



# Remagen 1945: Endgame against the Third Reich (Campaign)

*Steven J. Zaloga*

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Following the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes, the Allies began steps for the final assault into Germany. The long-delayed US Army thrust over the Roer River, Operation Lumberjack, finally took place in February, placing the US Army along the Rhine. The Rhine represented the last major geographical barrier to the Allied advance into Germany. The plan was for Montgomery's 21st Army Group to leap the Rhine into the Ruhr in a carefully choreographed attack called Operation Plunder. In the event, fortune smiled on the US Army when the 9th Armored unexpectedly found that the Ludendorff bridge at Remagen had not yet been demolished by the Wehrmacht, leaving this one major crossing over the Rhine intact. An armored infantry team supported by the new Pershing tanks stormed the bridge, seized it in fierce fighting and disarmed the charges placed on it. They then held it against numerous counterattacks in which the Germans used conventional tactics and unconventional, including jet bombers, V-2 missiles, and frogmen.

Remagen was not the only impromptu Rhine crossing made by the US Army in central Germany but it was the most dramatic and hardest fought. The irrepressible George Patton, in spite of instructions to stay put, snuck an infantry division across the Rhine in the south, setting the stage for the race into Germany. After reinforcing their two major Rhine crossings, the US Army launched its late-March offensive, encircling Frankfurt, and setting the stage for the defeat of the Wehrmacht in the West. This is a gripping, authoritative account of a crucial battle during the last major set-piece operation of World War II (1939-1945).

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