



2014-118

Michael Dolski, Sam Edwards, and John Buckley, eds., *D-Day in History and Memory: The Normandy Landings in International Remembrance and Commemoration*. Denton: Univ. of North Texas Press, 2014. Pp. xi, 308. ISBN 978-1-57441-548-3.

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On the fortieth anniversary of the Allied landings at Normandy (6 June 1944), President Ronald Reagan stood at the site of the assault by the US 2nd and 5th Ranger Battalions and delivered a moving speech framing the invasion in terms of the Cold War battle for freedom. He said of the American servicemen “These are the boys of Pointe du Hoc. These are the men who took the cliffs. These are the champions who helped free a continent. These are the heroes who helped end a war.”¹ In *D-Day in History and Memory*, editors Michael Dolski,² Sam Edwards (Manchester Metropolitan Univ.), and John Buckley (Univ. of Wolverhampton) have collected essays comparing and contrasting the collective memories of the Normandy Invasion from the American, British, Canadian, French, German, and Russian perspectives. While military histories of the campaign are legion and sometimes contentious, the place of the invasion in the national memory of the participant nations has been relatively ignored. American historians, for example, have given much more attention to memories of the Civil War.

In the book’s long introduction, the editors sketch the history of the Battle of Normandy and indicate the subjects treated in the collected essays, in particular memory of war, and the international significance of national remembrance.

Chapter 1, “‘Portal of Liberation’: D-Day Myth As American Self-Affirmation,” by Dolski explores the creation of mythic imagery as “the Second World War and its shining moments like D-Day have transformed into a celebratory story of national sacrifice for liberty and freedom” (45). Specific examples include the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach, the National World War II Museum (formerly, National D-Day Museum) in New Orleans, and the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia. Dolski also clarifies the place of D-Day in the later context of Cold War politics. Perhaps the most novel aspect of the chapter, however, is his discussion of the strong influence on the public consciousness of D-Day of first-person-shooter video games using Normandy as a setting.

The next two chapters explore the British and the Canadian views of the battle. Edwards argues in chapter 2, “The Beginning of the End: D-Day in British Memory,” that the British saw four strands of meaning in the campaign: Britain’s commitment to France, vindication for the Dunkirk debacle, a major act of Imperial unity and power, and, sadly, the last instance of British “transatlantic military and political parity” (87). Rather than the event that made America a superpower, the British cast their part in Normandy and in the war as a whole as, in Winston Churchill’s words, “their finest hour.” Great Britain helped defeat Germany and free Europe from the yoke of Nazism and, in the process, lost their empire for the greater good. Even thirty-eight years after the event, the British government and press framed the Falklands War in terms of the Normandy Invasion. In short, “to question, challenge or undermine Britain’s D-Day, therefore, is to tamper with the grand conclusion to a story of World War II, and of Empire, deeply entrenched in British memory” (119).

While Britain saw the Normandy Invasion as its empire’s “finest hour,” Terry Copp and Matt Symes (both of Wilfried Laurier Univ.) contend in chapter 3, “Canada’s D-Day: Politics, Media, and the Fluidity of Memory,” that it figured little in Canadian national memory until the fiftieth anniversary in 1994. They note

1. Text of the speech is available online at The History Place: Great Speeches Collection – www.miwsr.com/rd/1427.htm; video recording at YouTube – www.miwsr.com/rd/1428.htm.

2. Of the Joint Prisoner of War-Missing in Action Accounting Command, Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii.

that, while Americans and Britons read (and watched) *The Longest Day*³ (the film⁴ featured no Canadian stars or roles), Canadian military historians have focused on other aspects of the war. Thus, it was the French who initiated plans for Canadian monuments in Normandy. The contrast with the United States could not be sharper. However, it was in the context of both domestic and foreign policy issues that Canada's leaders brought Normandy into the foreground of public memory. For example, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien invoked the sacrifices of Canadian soldiers in June 1944 to promote national unity in the face of the Quebec separatism movement. Furthermore, when Canada assumed a more active role in Western military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, its government began to revive and commemorate its Second World War past.

In chapter 4, "Gratitude, Trauma, and Repression: D-Day in French Memory," Kate LeMay (Auburn Univ.–Montgomery) maintains that, for the French, D-Day was "a battlefield of memory invested with conflicting histories of both gratitude and resentment" (159). She notes that French remembrance was initially concentrated on the joy of liberation from Nazi tyranny and feelings of gratitude (tinged with resentment) to the liberators. Not till the 1990s did the French begin to acknowledge their bitterness over the destruction of their landscape by both Allied and Axis forces. Their anger at having to be liberated and the psychological scars of two world wars caused an "underground subversion" of public expressions of gratitude to the Allies (161). LeMay also shows how strains in Franco-American relations over contrasting views of the invasion are apparent in the *Monuments Signaux* (Signal Monuments) commissioned by the French D-Day Commemoration Committee at major battle sites.

In chapter 5, "'Sie Kommen': From Defeat to Liberation—German and Austrian Memory of the Allied 'Invasion' of 6 June 1944," Austrian authors Günter Bischof (Univ. of New Orleans) and Michael S. Maier (Univ. of Vienna) consider the German and Austrian perspectives on D-Day. Though integrated into the West after the war, Germany and Austria both viewed the battle as a major defeat. In analyzing West and East German and Austrian war guilt, the authors observe that, ironically, it was Cornelius Ryan's *The Longest Day* that portrayed the Germans as respectable military men rather than Nazi-monsters, thus laying the basis for a palatable counternarrative. Even though Germans could see the invasion as the beginning of their liberation from Nazism, the Wehrmacht soldiers who served in Normandy had trouble coming to grips with the defeat and the slaughter they witnessed. A particular strength of this essay is its discussion of the creation of the German military cemeteries and the D-Day memories of Austrians, whose guilt was even more deep-seated than the Germans'.

Finally, in chapter 6, "'Their Overdue Landing': A View from the Eastern Front," Olga Kucherenko (St. John's College, Cambridge) investigates the Russian view of D-Day. While Americans see the battle as beginning the liberation of Europe, Russians tend to minimize its significance by comparison with the immense sacrifices and immense victories of Soviet forces on the Eastern Front. For them, "the Allied landing in France ... had been 'complementary' to the battles on the Soviet-German front, not the other way around" (238). For the most part, Kucherenko detects no real change in Russian attitudes even after the Cold War. Russian historians acknowledge the importance of the Normandy Invasion in the defeat of Nazi Germany, but also believe a just recognition of the accomplishments of the Soviet military on the "second front" remains long overdue.

Military and political historians have produced a rich literature on the Normandy Invasion, carefully studying and explicating almost all its aspects, from grand strategy to the personal stories of individual soldiers. In a series of highly perceptive and well reasoned essays, *D-Day in History and Memory* nonetheless opens new avenues of historical inquiry into national interpretations of the Normandy campaign. It also constitutes a most useful model for future studies of the memory and commemoration of other World War II battles and campaigns.

3. Cornelius Ryan, *The Longest Day: June 6, 1944* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1959).

4. 20th Century Fox (1962), dir. Ken Annakin et al.