



To the Bitter End: Paraguay and the War of the Triple Alliance (Contributions in Military Studies)

Christopher Leuchars

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The War of the Triple Alliance was one of the longest, least remembered, and, for one of its participants, most catastrophic conflicts of the 19th century. The decision of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay to go to war against Paraguay in May 1865 has generally been regarded as a response to the raids by the headstrong and tyrannical dictator, Francisco Solano Lopez. While there is some truth to this view, as Lopez had attacked towns in Argentina and Brazil, the terms of the Triple Alliance signed that same month reveal that the motivation of these two nations, at least, was to redraw the map in their favor, at the expense of Paraguay. That the resulting conflict lasted five years before Lopez was defeated and his country fully at the mercy of its neighbors was a tribute to the heroic resistance of his people, as well as to the inadequacies of the allied command.

The military campaigns, which took place on land and on the rivers, often in appalling conditions of both climate and terrain, are examined from a strategic perspective, as well as through the experiences of ordinary soldiers. Leuchars looks in detail at the political causes, the course of the conflict as viewed from both sides, and the tragic aftermath. He brings to light an episode that, for all its subsequent obscurity, marked a turning point in the development of South American international relations.

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