – why did it become ‘the battle of the Bulge?’**
- 2. Could Bulge had been successful, what happens?**
- 3. Normally, battles make their leaders household names. But who are the heroes of this campaign.**

BULGE

- **The Battle of the Bulge was actually a series of battles scattered over several hundred miles.**

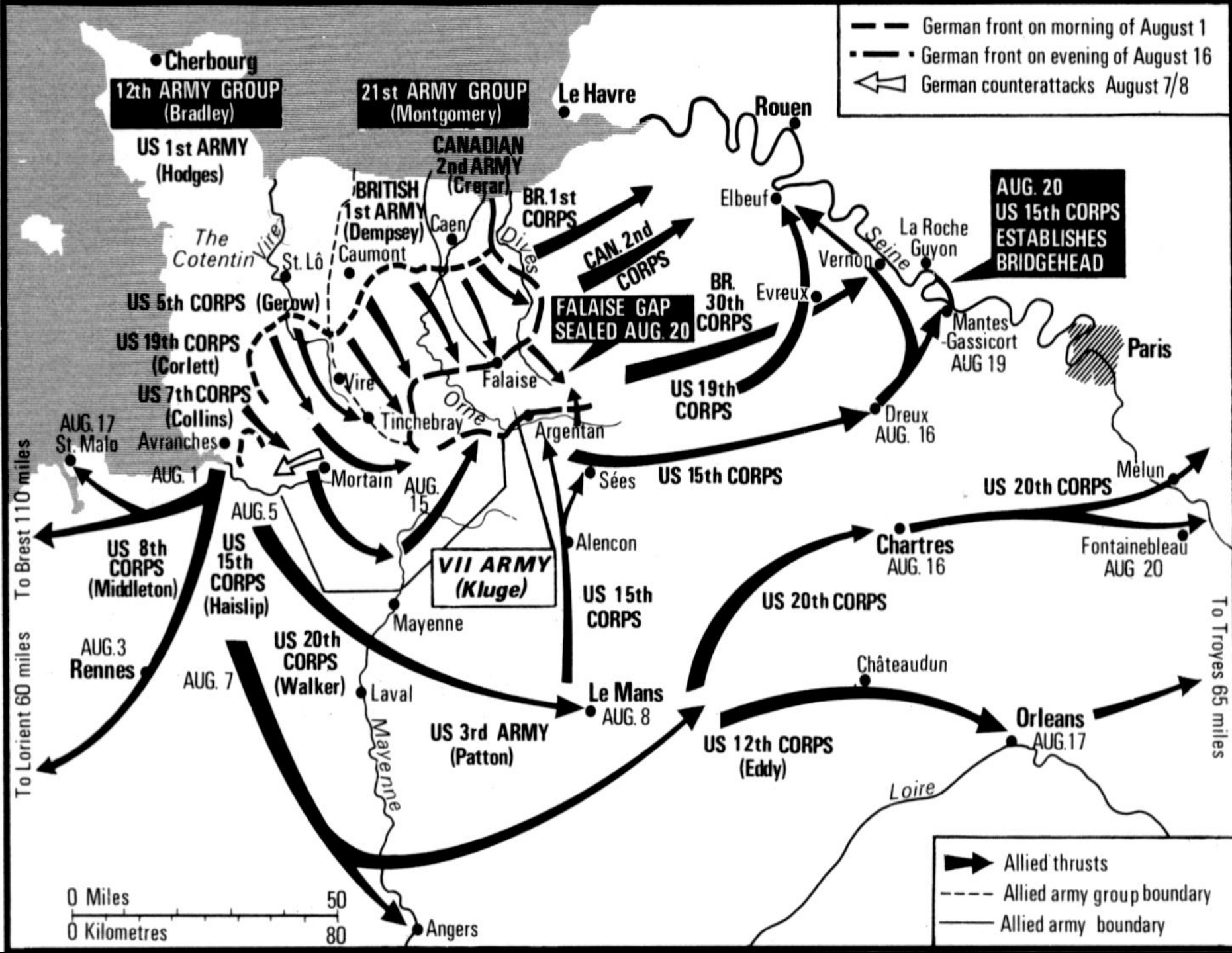
It involved 3 German armies – 38 divisions – with more than 250,000 German troops, and 1000 aircraft.

HELL IN THE HEDGEROWS

- **Following D-Day, the German army had kept the Allied forces tied up on the beaches and in the hedgerows for over a month.**



But all that changed when the Allied forces finally forced the breakout with Operation Cobra July 25, 1944



OVERCONFIDENCE

- **June 26, 1944:** The Allies capture the French port of Cherbourg; the Germans are on the retreat.



The breakout begins. It would seize the port, and the breakout begins.

LIBERATION!

- **June 26, 1944:** The Allies capture the French port of Cherbourg; the Germans are on the retreat.
- **August 25, 1944:** Allied troops liberate Paris after four years of German occupation.



The rapid change of war – Paris is liberated.

- **August 25, 1944**
Iowa's citizen-soldiers are first to liberate Paris.

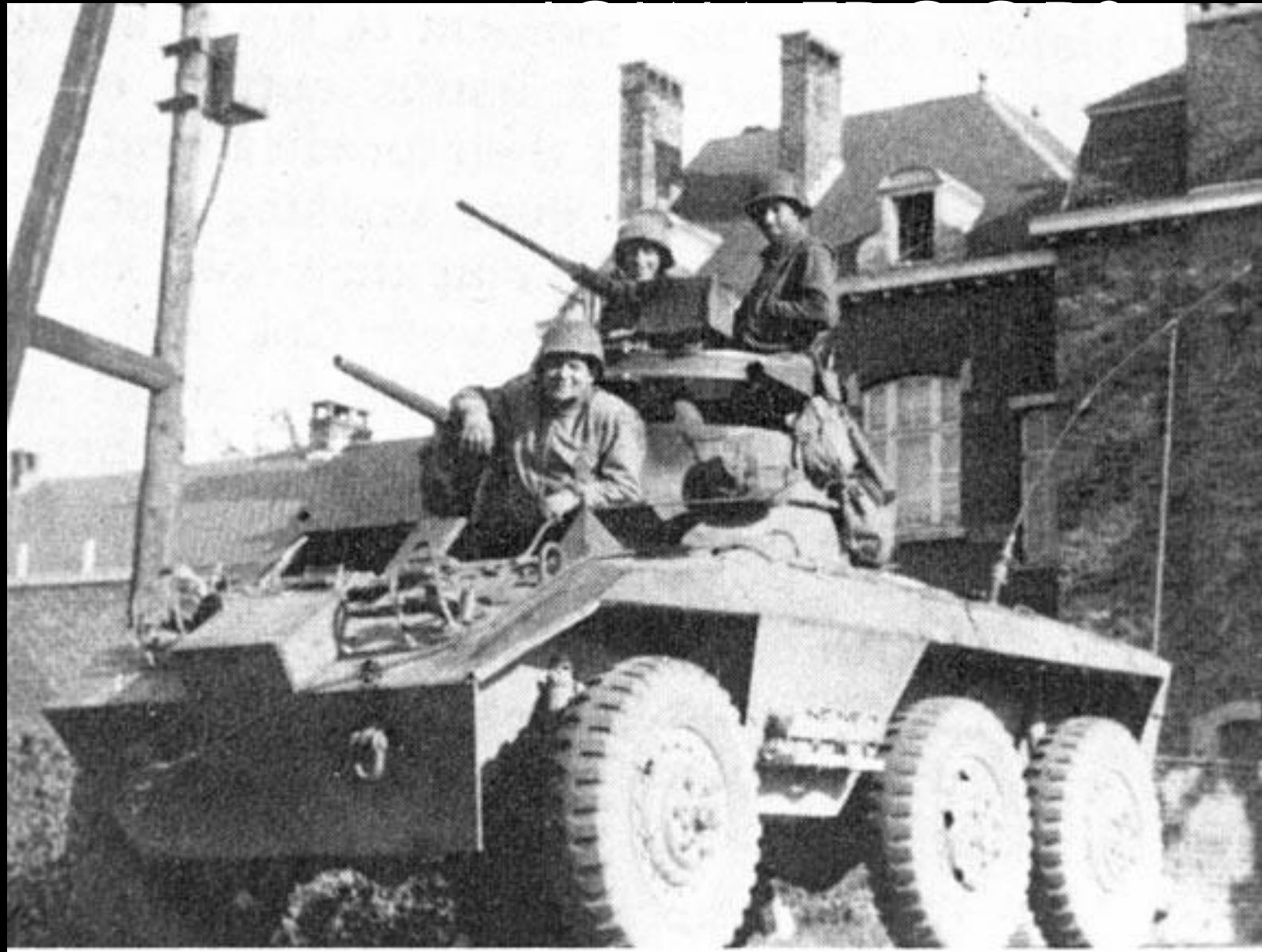
Notably, that includes troopers of the 113th Cavalry Regiment headquartered here.



Back to the 113th:

By September 5th, the 113th had spearheaded so far into France that they did not have any combat to support them.

The main units at the time had no fuel to keep up



WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

September 22: Patton's spectacular drive is halted – not by Germans, but by lack of fuel.



WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

The 'Red Ball Express',
6000 truckers begin
round the clock fuel
transportation to the
front.



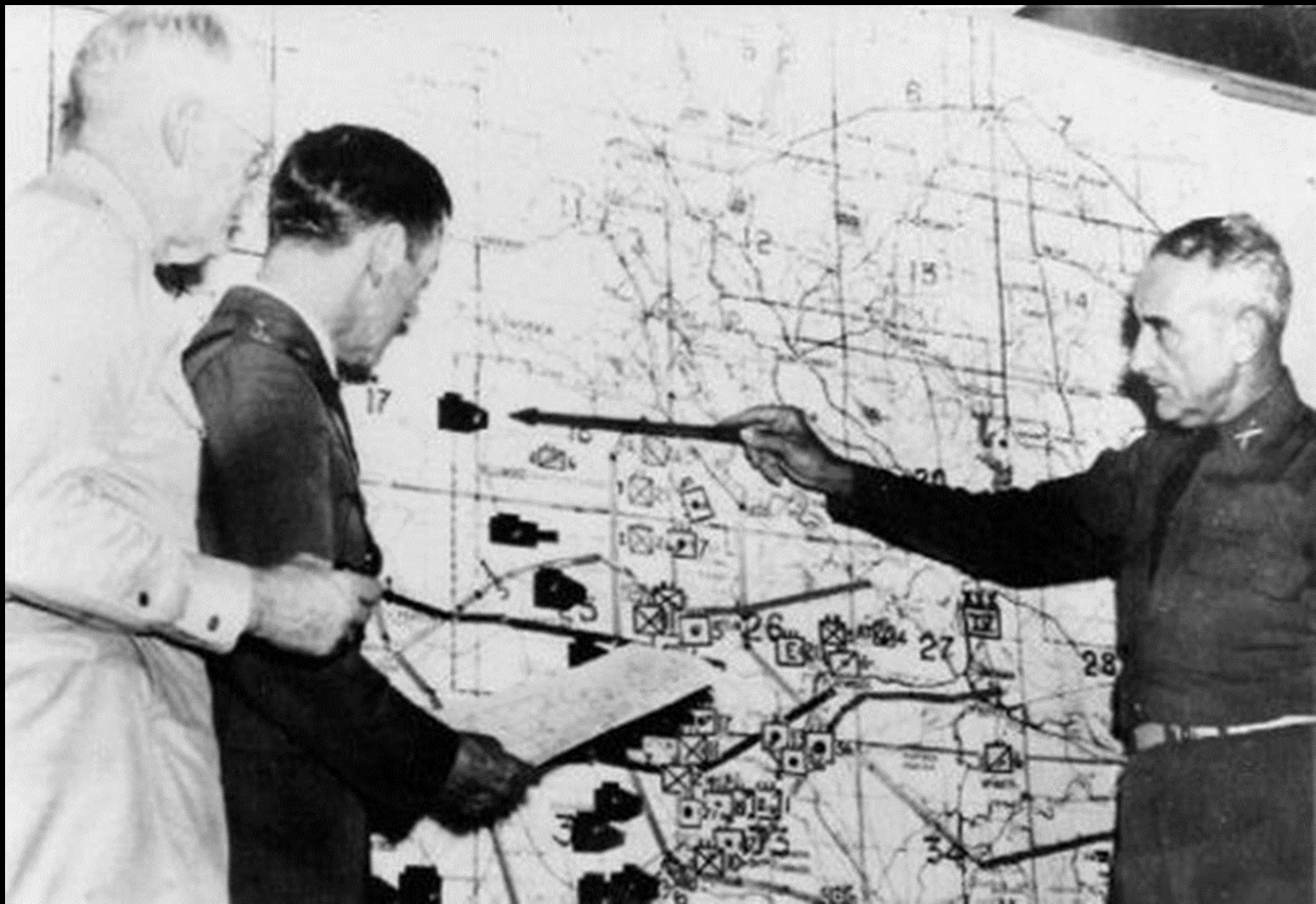
WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO WIN?

The Germans are reeling

—

**But the Armies are out
running their supply.**

**Ike vs Montgomery:
Broad front vs Single
Thrust**



CHOICES

Montgomery says he could have won the war.

Ike disagrees, and the broad front continues.



Gen. Dwight Eisenhower

CHOICES MADE

Montgomery says he could have won the war.

Ike disagrees, and the broad front continues.

But finally gives in to Montgomery – and the failure of Market Garden follows.



Gen. Dwight Eisenhower

OVERCONFIDENCE

- **September 17-25, 1944:**
Operation Market Garden begins – and fails.

Intelligence was discounted –

Drops were too far from their targets

And the bridge over the Rhine would not fall.

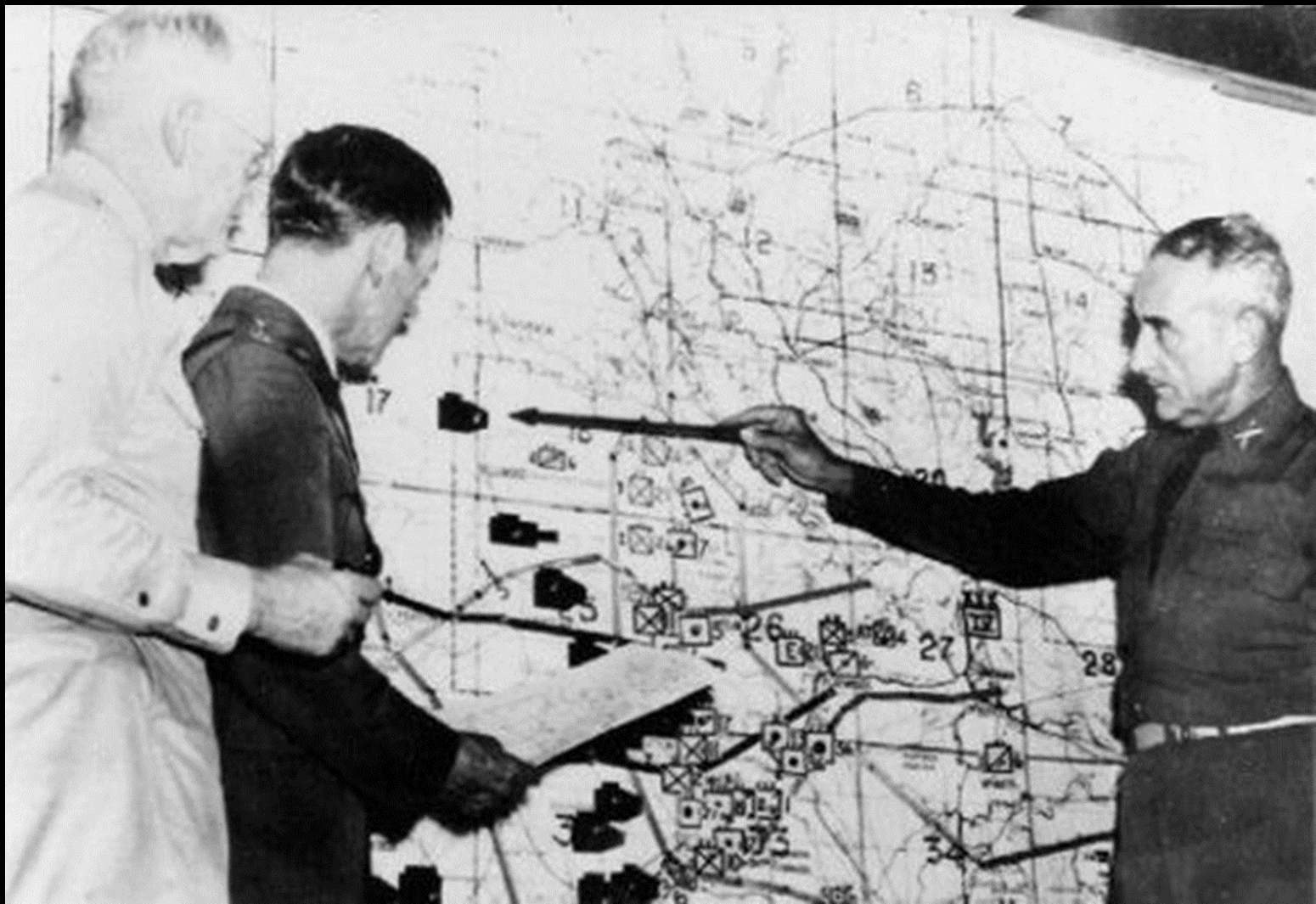


The largest airborne assault in history fails to take the final object – the bridge at Arnhem to open the door to Germany.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO WIN?

**But the efforts must
continue.**

**And the Brits did
manage to take the port
of Antwerp – intact.**



NOVEMBER 26, 1944

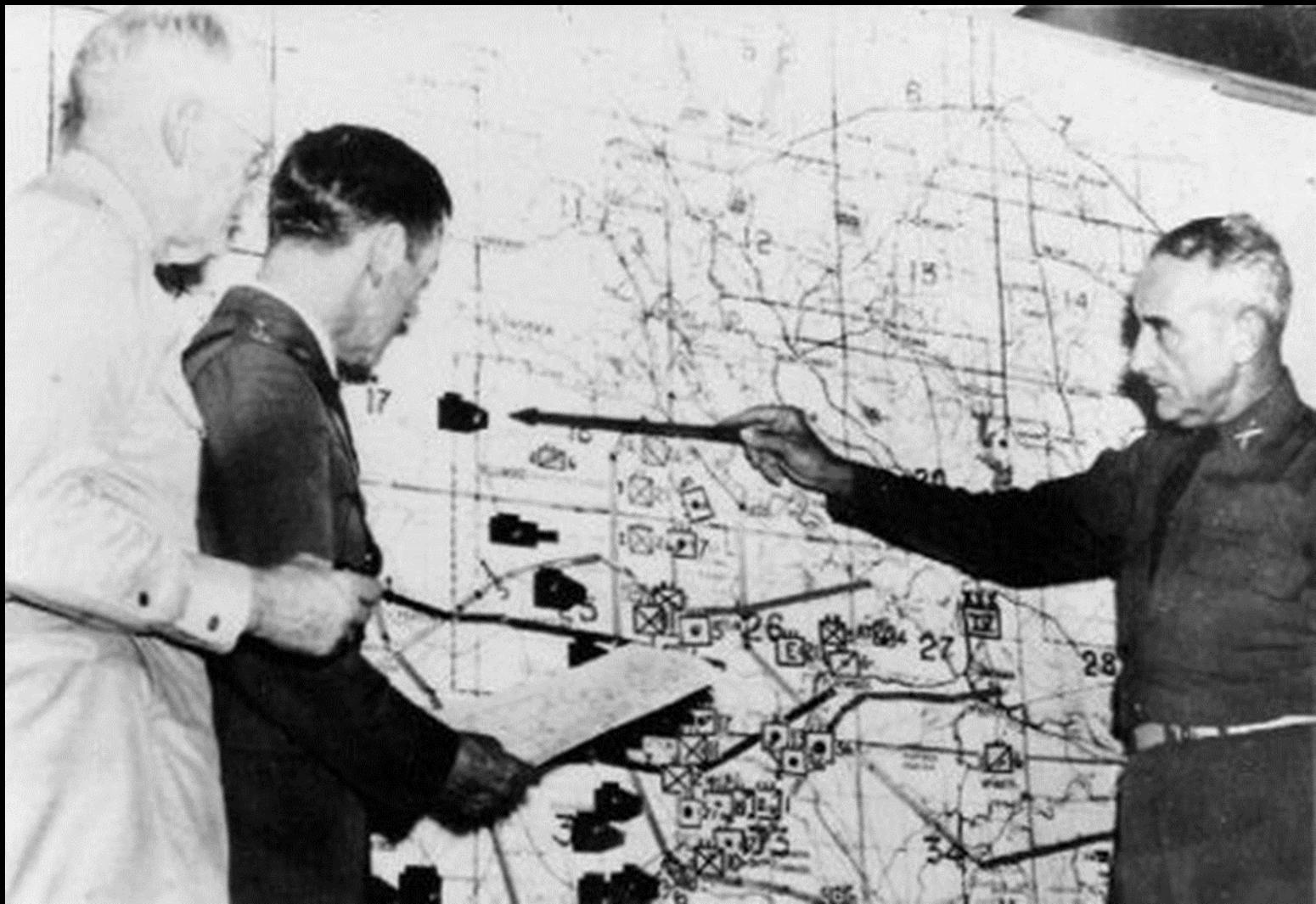
Once the Germans are cleared from the river that feeds to port, the much needed supplies will have a larger port nearer the front, and a ready path to get there.



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO WIN?

With ready access to supplies, the broad front approach begins again – except near the thick Ardennes forest.

Only four divisions were in this area – a very thin line of tired men.



WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

**Only a madman would
attack, though.**



WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

**Madness has
advantages.**

No one saw it coming.



WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

The concept was insane – but then, the Germans had successfully surprised and won here in 1870, and again in 1940.

Hitler now amassed an army greater than the one used in 1940.



HITLER'S LAST GAMBLE

His goal?

Separate the Allied Armies –



HITLER'S LAST GAMBLE

His goal?

**Separate the Allied Armies –
Seize Antwerp –**



HITLER'S LAST GAMBLE

His goal?

**Separate the Allied Armies –
Seize Antwerp –
Bargain for a separate peace.**



HITLER'S LAST GAMBLE

Since the assassination attempt in July, Hitler had not trusted his own command staff.

Thus, radio silence forces false statements of defensive preparation via ULTRA.



The German Chief of Staff von Rundstedt is misled
– as are the Allies.

On Dec 16, 1944

The lightly defended front along the forest erupted with two armored armies and a panzer Gruppe army.

Surprise was total.



THE BEGINNING

Three German armies plunged into the semi-mountainous, heavily forested region.

A heavy artillery barrage pounded American forward positions, followed by the infantry onslaught and the breakthrough by the armored columns.





LOCAL VOICES

“At the time of the Bulge, we’d been on line for about 6 months without a break. Each squad was covering about an area for a company.”

– Art Dunshee, from Clarinda, Iowa.



LOCAL VOICES

“All hell broke loose,” recalled Harold Rathert. “It was mass pandemonium.”

– Harold Rathert, from Des Moines, Iowa, part of the 9th Infantry Division.

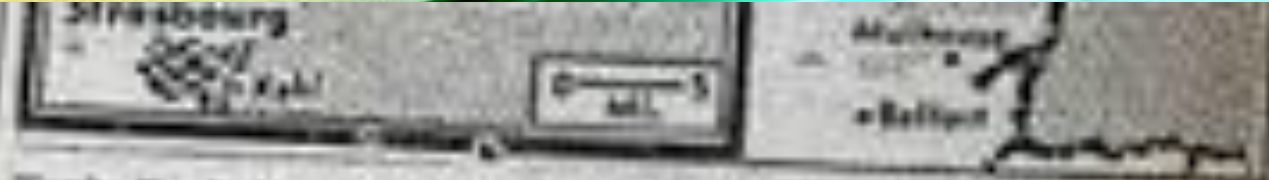
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Off. Cloth and Buck-
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in Superior court
Dulph M. Osborn, di-
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Director Osborn on
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Yanks Begin New Drive.—Amer-
ican 1st Army forces in a new
drive from Hagen and Menn-
chau, south of Aachen, are at-
tempting a flanking movement

on Duren, eastward Elmerath
(100 miles). Meanwhile, the 7th
Army (100 miles) has moved
within mortar range of the Ger-
man border south of Seltz.—
(MEA Telegrams)

Germans Strike Back at Seventh Army Invasion

By EDWARD KENNEDY

PARIS, Dec. 16. (AP)—Heavy
units of the Siegfried line and a
fresh Nazi armored division
brought up as reinforcements
struck in savage reaction today
against four U. S. Seventh Army
brigades spearheading a new invasion
of Germany along a 17-mile front
last west of the Rhine.

WEATHER:
Colder tonight.

Russians Strike Int.

WHAT ABOUT AIR POWER?

Heavy cloud cover and bad weather in general had neutralized the Allied air power.

It would continue to do so for almost a week.

No cover, and no intel.

CHOICES

Bradley and Ike disagreed on the importance of the attacks.

A Spoiling attack, Bradley argued. No importance.

Ike pondered. It ... felt like ...more.



Gen. Dwight Eisenhower

LOCAL VOICES

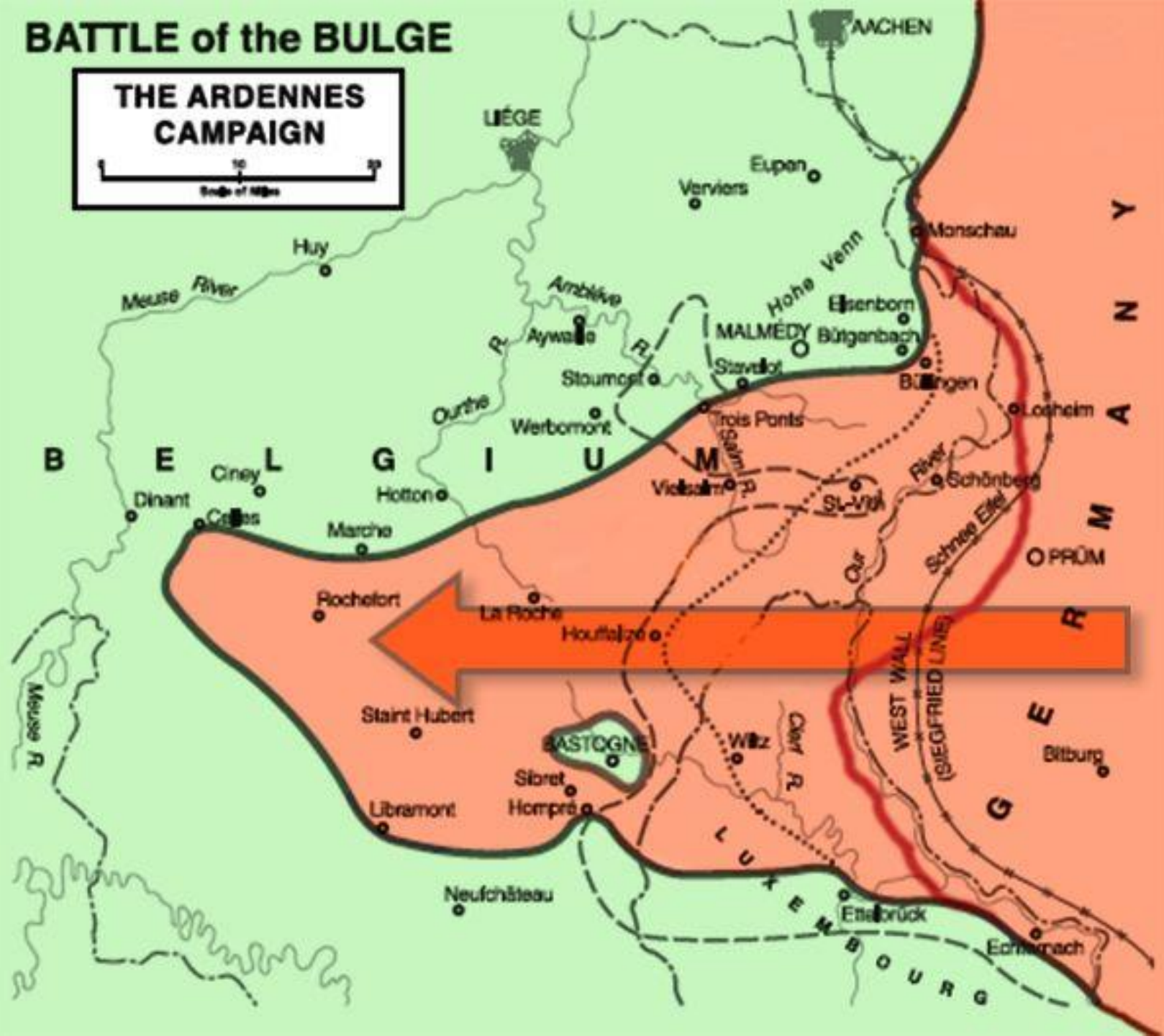
“We had a lot of artillery shellings. We went through strafings — many incidents. Every day was an adventure.”

– Harold Rathert, from Des Moines, Iowa, part of the 9th Infantry Division.



On Dec 17, 1944
Panzers had
overwhelmed the
overmatched
Americans.

Panzers were on their
way to the Meuse
river.





INITIAL CONTACT

John Phillips of Waterloo was ordered forward. Within moments, two friends are dead, another wounded, and Phillips has three rounds in his stomach.

The shot that would have hit his heart is stopped by a Bible.

CHOICES

As the reports continued to come in, and the front lines overwhelmed, the more Ike was certain it was an actual attack.

But ... what to do about it?



Gen. Dwight Eisenhower

CHOICES

American manpower was in short supply.

And the broad front he had pursued meant no real reserve existed.

No one had expected a counterattack.



Gen. Dwight Eisenhower



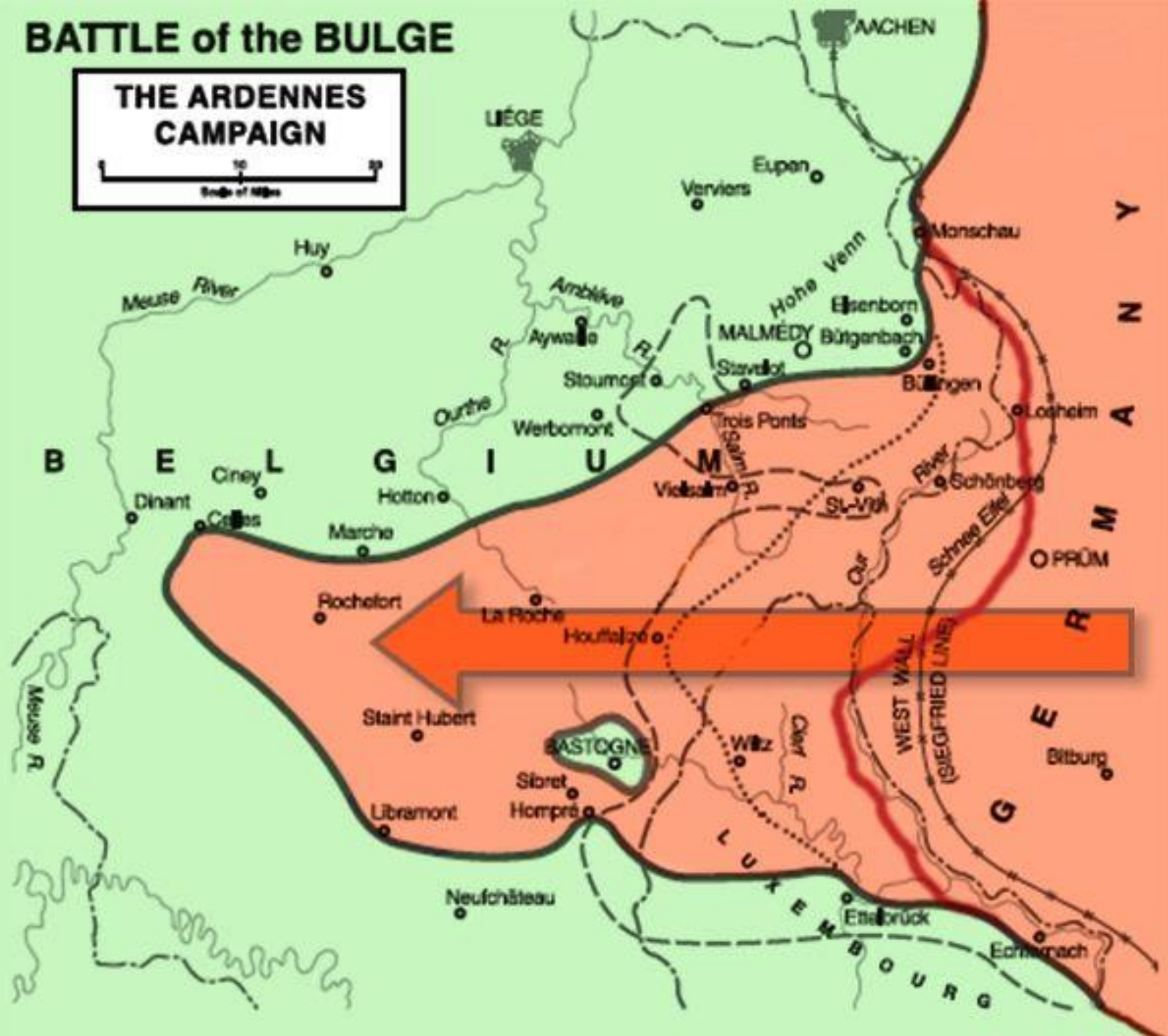
OTHER VOICES

“We can still lose this war.”

– General George Patton, 3rd Army

On Dec 17, 1944
Fighting is intense,
and brutal.

It would turn out to be
the coldest winter in
Europe thus far in the
20th Century.



DECEMBER 17, 1944

Kampfgruppe Peiper, an SS Panzer division from the East Front received the surrender of 84 Americans.

They executed them at the crossroads near Malmedy.



DECEMBER 17, 1944

In all, 362 soldiers, and 111 civilians would be murdered.

“The timetable did not allow for prisoners.”



DEC 17, 1944

But Ike is operating in a vacuum of information.

He overrules Bradley and Monty, and sends troops to St. Vith.

Not just any troops, ether. He sent the 82nd and 101st Airborne, and the 506th all of whom had been refitting after Market Garden.



Gen. Dwight Eisenhower

DEC 18, 1944

To Bastogne, he sends troops from the 10th Armored, as well.

They arrive on the 18th. Along with the lost 101st Airborne!

They immediately established barricades.



LOCAL VOICES

“We didn’t know where we were going when we loaded on the trucks. We only had the ammo we had brought out of Holland, and no winter clothes.”

– Milo Koehn, from Lexington, part of the 506th Infantry Division.





LOCAL VOICES

The 506th would meet the troops that the initial assault would send running.

“Turn back! They’ll kill you!” – **retreating soldiers to the 506th.**

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The 506th would meet the troops that the initial assault would send running.

“Turn back! They’ll kill you!” – retreating soldiers to the 506th.

The 506 had already survived D-Day and Market Garden. They helped themselves to their ammo and continued on to the front.





LOCAL VOICES

“Snow up to your knees. Snow under your butt.” And cold. Unrelenting cold.

-- **George Dane**



George Dane, 1945



LOCAL VOICES

“I think the cold was the worst, that’s 24 hours a day. We slept in fox holes down to 10-below, or more.”

– Harold Lindstrom, 75th Infantry Division, 2nd Battalion, 4th platoon.



LOCAL VOICES

“We dug in under the pines, and used #10 coffee cans with a mix of pine needles and dirt. We burned that to stay warm. You can imagine the smoke, and how we looked.”

– Sandlin Gillin

John Fuller, considered 'a natural leader whose calm manner and solid demeanor calms those around him,' answered a note from his mother back home in Cedar Falls, Iowa:

"Keep those home fires burning. Build 'em so hot we can feel 'em over here and don't worry — you'll be doing your part plenty."



DEC 17-21

Bastogne would be surrounded.

The Germans would stage multiple assaults, each repulsed.

And between the assaults -- constant shelling, snipers, and mortars attacks.



DEC 22, 1944

While the German assault continues to move forward, it is falling behind on the timetable.

And the surrounded U.S. troops at St. Vith and Bastogne still hold these two vital road junctions. They are preventing the rapid movement of added German troops to the front.



DEC 22

Bastogne, low on ammo, and low on food.

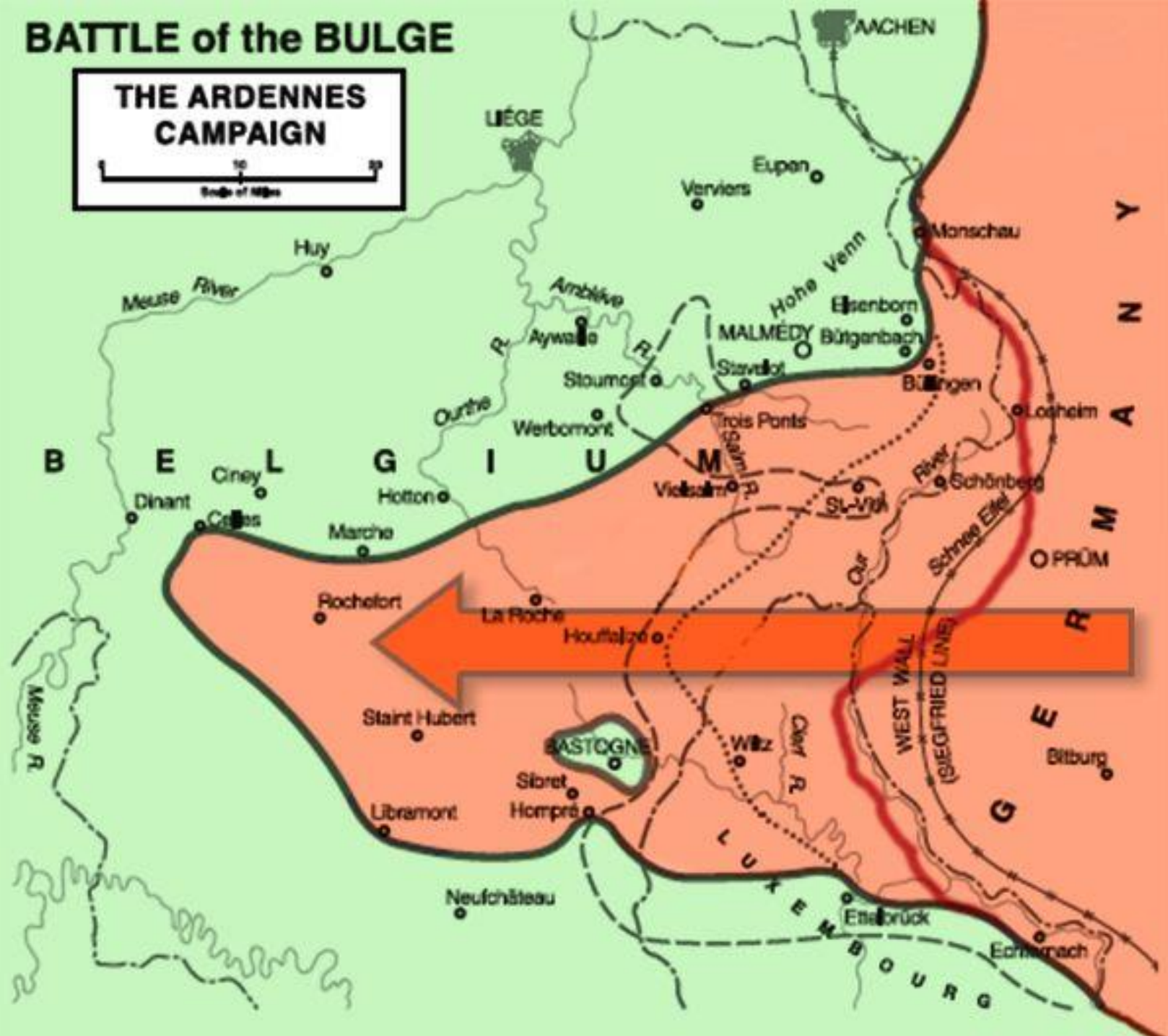
Germans send envoys to the town, to demand surrender.

“Aw, Nuts,” replied Brig. Gen. Anthony McAuliffe.



On Dec 23, 1944
The weather clears!

Allied planes take to the
skies and harass the
strung out lines of
Germans, forced to find
long difficult roads to
bypass the two Allied
held chokepoints.



DEC 23, 1944

Finding an opening, the Allied troops retreat from St. Vith.

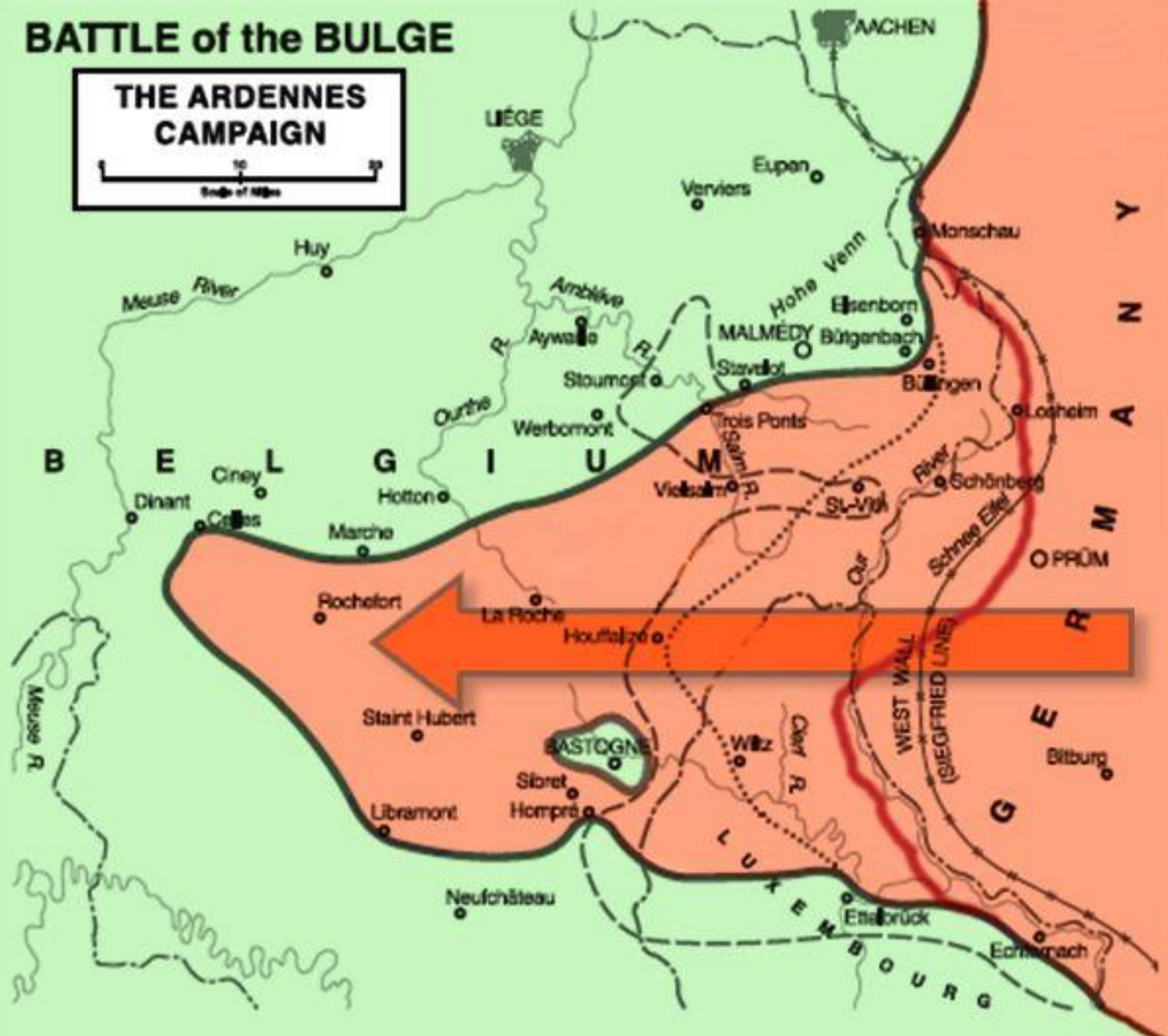
The edges of the American lines containing the bulge have broken, reformed, stretched, and ... yet they still hold.

Bastogne has become a lynchpin, choking the German push!



December 23 will mark the deepest penetration for the lead armored elements of the German Army.

They are stopped at Celles – they will not reach the Meuse.



DEC 24-25, 1944

The first of the Allied air drops bring ammo to the defenders of Bastogne.

“We were shelled. They didn’t get food to the front lines.”

– **Harold Rathert, Des Moines, Iowa**



**Not all would see the resupply
happen.**

**John Fuller died in the enemy shelling
the night of the 23rd.**



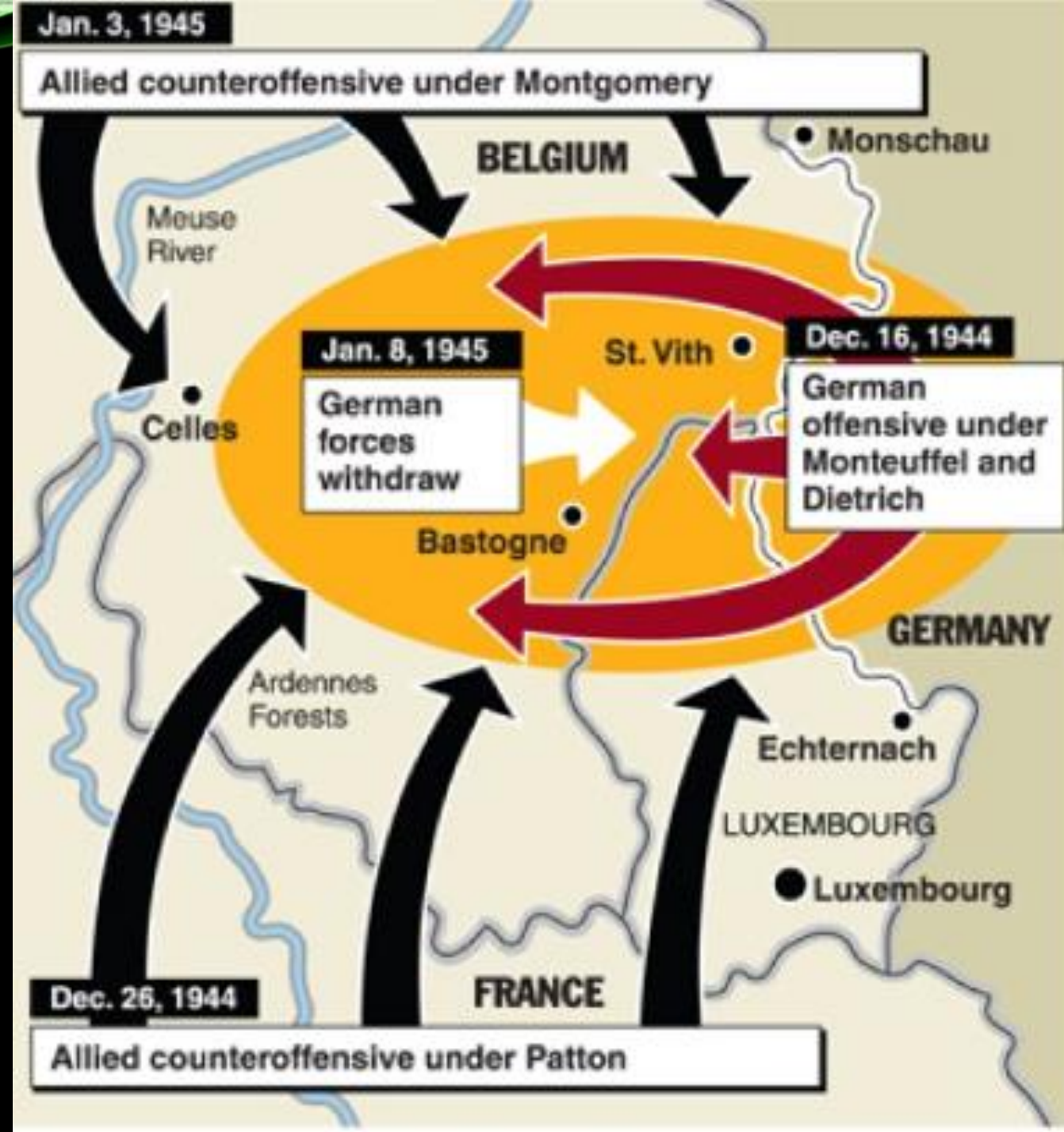
DEC 26-31, 1944

Dec 26th, lead elements of Patton's 3rd army reach Bastogne.

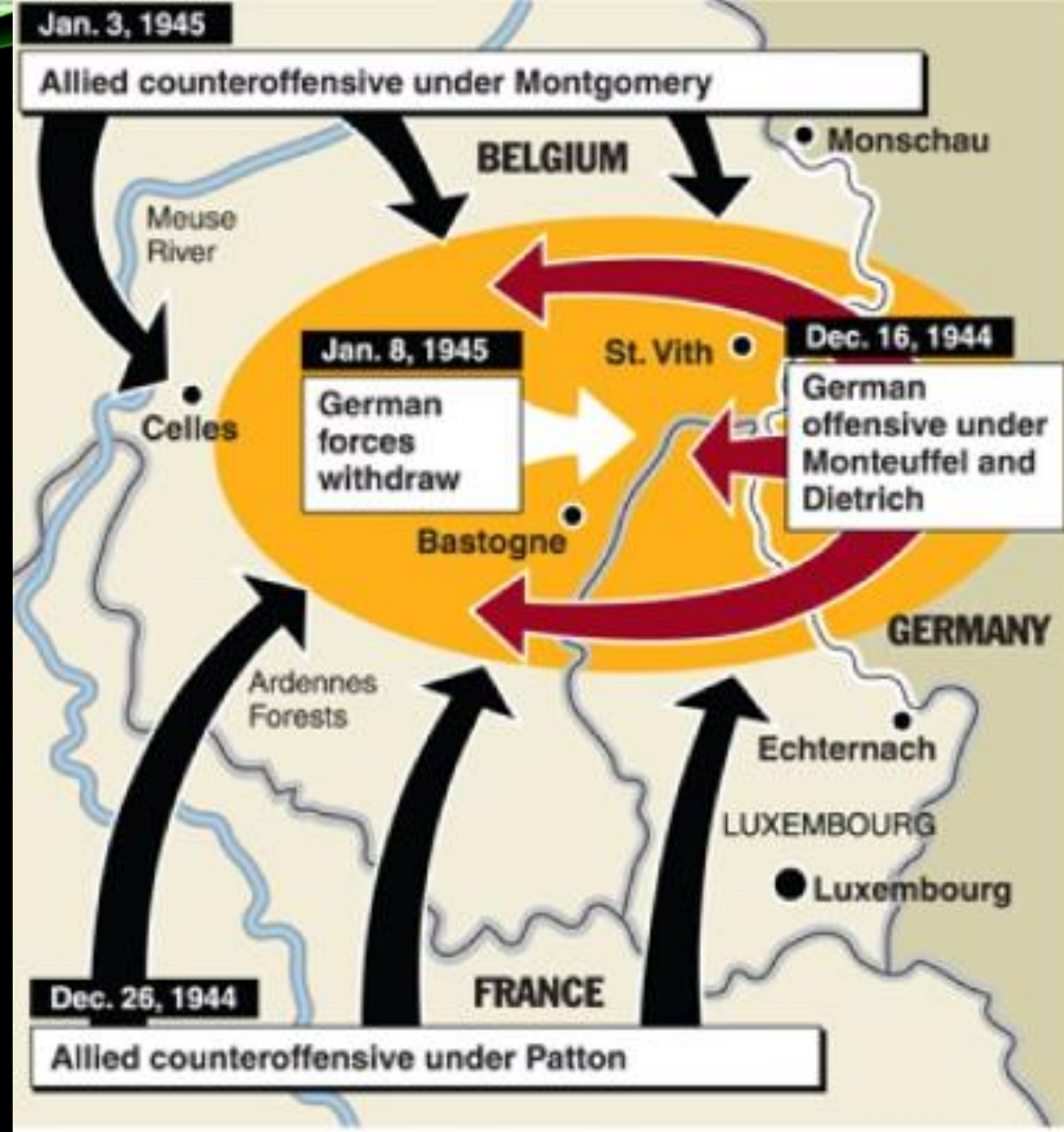
They will lift the siege – but heavy fighting there will continue for a week.



Ike also orders Montgomery's troops to pinch off the Germans, hoping to bag the remains of the three armies.



Once again, the weather rescues the German army, as heavy snows delay the advance and allow the Germans to retreat out of the closing trap.



GERMANY: A COSTLY LOSS

But the Germans cannot bring back destroyed tanks, the lost planes, nor can they retreat dead men or prisoners.

It is a costly lost for the Germans, which will change the course of the war going forward.



BULGE

Germans suffered perhaps as many as 200,000 casualties. Of those 110,000 were captured.

BULGE

Germans suffered perhaps as many as 200,000 casualties. Of those 110,000 were captured.

- They also lost 1400 tanks – high quality tanks, that were needed for defense on the Eastern front – and would not be there.**

OUTNUMBERED

“This is undoubtedly the greatest American battle of the war and will, I believe, be regarded as an ever-famous American victory.”

- Churchill

AMERICA: A COSTLY WIN

While Churchill is correct that it is the greatest battle, it is also the second most deadly series of battles in American History.

**8,000 men are dead
48,000 are wounded
21,000 are prisoners
(or missing)**

AMERICA: A COSTLY WIN

Some 20,000 injuries are due to the cold.

Harold Rathert would survive the battle, but almost lost his feet to frostbite.

THE REALITY, PART 1

“Hitler had sacrificed his last reserves and best armor on an essentially doomed enterprise.

The failure of the Ardennes offensive represented the last gasp of the Third Reich.”

--Prof. Thomas Childers

THE REALITY, PART 2

But -

The war would still require brave men giving their utmost for six more months.

WHY DO WE REMEMBER WWII?

“Every day, I try to think about all the things that I have been blessed with, especially my home, my family.”

“I owe my fellow comrades who paid the ultimate sacrifice my very best effort each day ...”

– – Harland D. Van Valkenburg, from Sioux City, Iowa

WHY DO WE REMEMBER WWII?

And of course, the real reason we have a program like this is because at 75, it has slipped from 'memory' to 'history.'

And if we don't teach it, they will only know the name, and nothing more.

CREATED BY RUSSELL GIFFORD



*Lifelong Learning Instructor,
Western Iowa Tech Community College,
Sioux City, Iowa 2004 – Present*

Siouxland: Ground Zero in the Great Depression

**IOWA AND THE
AMERICAN CIVIL WAR**
Keeping the Home Fires Burning:
The Impact of the Civil War in Iowa

Presented by Russ Gifford
Thursday, April 29; 7 p.m.
Cargill Auditorium No charge



BOOMER CLASSICS: Words that Changed the World

Third Week:

Monday,
10/22 6:30 PM

J.R.R.
TOLKIEN

Revisit the landmark literature and a handful of pivotal writers that influenced the 1960's. Are they still relevant? Join us as we search for clues of their continued value 50 years on.

As always, these seminars feature video and audio clips, with the sights and sounds of the 1960's.

by Russ Gifford

ber 29; 7 to 8:30 p.m.

The Institute for
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presents
"KHRUSHCHEV
IN IOWA"



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