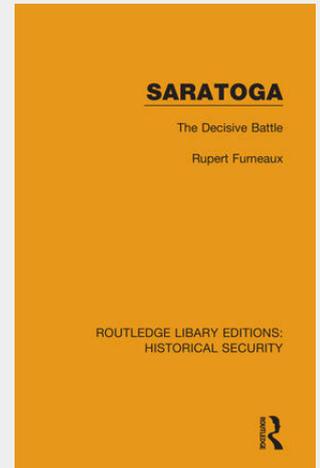


Furneaux

Saratoga

The Decisive Battle

The Grand Strategy, the imaginative plan to divide the rebellious American colonies, ended in disaster. On October 17, 1777, General Sir John Burgoyne, alone, unaided and stranded in the American wilderness, capitulated with his army at Saratoga in upper New York State. It was the 'turning point' of the Revolution, which culminated four years later in the British surrender at Yorktown. Creasy wrote of Saratoga: 'Nor can any military event be said to have exercised more important influence upon the future fortunes of mankind...' Who blundered? For nearly two centuries, Lord George Germain, the 'maladroit' minister, has been blamed, together with the Commander-in-Chief, Sir William Howe; but Burgoyne, 'Gentleman Johnny' as his affectionate troops called him, has largely escaped criticism. Only in the late 1960s had a full assessment become possible, by the publication of all the correspondence that passed between these men. Originally published in 1971, from his study of these letters, and by his visit to the campaign area, author Rupert Furneaux questions this long accepted view. The British disaster resulted, he says, not because anyone particularly blundered, or from any 'pigeon-holed' despatch, but rather because no one bargained that thousands of ordinary American citizens would rally to bar Burgoyne's path. Experienced frontier-fighters and skilled marksmen, they mowed down the closely-ranked Redcoats and the German mercenaries, who had all been trained for European battles. Saratoga heralded a new age of warfare, which Europeans took another hundred years to learn. It was also far more than a British defeat; it was an American victory, the decisive battle whereby they won the right to run their own lives without interference from Europe – and with incalculable consequences.



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