H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

**Ken Ford.** *The Rhineland 1945: The Final Push into Germany.* Westport: Praeger, 2004. 96 pp. $35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-275-98269-0.

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## Great Pictures

Osprey Publishing has added another volume to the Praeger Illustrated Military History Series with the release of Ken Ford's *The Rhineland 1945: The Final Push into Germany.* Trained as an engineer and currently employed as a bookseller, Ford has written accounts of the Dieppe and St. Nazaire commando raids, the D-Day landings, and the crossing of the Seine river in 1944. *The Rhineland 1945* is based on secondary sources and does not include footnotes or endnotes. Like other volumes in the series, *The Rhineland 1945* uses photographs, detailed maps, and illustrations to augment a brief text. Although it includes some first-hand accounts of the fighting, the narrative concentrates on the movement of divisions, brigades, and other military formations. The result is a concise summary of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's campaign to clear the western bank of the Rhine river in north-west Germany between February and March of 1945.

Using British, Canadian, and American forces under his command, Field Marshal Montgomery planned to seize the west bank of the Rhine river between Cologne and Arnhem in two steps. Launched on February 8, 1945, Operation "Veritable" called for the Canadian First Army to advance strike south-east from Nijmegan toward the German city of Wesel. Although delayed by flooding, the U.S. Ninth Army began Operation "Grenade" on February 23, crossed the Roer river, moved north-east, and eventually met Canadian troops at the German town of Geldern. Once he reached the Rhine, Montgomery planned to thrust the Second British Army into the heart of Hitler's Germany and destroy Hitler's Thousand-Year Reich. Unable to match the Allies in terms of men or material, opposing German commanders tried to block the Allied advance by flooding the region. Poor local roads could not support heavy vehicle traffic, hampered the Allied advance, and aided German defenses. Fighting under miserable weather conditions, American and British soldiers marched over soggy terrain without much support from armored formations or air power. Canadian and American troops reached their objectives on March 3, prepared to cross the Rhine, and planned for the final stage of the Second World War.

Given the length of this short work, Ford cannot place his narrow study in the context of the broader war. Top-

ics such as Eisenhower's decision to advance on a broad front and Montgomery's methodical style of command receive cursory treatment. Even though the Second World War was drawing to a close in March 1945, Allied troops pressed home their attacks while many of their German counterparts fought to the bitter end. Readers can only wonder why soldiers fought so tenaciously during the final months of the war. History buffs may appreciate the many pictures included in *The Rhineland 1945*, but scholars should look elsewhere for insight. Students looking for an overview of the final year of the Second World War might wish to consult general works like *A World at Arms* by Gerhard Weinberg or *A War to be Won* by Murray and Williamson.[1] Specialists would be better served by examining recent books by Robin Neillands, H. Dieter Arntz, or Denis Whitaker.[2]

Notes

[1]. Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World At Arms: A Global History or World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[2]. Robin Neilland, *Conquest of the Reich: D-Day to VE-Day: A Soldiers' History* (New York: New York University Press, 1995); H. Dieter Arntz, *Kriegsende 1944/45: Zwischen Ardennen und Rhein* (Euskirchen: Kuempel, 1985); W. Denis Whitaker and Shelagh Whitaker, *Rhineland: The Battle to End the War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

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