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Tekst 12

The beginning of the Nazis' end

D-Day was a huge gamble: had the Allies been pushed back, the shape of the 20th century would have been quite different. Several new books published to celebrate the 60th anniversary re-examine the heroism and sacrifice

THE D-DAY COMPANION

Edited by Jane Penrose

Osprey £20, pp288

D-DAY

By Martin Gilbert

Wiley £13.99, pp220

D-DAY: THE FIRST 72 HOURS

By William Buckingham

Tempus, pp312

THE D-DAY ATLAS

By Charles Messenger

Thames and Hudson £22.50, pp176

THE BEDFORD BOYS

By Alex Kershaw

Pocket Books £7.99, pp300

D-DAY: NORMANDY REVISITED

by Richard Bougaardt

Chaucer Press £20, pp192

ABOVE THE BATTLE: D-DAY THE LOST EVIDENCE

by Chris Going & Alun Jones

Crecy £14.95, pp144



Martin Gilbert's **D-Day** is a short book on a big subject. So key moments become a few sentences. Gilbert is good on the years of planning and on the deception. The Allies hid the planning of the invasion from the Germans and deceived them that Normandy was a feint and that the real invasion would follow later in the Pas de Calais. Huge numbers of dummy trucks and tanks with a vast amount of radio 'noise' made the Germans believe there was an entire US Army Group in south-east England. Another 'pretend' Army was invented in Edinburgh posed to invade Norway. Double agents fed wrong information to the German high command. We'll never know how many lives this saved but it tied down 27 German divisions in Norway and half a million German soldiers in north-east France.

Twenty days after D-Day, Hitler still believed the real invasion was coming in the Pas de Calais. This was the finest hour in the art of strategic deception. But Gilbert is less good on the technology that helped turn the battle.

The 60th anniversary of D-Day has unleashed a spate of books the likes of which we are unlikely to see again. Best of the bunch is **The D-Day Companion**, in which a group of top military historians from Britain and the US write on leadership, logistics and the importance of the intelligence war.

Strong leadership was vital to the success of D-Day, Churchill and Roosevelt providing the political framework, Eisenhower and Montgomery the military strategy. As a combined Anglo-American operation D-Day was the crown jewel in the special relationship and however history judges more recent Anglo-American military ventures, D-Day was vital to the preservation of the free world. There was a hell of a lot to play for on 6 June 1944.

On the other hand, **D-Day: The first 72 Hours** by William Buckingham reveals in a mass of wonderful detail about the weapons, the machines and the men that fought on D-Day, helping to make this a compelling narrative. Buckingham offers an alternative view to the usual concentration on the horror of the American landings on Omaha beach, immortalised by Steven Spielberg in the opening 20 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*. Buckingham argues that the Brits on Gold beach came up against even tougher opposition than on Omaha but because the Americans had hastily reorganised smaller units into mixed assault platoons they lost the cohesion and the bonds that years of training had built up between men. Along with this, the better British use of armour made their success look too easy by comparison to the American mauling on Omaha.

The D-Day Atlas by Charles Messenger contains some magnificent, very clear maps. Unfortunately, it is marred by the poor quality of reproduction of its photographs and by a laboured text. Messenger's battle descriptions are dry and without colour.

Like the British army in the First World War, some American units on D-Day were recruited from particular towns in the US. During the Battle of the Somme whole towns went into mourning as their local boys were killed in the first wave of a futile attack. So the tiny town of Bedford in Virginia lost 19 of its sons who made up the first assault company on

Omaha beach in the early morning of 6 June. In **The Bedford Boys**, Alex Kershaw follows the lives of a group of Bedford men through the Depression years and into the National Guard, and then into a single company of the 116th Regiment of the 29th Division. It's a poignant story that humanises the D-Day sacrifice.

Two books of photographs are part of the mix. In **D-Day: Normandy Revisited** a young photographer, Richard Bougaardt, visits the Normandy beaches. The book is based on a simple but effective idea of contrasting the tranquility of the landscape today in Bougaardt's black and white photographs, with archive stills from 1944. Battlefields can be haunting places to visit, instructive for students of military history and highly emotional to the general visitor, especially when dotted with military cemeteries, as is Normandy. This simple book does justice to its epic subject.

And in **Above the Battle: D-Day the Lost Evidence** Chris Going and Alun Jones offer a new angle by analysing the mass of aerial photographs taken on 6 June to focus on key engagements that shaped the day.

The real meaning of D-Day lies in the military victory that followed the invasion of June 1944. It was the success of D-Day and the battle for Normandy that made Allied victory in The Second World War certain.

The Observer

Lees bij de volgende opgave eerst de vraag voordat je de bijbehorende tekst raadpleegt.

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Voor een presentatie zoek je informatie over het dagelijkse leven van Amerikaanse mannen die later zouden meevechten op D-Day.

- 1p **43** Wordt in de tekst een boek besproken waarin dit onderwerp aan de orde komt? Zo nee, antwoord "Nee". Zo ja, noteer de titel van dit boek.