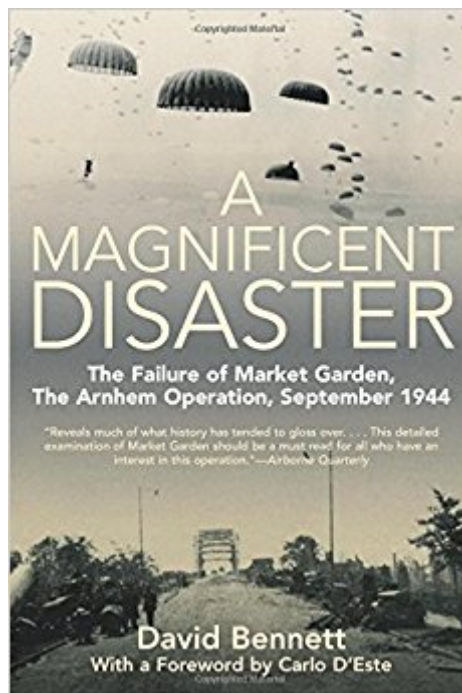




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A Magnificent Disaster: The Failure Of Market Garden, The Arnhem Operation, September 1944



Synopsis

After Normandy, the most spectacular Allied offensive of World War II was Operation Market Garden, which saw three divisions of paratroopers dropped behind German lines, to be joined by massive armored columns breaking through the front. The ultimate object was to seize a crossing over the Rhine to outflank the heartland of the Third Reich and force a quick end to the war. The Operation utterly failed, of course, as the 1st British Airborne was practically wiped out, the American 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions became tied down in vicious combat for months, and the vaunted armored columns were foiled at every turn by improvisational German defenses. In many circles the battle has become known as "Hitler's last victory." In this work, many years in the making, Professor Bennett puts forward a complete, balanced and comprehensive account of the British, American, Polish, Canadian and German actions, as well as the strategic background of the Operation in a way not yet done. He shows, for example, that rather than a bridgehead over the Rhine, Montgomery's ultimate aim was to flank the Ruhr industrial area from the north. The book also deals as never before with the key role of all three Corps of British Second Army, not just Horrocks' central XXX Corps. For the first time, we learn the dramatic, untold story of how a single company of Canadian engineers achieved the evacuation of 1st Airborne's survivors back across the Rhine when all other efforts had failed. Also revealed is the scandal of how Polish General Sosabowski was humiliated, insulted and dismissed by the mendacious hostility of the British military authorities. And the book shows, too, how the Operation would have failed at the outset but for the brilliant soldiery of the two American airborne divisions who overcame a variety of odds to achieve their objectives. Respectfully nodding to "A Bridge Too Far" and other excellent works on Market Garden, the author has interviewed survivors, walked the ground, and performed prodigious archival research to increase our understanding of the battle. From the actions of the lowliest soldier to the highest commander, Allied and German, the Operation develops in highly readable style, with the author's expert analysis unveiling new insights at every step. www.magnificentdisaster.com

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Customer Reviews

"Reveals much of what history has tended to gloss over. This detailed examination of Market Garden should be a must read for all who have an interest in this operation." (Airborne Quarterly)"an informative volume provides a wealth of detail. It will make a valuable addition to your collection if you're an enthusiast of Market Garden or the ETO in WWII" (Armorama)"the first to put forward a complete, balanced, and strategic account of all forces involved and provides us with a new perspective on the many errors and conflicts of the campaign." (Best of Britain(UK))"an amazing, utterly captivating and enthralling account the amount of research he's put into this book phenomenal. One of the most readable accounts of a second world war campaign I have ever read." (BOOKS MONTHLY UK)"a readable yet thorough history that should make a great addition to any World War Two history shelf." (Internet Modeler)"brings previously overlooked details of a battle I thought I knew a lot about. I didn't expert analysis, unveiling new insights at every step." (IPMS)"To be sure, the basic story has been told many times however we never get the full story Bennett brings the Polish, Canadian, and German actions into the campaign in new and significant ways. He has done his homework. He has mined the archives, walked the ground, talked with participants of the campaign, and painted the strategic picture more thoroughly than in previous works a fine book." (Military History of the West)"interesting appendices and a most complete bibliography, making this probably one of the finest works on the subject yet done both informative and entertaining I give my highest recommendation for a superb read." (MODEL MADNESS)"A fresh look at the disastrous operation in the Netherlands that led to devastating losses among British and Polish airborne troops a concise look at the critical events during the operation (NYMAS)well researched and excellently written account which raises many good points and invites a great deal of comment... challenges(the reader)... provides us with a modern appreciation of the battle. (War Books Out Now)"a smooth, concise account of the battle's major phases and turning

points, well spiced with vignettes from the tactical level conclusions are well supported a fine foreword by Carlo D'Este.. Demonstrat(es) that even well-studied campaigns can use a fresh look. (WORLD WAR II MAGAZINE) "An interesting well researched and different perspective of The Market Garden Operation" (WWII Connection) "Immaculately researched The wealth of detail is exceptional. (The Book Bag) "an incredibly detailed examination of why who and what exactly went wrong in September 1944 a war chest of obscure delights fantastic photos A great book on a hugely famous battle. (Military Modelcraft International) "the best balanced account of the failure of the biggest airborne attack of all time (Irresistible Targets)

DAVID BENNETT was educated at Christ's Hospital School and Sidney Sussex College Cambridge, where he took history and philosophy. He holds a Ph.D in philosophy from McGill University. He spent much of his working life in the labor movement, ending his career in 2006 as National Director of Health, Safety and Environment at the Canadian Labour Congress. He is widely published in the areas of workplace health and environmental protection and has published several articles, op-ed pieces and reviews on the Second World War.

This book is detailed and thoroughgoing in its coverage of this major Allied failure in World War II. The high-level analysis of the causes is very revealing of the personalities of the military leadership involved.

This account of Market-Garden does not measure up to others in spite of a good try. The narrative is somewhat difficult to follow, and the sweep of the battle is lost in the details. Some of the photos are good, but sometime, somewhere, someone will produce a book showing photos of all of the bridges, crossing sites, road features and general terrain features so the battlefield can be truly be pictured by the reader. Unfortunately, this does not happen in this book, nor are the maps sufficiently detailed to be of much use. The author's assessment of Montgomery's fecklessness in attempting to plan this operation in a single week while ignoring the 15th Army on his left shoulder and neglecting to clear the Scheldt is not only accurate but welcome. The supply problem was of Montgomery's making, not as he attempted to imply, that he lost the battle because the Americans did not support his sufficiently or that Patton siphoned off supplies that he (Montgomery) should have received. The whole plan was a fantasy, as was the idea of a subsequent drive on Berlin by

Montgomery at the head of his troops. The author makes a number of points that improve and validate his presentation. He makes clear that against composite units thrown into the battle by the Germans, none above battle group size, the British were outfought and simply too slow in going from one phase of the battle to another. Horrocks did not lead from the front, and he failed to urge his troops forward at any time in the battle. As always, a lack of leadership brings failure. By contrast, the two American airborne divisions acquitted themselves extremely well under close, "up front" leadership, and it was due to their heroics that the operation accomplished as much as it did. The treatment of General Sosabowski by Essame, Myers, Taylor (of the DCLI), Horrocks, Browning and Montgomery was horrible, and they actively attempted to use him as a scapegoat for their own deficiencies. Even worse was Montgomery's spreading of falsehoods with respect to the Polish Brigade's performance. I still recommend Ryan's "A Bridge Too Far" for the Allied side, and Robert Kershaw's "It Never Snows In September" for the German side. Author Bennett does a creditable job, but with the poor editing and the impossibility of following the action with sufficient spatial cognition to make the reader feel like he understands what's happening, I cannot go higher than three stars.

Would have liked a little more from the German side, but if you want that, you need to read "It never snows in September".

The first balanced account of this campaign I have read. De-bunks many of the myths of this operation, and, while giving the British 1st Airborne great credit for courage, the first I have read to appropriately criticize the British performance at Arnhem. Kudos!

This is a fairly detailed tactical account of operation Market Garden, the allies attempt to establish a bridgehead over the Rhine in late 1944 by capturing a series of bridges using massed airborne forces. On the positive side, the author, who from his bio appears to be an amateur military historian, offers a detailed account of the operation primarily from the allied viewpoint but using sufficient German material to give a sense of the "other side of the hill". The narrative is often a little jerky, jumping around rapidly from unit to unit. However this is probably inevitable when describing a battle that involved three separate airborne areas of operation and a ground force component. The author offers his opinions freely during the text, though none of these are particularly surprising to anyone who has studied this battle. The flaw in the book and the reason for my mediocre rating is the lack of any detailed maps. The author provides three high level maps which do little to assist the reader in

visualizing the events described in the text. When describing action at the detailed, tactical level good maps are essential and their absence seriously degrades the book's value as a battle history. Other flaws include: very little background on the strategic situation, although this would not be a problem for anyone who is already familiar with the military history of WWII; minor but irritating editorial errors; and one or two apparent errors of fact. An example of the latter occurs on pages 75-78 where the author states that the British had around 750 men at the Arnhem road bridge. Yet earlier he had stated the Frost's battalion (the main unit at the bridge) had only 481 men and only two of his three companies (300-350 men) actually arrived at the bridge. Despite the author noting that other units later arrived at the bridge it is not completely clear where the additional 400 men came from. In summary, if you have a high degree of interest in Market Garden this book may be useful to you in providing a more detailed account than is available in other works and by providing at least a little of the German viewpoint, but it is compromised by the lack of maps to support the text.

Well written book, but totally lacking in maps. Detailed explanations of complex maneuvers and tactical dispositions are not supported by maps. Even if you know where Eindhoven, Driel and Arnhem are located, make yourself a sketch map to follow the dialogue. If you are unfamiliar with the locations of these cities get a good road map and follow the narrative. The author also mixes his discussions with the names of American, British, Polish and German force actions. While a technique to keep the reader interested, it can be confusing without a map and diagram of the given orders of battle. His description of the action as British forces close on the Rhine is superb and very detailed. I only wished that he would have supplemented his text with maps and diagrams.

Thank you. Book in great shape.

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