

U.S. 1st, Third Link Front Split by Bulge

PARIS, Tuesday, Jan. 16 (UP) — American First army tanks drove into the stronghold of Houffalize in the heart of the Ardennes bulge Monday and joined forces with the Third army near the town, while to the east Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's troops resumed their advance across German soil, moving one and one-half miles through the Moselle valley.

The U. S. front, split by Marshal Kari Gerd von Rundstedt's mid-December surge, thus was being restored in the victorious climax of a costly, uphill struggle, and as the First army also carried the attack back to the vicinity of the Reich borders.

Opening a new drive toward St. Vith along the base of the bulge, two veteran and rested divisions of Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges' army gained more than one mile the first day, captured pivotal Ployonville, and struck within six miles of St. Vith itself, road bottleneck for Von Rundstedt's retreating panzers.

Faced by Armored Unit

Task Force "Y" of the First army's Second armored division was the first unit to enter Houffalize, holding within one-half mile of the town's exact center in house-to-house fighting with German troops who were putting up a last-man defense, dispatches from First army field headquarters said.

"The tanks reached the town in an advance of nearly three miles down the main road from Liege, and Third army units were three and one-half miles away on the south after capturing Novillo and advancing one-half mile beyond that point. The guns of the two armies had turned the remaining gap into a maelstrom of burning German tanks and trucks and scrambling enemy troops.

Patrols made the first contact between the two armies presumably just west of Houffalize, marking their first junction since the German sweep across the Ardennes cut their front communications.

Air Force Joins Action

Thanks to winds which swept away an early morning ground fog, the Ninth tactical air force got back into the air in support of the bulge battle and destroyed 12 tanks and 141 trucks during the day, bringing the two-day total to 52 and 440 in those respective categories.

In Alsace to the east, meanwhile, the Germans had suffered an estimated 14,000 casualties including 4000 men captured, in their two weeks of attacks against the U. S. Seventh army, but had opened a new assault, described as a "major" one, toward the key junction of Haguenau.

Fighting raged furiously Monday night in and around the town of Hatten, nine miles northeast of Haguenau, where two lighter German jabs had been thrown back during the day. The enemy now was reported intensifying the attack with tank and artillery support and was pouring in reinforcements.

Houffalize, a tiny town, but a strategic road hub, had been the nerve center of the Germans bulge front. With its fall imminent, Von Rundstedt's main panzer forces, including the First and Third army vice on the town, were streaming on eastward through St. Vith.

(See Page Four, Column Three)

1945-01-16 Yanks storm into St Vith PART ONE

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