

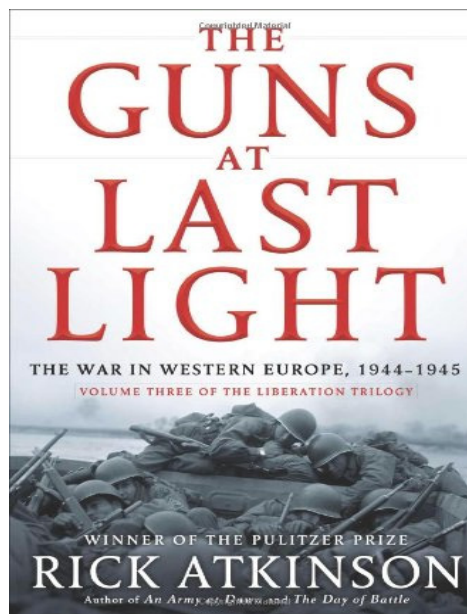
The Guns at Last Light, by Rick Atkinson

by Wesley Moore

This is the last volume of Atkinson's Liberation Trilogy, the story of the U.S. Army in the Mediterranean and European Theaters (the first two are *An Army at Dawn* (the North African campaign) and *The Day of Battle* (the Italian campaign)). It has been a long time coming, the previous books taking years to produce, but is worth the wait.

The book covers the campaign in Northwest Europe, from D-day to the German surrender. It is very much from the point-of-view of the American ground forces, with reference to the RAF, the USAAF, and the British Army only as necessary (OK, Bernard Montgomery keeps popping up, mainly because he thought he should be running things—see below).

As devotees of military history, we probably think we are familiar with the battles in NW Europe in 1944-45. If you want to learn about battles beyond Normandy and the Bulge, however, you should invest* a couple of weeks and read all 640 pages (plus notes) of this book. And it has decent maps—almost every place mentioned in the text can be found on a map!



Another highlight of the narrative is the account of the political infighting at the highest level. Eisenhower barely survived the agony of commanding the crew of prima-donnas he selected, and those that he had to endure, like Monty and De Gaulle.

But do not read it just to be able to tick off the major (and minor) battles of this campaign. The anecdotal content will make it clear just how hard it was for our fathers and grandfathers (great-

grandfathers?) to fight the German Army, no matter how massive the our forces, nor how hamstrung the Wehrmacht was by shortages of fuel and ammo. After reading this, you will want to salute any WWII veterans you encounter—or maybe kiss them.

*I have no idea how much it costs—I read a library copy!

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