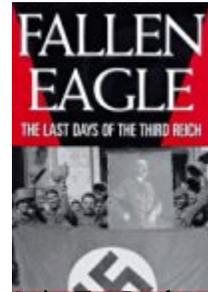


# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Robin Cross. *Fallen Eagle: The Last Days of the Third Reich*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996. vi + 282 pp. \$24.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-471-16408-1.

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In recent years there has been considerable interest in the final stages of World War II in Europe. New information from Soviet archives has led to the publication of several books such as David Glantz and Jonathan House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler*, and Ada Petrova and Peter Watson, *The Death of Hitler*, which contribute significantly to our knowledge of the Third Reich's collapse. Unfortunately, little of this new material has been incorporated into Robin Cross's *Fallen Eagle: The Last Days of the Third Reich*.

This work provides an overview of the last months of the war, primarily from an Allied perspective. Following two brief introductory chapters the author addresses Soviet preparations for the offensive of January 1945. He then devotes two chapters to the Red Army's Vistula-Oder Operation. A chapter on the air war follows, focusing almost exclusively upon the destruction of Dresden in February 1945. The following two chapters deal with the advance of the Western Allies, beginning in September 1944 with the failure of Operation Market-Garden and continuing until the crossing of the Rhine. The three final chapters cover the Battle of Berlin and the final collapse of Nazi Germany. The book has two brief appendices. The first (four pages) gives technical data on a few of the main weapons used by each side. The second (eight pages) provides brief biographical sketches of some of the leading individuals discussed in the text.

Although the dust jacket claims that the work is one of "impeccable scholarship," there is little evidence to support this claim. There are no footnotes, and only a two-page bibliography with several glaring omissions. One searches in vain for a single journal article or mention of relevant works such as Dmitri Volkogonov's *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy*, Alan Bullock's *Hitler and*

*Stalin: Parallel Lives* or Tony LeTisser's *The Battle of Berlin*. Instead of these works, the bibliography includes four books by Charles Whiting and two by the notorious David Irving. Aside from eight books in German, two in Russian and one in French, all other sources listed are in English, and none were published after 1991. Instead of notes the author provides less than two pages of acknowledgments, noting some, but by no means all, direct quotations. Also listed on the acknowledgments page are two diaries and an unpublished manuscript from the Imperial War Museum. The overwhelming majority of Cross's information appears to come from older secondary sources and memoirs.

This book will be of interest to the general reader despite the lack of scholarly apparatus. Cross writes well, and includes several excerpts from diaries to lend a "feel" for individuals' perceptions of the events under discussion. He is effective at presenting Allied planning and decision making, but less so in the case of the Germans. Unlike many authors, Cross does not minimize the accomplishments of Soviet armies, giving them due credit for the destruction of the bulk of Germany's land forces. He does a particularly fine job of showing tensions between British and American generals in this stage of the war. Unfortunately, there is relatively little on the relations between the Soviets and their Anglo-American allies. His account of Yalta shows Stalin firmly in control of an ailing FDR and a distracted and depressed Churchill. Cross provides a sound analysis of several aspects of the war during this period. For example, he gives a good description of Soviet deception measures prior to the January 1945 offensive. His evaluation of German operations in Kurland and Hungary is brief, but accurate.

There are several errors which careful editing could

have avoided. Alfred Jodl becomes Alfried Jodl (p. 8), the Wartegau becomes the Wartegan (p. 88), and Field Marshal Ferdinand Schoerner supposedly received the order to surrender on 7 March instead of 7 May 1945 (p. 273). *Fallen Eagle* also contains several factual errors. Cross places Schoerner in Munich when he received word of the surrender (p. 236), when he actually was still with Army Group Center in Czechoslovakia (although Schoerner soon boarded a plane for flight to the West). In addition, Cross claims that Soviet General Andrei Vlasov, who headed the so-called Russian Liberation Movement, was captured in May 1942 near Sevastopol (pp. 14, 103). In fact, Vlasov was captured by the Germans in July 1942 in the Volkhov pocket (south of Leningrad), at the

other end of the Russian front. The author also confuses Hitler's personal testament with his political testament, and incorrectly claims that in this document Hitler expelled Albert Speer from the Nazi Party (p. 236).

In conclusion, the book presents a lively and interesting summary of the final phase of the war, but its use will be limited to the general reader. Scholars will continue to turn elsewhere for accounts of the end of the Third Reich.

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