



No Silent Night: The Christmas Battle For Bastogne

Leo Barron , Don Cygan

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On Christmas Eve, the holiest of nights for the many Christian peoples of Europe, Adolf Hitler was unleashing the full fury of his remaining Luftwaffe bomber force on Bastogne.

For Bastogne was the holdout city, center of Allied resistance to his Wacht am Rhein (Watch on the Rhein) offensive—the German surprise attack in the west that would become known among the Allies as the Battle of the Bulge...

The battle that would result from Hitler's orders would become the climactic event of the Bastogne saga: a rapid-fire, desperate assault by overwhelming German armored might, defended in bloody struggles by the ragged and weapons-strapped GIs trapped in Bastogne. It would be either the last stand of the American defenders or the culmination of the German drive to capture the vital crossroads. Either way pointed to a climactic showdown—a desperate bloodbath in the snowy fields of Bastogne.

For hundreds of German and American soldiers facing off in the siege, the events of Christmas 1944 would destroy any sense of holiness and peace on earth. For the soldiers on both sides, and for the brave people of Bastogne, this would be no silent night.

No Silent Night: The Christmas Battle For Bastogne Details

Date : Published November 6th 2012 by NAL

ISBN : 9780451238139

Author : Leo Barron , Don Cygan

Format : Hardcover 432 pages

Genre : History, War, World War II, Military, Military History, Nonfiction, North American Hi..., American History, Military Fiction



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Drew MacGregor says

This is a decent narrative, culling different sources into a well told story. However it does read like a edited narrative...so and so "drummed his fingers", and other examples of minute detail are present. Overall it gives a snapshot of part of Christmas in Bastogne, a critical moment for the US Army. But it lacks as an overall history. Events such as the Malmedy Massacre are given a passing sentence, as are references to Germans in US uniforms. There are many more complete histories of the Bulge, and this falls between a complete story and an oral history.

Paul Lindstrom says

Amazing men.

Mike Kershaw says

Excellent account of the Christmas Day attempt by the Germany Army to take Bastogne. The authors have reconstructed the different units engaged in considerable detail -- in particular, drawing attention to those other units (Armor, Artillery, Tank Destroyers and Tactical Air) that did so much to support the 101st during this epic battle of World War II (much like Burgett's "Seven Roads to Hell"). They additionally follow several key German units involved in the attack which gives an added dimension to the story -- and why the Germans thought they could pull off such an audacious stroke at this late stage of the war. This book is to be commended on several levels, but chief amongst these is that all 'great' battles in the end are a series of small unit engagements. The authors faithfully follow a few characters and key units and provide copious and detailed maps to reconstruct the confused action. They also remind us, as Field Marshall Slim does in his classic treatise, "Victory into Defeat", that there comes a time in an engagement when the Generals realize they can do nothing and that the battle is essentially in the hands of their Regimental Officers. Thus, while General Officers on both sides are mentioned for perspective, it is the Regimental and Battalion Commanders who are critical in setting the stage for the action that in the end will be decided by Company Commanders, Squad Leaders, Tank Commanders and individual Soldiers on both sides. Finally, the book records the many frictions -- the weather, the inadequate communications, the incomplete orders, etc... that dominate combat and conspire to make it such a difficult endeavor. Because the book has focused on the tactical level of the battle, I would recommend reading any of the numerous accounts of either the Ardennes Counteroffensive or the Battle for Bastogne in particular to understand the larger picture. A superb book.

Jordan says

I received my copy of No Silent Night as part of the Goodreads FirstReads program.

In December of 1944, Hitler's Third Reich launched its last-ditch effort to stop the Allied advance--Wacht

am Rhein, or the offensive that would lead to the famed Battle of the Bulge. While this battle was more than overflowing with moments of drama and heroism, one of the most fascinating elements was the battle for the small crossroads town of Bastogne. As the German offensive was once more dependent on Blitzkrieg tactics, good roads were going to be essential for moving their armor, troops and supplies quickly to where they needed to be to support the frontline's advance deep into Allied territory. Quickly taking crossroads towns like Bastogne would be essential to the German advance--a fact that was not lost on the commanders of either side. While the German flood swept towards Bastogne, the Allied command hurriedly installed the 101st Airborne and any other stray troops they could find in defense of the town and its outlying villages, creating an island of Allied resistance that was quickly surrounded. If the defenders of Bastogne could hold out long enough, they could seriously impair the German offensive. If they failed, the Germans would have a direct supply line for their forward troops. Poorly supplied and seriously outnumbered, the defenders of Bastogne were in for a Christmas they would never forget.....

This book first caught my eye because I was passingly familiar with the story--it was featured in the stellar HBO/BBC miniseries Band Of Brothers (if you haven't seen that, go do so immediately!) Historical narratives have a reputation (not always deserved) of being dry and uninteresting for the non-historian, but I was pleased to find this was not the case with this book. The authors tell the story of Bastogne's defense from both sides, following both the American defenders and the German besiegers, and the style is very engaging. While the book is a secondary source, I suspect intended more for the general public than for academia, the authors have done quite a bit of original research including interviews with several of the key characters. I will undoubtedly mine their works cited section for some other works on the subject when I get the chance--several of the memoirs they cite look quite intriguing.

This is the first book either author has written, and I had never heard of either of them before, but the book was quite good. According to the dust jacket, Leo Barron has served in the 101st Airborne in Iraq, holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in history, and trains military intelligence officers for the US Army. Don Cygan is a history teacher and journalist.

Content: PG-13 for language and violence. Soldiers' language can be a bit salty, and this is a narrative about war. On the whole its not too gruesome, but there are a couple occasions that are a bit disturbing and illustrate the horror of war.

Frederick Danysh says

A history of the siege at Bastogne during World War II based on interviews and letters of men who took part. Numerous other sources were used as well and the work is extensively end-noted. A very interesting read.

Dean says

This is a great read for the history enthusiast and historical wargamer.

The book begins with a short overview of the rationale and planning leading up to the Battle of the Bulge, with the majority of the book then being focused very specifically on Bastogne, and the villages around it. The stories of the participants are blended throughout in an engaging manner, with views of the battle from

higher levels of command as well as from the men (and civilians) in the thick of the action. The authors do a nice job of providing the context of the importance of Bastogne crossroads to the overall German plan of attack.

The perspective switches back and forth between the German and the American, allowing the reader to understand more about what both sides were experiencing. One of the organizational mechanisms used in the book that I liked, is the way in which each chapter is further defined by specific dates and times. This makes following the action of several story threads easily done.

For the historical wargamer this book is full of good scenario options, providing enough detail to generate the orders of battle and objectives, along with some excellent descriptions of the terrain.

The pacing and development of the battle in *No Silent Night, The Christmas Battle for Bastogne* is well done, and I was thoroughly engaged throughout.

I am happy to recommend it.

Michael Gerald says

I have known of the German siege of the Belgian town of Bastogne during the so-called Battle of the Bulge in December 1944 through other books and the Stephen Ambrose book-turned-HBO mini-series "Band of Brothers". This book explains in more detail the circumstances behind the siege and the different units, both American and German, involved in the battle.

Popular notion may seem to portray the American defense of Bastogne as solely done by the paratroopers of the 101st Airborne Division. But as this book shows, the paratroopers were not alone. Other units, especially the glidermen, the tank destroyers, and the artillery, all helped save Bastogne from capture by the Germans and prevented the latter from having a hub of major roads in and out of that town.

A note to Goodreads: the book was written not just by Leo Barron; Don Cygan is a co-author.

James Williams-ness says

While not a full history of the "Battle of the Bulge", Barron's tale of the German Christmas offensive is a broader view of the battle than either Alex Kershaw's excellent "The Longest Winter" or Ambrose's narrow telling of the battle in "Band of Brothers". This is an excellent read for anyone wishing to get a bigger overview of the start of the German offensive and the first days of the battle.

Kathleen says

I read this book because after my grandfather died I had a sudden urge to know more about the battles that he fought in during the War. I've never really read a history book like this, so the details were a little overwhelming for me. I did enjoy learning about how the Americans won the battle.

Charlie says

This is the battle of the Bulge fight. Some call it the battle for Bastogne.

What- ever you want to call it the battle was bloody and calculated at every corner. The Germans thought they knew how to easily take Bastogne but on the other hand, the Americans knew how to defend and be the offensive power when need be.

This is a well put together story of the battle from the German side and the American side. At times I felt like too much information was inserted. But that's how wars and sporting games are won and lost. Need that info. Yes, it is a good book to read about the Christmas Battle For Bastogne.

Jerry says

This is a great look at the battle for Bastogne. Barron does a masterful job creating the scenes on both sides of the battle, US and German. Relying on first hand accounts to create his narrative, Barron's look at both sides will leave you amazed at the bravery and heroism demonstrated by the defenders. You even get to walk beside the German commanders, and watch them realize the impossibility of victory against the Allies, both in Bastogne and in the overall war.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys a good history book that reads like a novel. You won't be disappointed with this.

John E says

An admirable study of the battle from the individual's point of view. From Private in their frozen foxholes to Field Marshal in thier castles, the book give a well-organized and well-written presentation of the confusion, frustrations, and terror of the World War II battlefield. The authors do a great job on integrating the text and the maps (although the placement of the map pages could have been a little better) and of keeping the big picture and immediate action in clear perspective.

Mike Mages says

A well written book about the strategic planning and horrific reality of war. This book goes into great detail to explain how the Battle for Bastogne would happen. I enjoyed how the authors would put you on the American side and explain things from their point of view and a few pages later you would be given everything from the Germans point of view. I also enjoyed how the book was presented as a narrative rather than all the facts thrown at the reader at once. Again, this book is well written, very educational, and an all around great read. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in World War II, history, or war.

Steve says

An excellent account on the Battle for Bastogne that was fought around Christmas 1944. The Germans attacked the town in Belgium in what became known as the Battle of the Bulge. The Americans-Especially the 101st Airborne were surrounded and outnumbered but however did not give in to surrender especially when the German commander sent a message to the American officer of the 101st General McCauliffe to surrender which he replied NUTS!!! A enjoyable read and like how it was broken down by the dates and day by day during the battle.

Don says

The story focuses on the efforts of the 101st Airborne's 327th Glider Infantry Regiment in the defense of Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. The 101st famously got this important Ardennes Forest crossroads before the Germans making it impossible for them to focus on crossing the Meuse River that could have reeked havoc far behind the Allied lines.

The Germans had to take the town at all cost to save any chance of winning the battle. They had the town surrounded and decided that the segment of the line held by the 327th was the weakest.

It was at this segment that the Germans arrived to demand the town's surrender and received the famous "Nuts" reply.

The book focuses on the German effort to break through the 237th on Christmas Day 1944. The Germans outnumbered and outgunned the Americans but the Americans were better soldiers and had better leaders and tactics.

The author recognizes that not all readers are familiar with World War 2 army tactics and weapons so he tells the story in a way to engage all levels of readers.

He tells the perspective from both the German and American perspective by telling events from the soldiers who were there.
