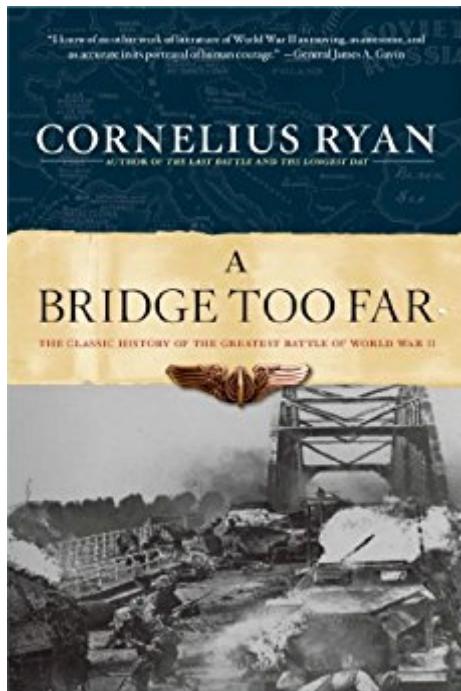


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A Bridge Too Far: The Classic History Of The Greatest Battle Of World War II



Synopsis

The classic account of one of the most dramatic battles of World War II. A Bridge Too Far is Cornelius Ryan's masterly chronicle of the Battle of Arnhem, which marshalled the greatest armada of troop-carrying aircraft ever assembled and cost the Allies nearly twice as many casualties as D-Day. In this compelling work of history, Ryan narrates the Allied effort to end the war in Europe in 1944 by dropping the combined airborne forces of the American and British armies behind German lines to capture the crucial bridge across the Rhine at Arnhem. Focusing on a vast cast of characters "from Dutch civilians to British and American strategists to common soldiers and commanders" Ryan brings to life one of the most daring and ill-fated operations of the war. A Bridge Too Far superbly recreates the terror and suspense, the heroism and tragedy of this epic operation, which ended in bitter defeat for the Allies.

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Customer Reviews

I shall assume that everyone reading this review has seen the movie made of this book: with an all-star cast including Sean Connery, Michael Caine and Robert Redford among many others, it's rather hard to miss. I was expecting to find all sorts of inaccuracies in the movie exposed in this book. But while there indeed were a few inaccuracies, the movie is surprisingly true to the book,

down to verbatim accounts herein, such as Major Cook (played by Redford in the movie) and his 82nd airborne troopers crossing the Waal to seize the other side of the bridge at Nijmegen with rifles as oars, under heavy Jerry mortar fire, synchronising the rowing to "Hail Mary-full of Grace-Hail Mary-full of Grace."- One might add that it's the only fully successful Allied action one finds here. More importantly, the movie does capture the spirit of the operation as a whole, especially the valiant tenacity of the airborne troops. And, if you thought the movie was too bloody, you will only be convinced that it didn't show the gore and confusion of war as fully as it might have. Despite some reservations - to which I shall get around in due course - this book is a sorely needed one. Market-Garden is carefully swept under the carpet in both British and American accounts of the war, as is the "hedgerow war" fought after D-Day. In fact, when I first saw the movie (at age 11 or 12), I thought it was some sort of fiction! As one born and educated in England, I can't help but seeing Monty's fiasco here as an act in what the Brits at the time (Monty and Churchill especially) saw as a tragedy: The crumbling British Empire. Also, there's Monty's peculiar situation. It's very hard to convey to Americans.

Famed author Cornelius Ryan has a unique and appealing way of telling a story that makes his books quite unique, and this huge best seller is no exception. He lets the disastrous story of the wrong-headed Allied decision to risk an immense day-light paratrooper drop with "thunderclap surprise" (catching the Germans with their proverbial pants down) for the first time in the European campaign unfold as an ill-conceived effort to capture a series of bridges critical to a fast and successful prosecution of the Allied thrust into the heart of Germany. This tale retelling the Allied miscalculation of potential German resistance and the speed with which they could proceed up the one road needed to support the airdropped forces is a riveting tale. Its total cost in terms of human life and unnecessary destruction is a cautionary lesson for history. Like his other books, this is a story told at every level, but concentrating on the faithful recollections of the actual participants in the action. Thus, the reader is swept into the action as we get a voyeur's view of the moment-to-moment development of the story as it unfolds in all its horrific detail. There is a cornucopia of information presented here, and Ryan's approach is scrupulously faithful to the facts, all of them, regardless of the source. Therefore, there is a great deal of attention paid to the recollections and experiences of the German armed forces and noncombatants as well as the Allied invaders. Unlike some other efforts on this subject, there is no apparent effort here to color the results and make the Allies more circumspect and less provocative in making and activating their ill-conceived plans.

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