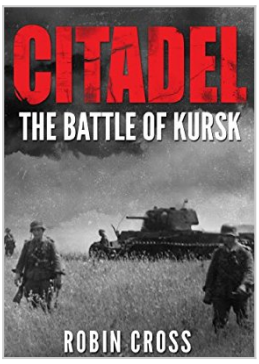

Citadel: The Battle of Kursk

By Robin Cross

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It was the greatest armoured clash in the history of the world - and the decisive battle of World War II. Two vast armies engaged one another on land and in the air, in a conflict that included the most costly single day of aerial warfare of all time.

This was the battle of Kursk - a battle so terrible that even Hitler confessed it made his ‘stomach turn over’.

Citadel was the last great German offensive on the Eastern Front; its aim was to claw back the initiative after the surrender of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad in January 1943.

The location chosen by Hitler was the Kursk salient in the heartland of the Ukraine. The date was 5 July 1943, the codename ‘Citadel’. The Red Army, warned of the German plans by the ‘Lucy’ spy network in Switzerland, was prepared to defend the salient in massive strength and depth. Against its breakwaters Hitler launched his finest armoured divisions, only to see them mangled beyond repair.

No sooner had the German thrusts been contained, while within the tantalizing grasp of success, than the Red Army delivered a series of crushing counter-blows with were to drive the Wehrmacht back beyond the River Dnieper.

Characteristically, Hitler had gambled all on a throw of a single dice and had lost the initiative in the East - never to regain it.

'Citadel' provides a detailed picture of the Battle of Kursk, from the strategic tug-of-war waged within both high commands in the agonizing months which preceded the German offensive, to the first-hand experiences of the troops on the ground and the airmen flying over the blazing steppe as the battle reached fever pitch.

Robin Cross places the battle firmly within the wider strategic context of the spring and summer of 1943, months in which Hitler and Stalin steeled themselves to take decisions which would decide the course of the war and the shape of the peace which followed.

Praise for 'Fallen Eagle':

"Mesmerising account of those final, bloody weeks of war ... Cross's account of the final hysterical days in his Berlin Bunker is masterful." Sunday Express

Robin Cross is a distinguished journalist and military historian whose books include VE Day: Victory in Europe, The Bombers: Strategy and Tactics and The US Marine Corps.

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