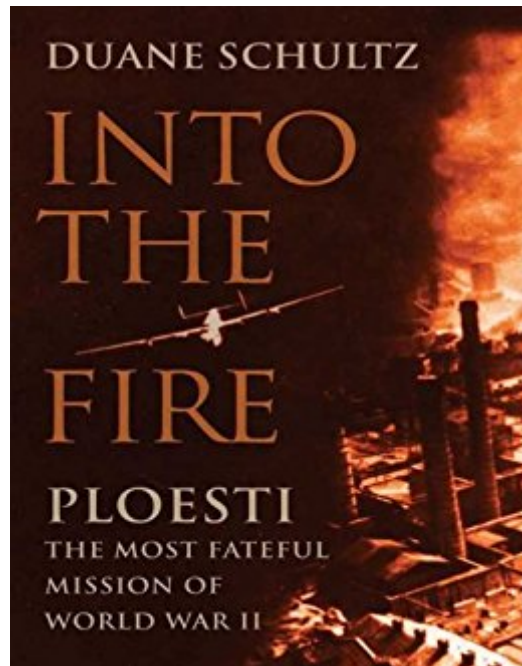




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Into The Fire: Ploesti, The Most Fateful Mission Of World War II



Synopsis

A detailed and vivid account of the World War II disaster. "Booklist" Into the Fire shimmers with historical parallels and modern resonances. . . . Schultz combed an impressive body of material for this account." "Washington Times" This bittersweet tale of arrogance, wishful thinking, sacrifice, and heroism is recounted with grace and empathy." "Military.com" Schultz combines a historian's meticulous research and a novelist's hypnotic prose to produce this memorable popular history... Shultz's intimate account of this controversial episode is a timely reminder of the horrors of war and a moving tribute to Ploesti's heroes." "Publishers Weekly" "We knew it was a disaster and knew that in the flames shooting up from those refineries we might be burned to death. But we went right in." "Lt. Norman Whalen" "We were dragged through the mouth of hell." "from a Ploesti Mission debriefing report" Planned by Winston Churchill, authorized by Dwight D. Eisenhower, and executed by five specially trained American bomber units, the attack on the oil refineries of Ploesti, Romania, was among the most daring and dangerous missions of World War II. If the raid succeeded, the Nazi war machine would suffer a devastating blow. On August 1, 1943, nearly two hundred B-24 bombers flew from Benghazi, North Africa, with directions to descend on Ploesti at treetop level, bomb the refineries, and return. The low-level bombers could evade enemy radar and were thought to be more difficult to shoot down. But despite warnings that a German heavy flak train had been moved into the area and that the secrecy of their mission had been compromised, the bombers were sent out. Minutes from the target, one of the commanders made a wrong turn, leading the formations away from Ploesti. Recovering from this mistake, most of the bombers relocated the refineries, but the mission was doomed. The ensuing air-ground battle claimed dozens of the bombers, and many of those that survived the ordeal were forced to ditch in the ocean or in remote areas due to lack of fuel or structural damage. In *Into the Fire: Ploesti, The Most Fateful Mission of World War II*, Duane Schultz re-creates this great battle, combining original research and interviews with survivors in order to capture the tension, drama, and heroics of the warring sides. More Medals of Honor were awarded for this mission than any other aerial combat enterprise in the history of the United States. But the medals are bittersweet testimony to the courage of the 1,726 young men who risked all on a fateful attempt to cut off the Nazi supply of "black gold."

Book Information

File Size: 1467 KB

Print Length: 288 pages

Publisher: Westholme Publishing; 1 edition (September 15, 2008)

Publication Date: September 15, 2008

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00492CFWQ

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #953,228 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #70

in Books > History > Europe > Romania #774 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History >

Military > Strategy #1037 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Military > Aviation

Customer Reviews

Excellent book. Well detailed, but not going overboard. Went in to good detail about the genesis of the mission as well as the post-mission break-down of what went wrong. The bravery of the young men who fought in these great battles to many years ago never ceases to amaze me. This book reads almost like a movie script, and could be one! It's very thorough and gives a good account of those who made it back to base, and those who crashed elsewhere or were taken prisoner.

Definitely recommended for those interested in air combat, particularly strategic bombing, during World War 2.

It often appears that every Allied operation intending to deliver Germany a decisive blow or "end the war early" only resulted in disaster and an early grave for many Allied soldiers. While the raids on Schweinfurt, Operation Market Garden and Operation Shingle come to mind, the 1943 raid on the Ploiesti oil refineries was no exception. With his book, INTO THE FIRE, Duane Schultz has nicely encapsulated the dramatic events surrounding the disastrous Ploiesti mission (Operation Tidal Wave nee Operation Soapsuds). INTO THE FIRE introduces readers to one of the lesser known tactical operations that intended to instantly disrupt Germany's ability to wage modern warfare by crippling its precious fuel supply with a single bombing raid. The general plan was bold, the method of delivering the plan was even bolder ... B-24 bombers flying the 1,600 mile round trip to and from

the massively defended oil facilities in Ploiesti, Romania ... unescorted and at tree top level to avoid detection. Schultz does an excellent job in quickly guiding the reader through the planning and training phases in order to get to the mission itself. Enough background information is presented to suggest that many of the men flying the mission were keenly aware of the odds they would not be returning. The reader also senses that the short time lapse between planning and implementation would likely lead to problems and a lot of men were going to be killed. The bulk of the book is dedicated to the dreadful mission itself ... and it is a disaster from the start. The reader boards the bombers and flies the mission with the men as they grapple with navigational problems that puts almost all the groups off course and the perils of flying at such a low level (low enough that the men could see children waving, old farmers diving for cover and enemy soldiers hitting the planes with small-arms fire). Scattered in all directions and the element of surprise no longer a factor, the low-flying, lumbering bombers, over-loaded with bombs and fuel, serve as can't-miss targets for Ploiesti's defenders. Innocent haystacks suddenly reveal machine guns and barn walls fall to uncover anti-aircraft guns. I have never read an account of a bombing mission where so much detail of happenings on the ground being provided by those in the planes. The chaos and misery described is tangible, the wall of jagged metal the planes rumble through shreds both machine and man. Off course, the bombers are arriving at their target from all directions, the delayed fuses on the bombs means that many groups of bombers are flying through the explosions of bombs dropped by the previous bomber groups. Most all the planes are critically damaged in some manner, engines are destroyed, fuel tanks are ruptured and many planes are on fire before reaching their target. Schultz bounces the reader from plane to plane giving us a visceral account of each bomber's horrifying experience over Ploiesti and in many cases, the bomber's demise. After the bombing part of the mission is complete, the next phase is simply to escape the inferno by whatever means possible (crash landing, flying to nearby Turkey, gaining enough altitude to bail out or for a few lucky crews, willing their limping plane back to Benghazi). The details of the surviving bomber's plight leaving Ploiesti is as compelling as any part of the book. The manner in which captured American airmen were treated by the Romanians is particularly interesting, as was the mission to get the men out of Romania, ahead of the advancing Red Army. The book concludes with a succinctly written aftermath which details the postwar lives of the Tidal Wave planners and the bomber group leaders. INTO TO THE FIRE is a well written, simplified overview of a small, but significant air operation that could easily be forgotten as being just another piece of the massive World War II puzzle. Schultz captures the drama of Operation Tidal Wave in a manner that most readers should enjoy and appreciate. Additionally, INTO THE FIRE serves as a great tribute to the bravery (5

Medals of Honor awarded, most of them posthumously), selflessness and dedication to duty that these airmen exhibited under such dire circumstances.

Reading this novel moved me to an incredible sense of pride and sadness. As I listen to the news and hear famous people speak and we're constantly bombarded with me, me, me, me and more "me." This book articulates a generation of true heroes who did what they needed to do to ensure freedom and democracy for the coming generations. Knowing you're going to die and flying into a fire storm to keep your aircraft on target and deliver the "load." WOW! Cadets from all the military academies, as well as their peers on college campuses around the country need to read this book to understand what was sacrificed so that they could be free to exercise their right to selfishness and entitlement. A well-written account of incredible feats of heroism!

One of the better renditions of the story of one of the most imaginative missions ever flown by heavy bomber crews in World War 2. Except for the fact that he didn't get the name of Doug Flavelle's ill-fated B-24 named Wingo-Wango correct (calling it Wongo Wongo) the stories he told were quite excellent and added much to the overall story of this incredible mission. Thoroughly enjoyed it

Excellent research and detail. An emotional collection of stories about individuals with a great sense of duty and their heroic actions. Should be required reading for everyone, but especially anyone who doubts or does not believe in "American Exceptionalism." A story of unequalled bravery, daring and sacrifice. Thanks to Duane Schultz for bringing this together so that these people's stories will not be forgotten.

"We were flying low and moving fast." Years ago, I watched a Documentary on Ploesti and there were quotes from some of the survivors. This was a meat grinder mission. When somebody upstairs screws up it costs a lot of blood.

The best account of a pivotal battle of WWII. This book accurately portrays what it must have like to follow orders in spite of impossible odds. Touching to understand what "The Greatest Generation" gave in order to overcome the evil of the Axis powers.

This was an interesting book and it had a lot about the details of the mission, but I would like to have read a more about the men. The inside personal details of those brave men is what tells the real

story of that "Greatest Generation".

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