



Fatal Decision: Anzio and the Battle for Rome

Carlo D'Este

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Fatal Decision is a powerful, dramatic, moving, and ultimately definitive narrative of one of the most desperate campaigns of World War II. In the winter of 1943-44, Anzio, a small Mediterranean resort and port some thirty-five miles south of Rome, played a crucial role in the fortunes of World War II as the target of an amphibious Allied landing. The Allies planned to bypass the strong German defenses along the Gustav Line and at Monte Cassino sixty miles to the southeast, which were holding up the American and British armies and preventing the liberation of Rome. By taking advantage of Allied command of the sea and air to effect complete surprise, infantry and armored forces landing at Anzio on January 22 were expected to secure the beachhead and then push inland to cut off the two main highways and railroads supplying the German forces to the south, either trapping and annihilating the German armies or forcing them to withdraw to the north, thus opening the way to Rome.

But the reality of one of the most desperate campaigns of World War II was bad management, external meddling, poorly relayed orders, and uncertain leadership. The Anzio beachhead became a death trap, with Allied troops forced to fight for their lives for four dreadful months. The eventual victory in May 1944 was muted, bitter, and overshadowed by the Allied landings in Normandy on June 6. Mixing flawless research, drama, and combat with a brilliant narrative voice, *Fatal Decision* is one of the best histories ever written of a World War II military campaign.

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