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Peter Caddick-Adams, *Snow and Steel: The Battle of the Bulge, 1944-45*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015. Pp. lv, 872. ISBN 978-0-19-933514-5.

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The Battle of the Bulge, or Operation Herbstnebel (Autumn Mist), the December 1944 German counter-offensive against the Allies, ranks among the most researched military operations of the Second World War, particularly in the English-speaking world. Yet in *Snow and Steel*, Peter Caddick-Adams (UK Defence Academy) has crafted a superb, well organized narrative and novel analysis.

The book contains four parts. The first details the genesis of Herbstnebel, Allied intelligence, the failures that gave the Germans the advantage of surprise, and the nature of the opposing forces. Caddick-Adams explains why the German forces (nominal divisions) lacked the punch and fighting ability of their predecessors of just a year before. He also delves into the controversy over the planning stage of Adolf Hitler's counterstroke, arguing persuasively for an earlier date than conventional wisdom posits. Specifically, he believes planning began in the midst of the Battle for Normandy. This is enormously important, because it forces us to rethink Hitler's strategic goals in 1944-45 and clarifies how and why the war ended precisely in spring 1945. Also explored are the political, psychological, physical/medical, and personal factors that led Hitler to launch such an egregiously ill-advised attack:

in the midst of planning and executing the Ardennes campaign, Hitler's physical and mental faculties were excessively impaired: he slept little, was exhausted and subject to an extraordinary daily cocktail of drugs, which may partly explain the extreme risk-taking that the eventual plan entailed. Whatever the political logic, the Ardennes was not a sane venture and certainly not an operation that Hitler or OKW would have contemplated even a year earlier. (54)

Caddick-Adams offers a perceptive analysis of how the Allied response to logistical difficulties in late summer 1944 allowed their armies to react so effectively to a German counterattack. He explains that the Allied operation (codenamed "Market Garden") to outflank the Germans on the Rhine miscarried owing to difficult terrain. He leaves the reader to ponder how the German forces could possibly succeed in a similar operation in poorer weather with far fewer resources than the lavishly equipped Allies. Though much has been made of German fuel shortages during Herbstnebel, the author amply demonstrates that not lack of fuel so much as an inability to transport it where it was needed constituted the critical logistical failure among many others on the German side at war's end. Even those with some knowledge of such topics will value Caddick-Adams instructive discussion of the workings of Allied military intelligence. An engrossing investigation of the state of the three German armies deployed for Herbstnebel rounds out Part I. The analysis here is buttressed by interviews with over a hundred participants in the battle and the author's own inspections of the battlefields, which enliven the relevant archival material he draws on.

Parts II and III of *Snow and Steel* move on to the battle itself. Caddick-Adams adduces copious evidence of the futility of the German armies' attempt to reach Antwerp, which, at least in theory, might have trapped and crippled the Allied forces in Northwest Europe. As so often, German forces simply could not achieve the expansive, unrealistic goals they had been set—they lacked men trained for complex offensive mobile operations and had not properly reconnoitered prior to attack (so as to preserve the element of surprise). German officers had to act on far too compressed planning schedules, without either adequate signals capabilities or indispensable bridging equipment. As the author illustrates, a formerly preeminent combined-arms military machine was now a mere shadow of its former self, powerless even to deploy its various combat arms against badly overextended Allied defenders.

Most accounts of the Battle of the Bulge focus on the German Fifth and Sixth SS Panzer Armies. Caddick-Adams, however, gives equal time to the Seventh Army's attack, proving that the German command

might have inflicted significant damage on the US Twelfth Army Group by adding armored and bridging units to the Seventh and shifting the offensive to the south.

The US divisions that bore the brunt of Herbstnebel have received much deserved praise. But the author criticizes certain questionable operational level Allied command decisions and maintains that several maligned US units, such as the 106th Infantry Division, fought better (at least tactically) than they have been give credit for.

On the German side, previously lauded officers who commanded crucially important elements of the First SS Panzer Division¹ come in for heavy criticism here. The author excoriates Fritz Bayerlein for his dilatory march on Bastogne, when he wasted precious time in needless maneuvering on 18–19 December at the very gates of the thinly defended city. This gave the lead elements of the 101st Airborne Division the chance to roll in and stabilize the Allied hold on this vital transportation junction.

Part IV concerns the battle's aftermath, including the jostling for recognition and acclaim among Allied commanders. Though there is a brief examination of the war's final months in an operational sense, the remainder of the narrative focuses on the politics of an already fraying Allied alliance with the Soviet Union. This final section of the book also features a historiography of the battle in both film and print with a discussion of how these cultural touchstones have influenced western views of it.

Snow and Steel has its flaws. Caddick-Adams make some dubious assertions, for example, claiming that a US Hellcat tank destroyer was a match for a German King Tiger tank. He also argues that Joachim Peiper could easily have turned the flank of the US Ninety-ninth and Second Infantry Divisions on the Elsenborn ridge, opening the way for an advance by the Twelfth SS Panzer Division. True enough, but Peiper's assigned objective was to make a deep operational thrust behind the Allied lines.

Overall Peter Caddick-Adams has made an engaging, comprehensive, and discerning addition to an immense body of literature about one of the Second World War's most well documented battles. *Snow and Steel* will serve students of the war for decades to come as the standard history of the battle that decisively hastened Germany's capitulation in the final months of the Third Reich.

1. Notably Fritz Bayerlein's Panzer Lehr Division and Joachim Peiper's Kampfgruppe.