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D DAY Through German Eyes: The Hidden Story Of June 6th 1944

D DAY THROUGH GERMAN EYES



HOLGER ECKHERTZ



Synopsis

This is the hidden side of D-Day which has fascinated readers/listeners around the world. Almost all accounts of D-Day are told from the Allied perspective, with the emphasis on how German resistance was overcome on June 6, 1944. But what was it like to be a German soldier in the bunkers and gun emplacements of the Normandy coast, facing the onslaught of the mightiest seaborne invasion in history? What motivated the German defenders, what were their thought processes - and how did they fight from one strong point to another, among the dunes and fields, on that first cataclysmic day? What were their experiences on facing the tanks, the flamethrowers and the devastating air superiority of the Allies? This book sheds fascinating light on these questions, bringing together statements made by German survivors after the war, when time had allowed them to reflect on their state of mind, their actions and their choices of June 6. We see a perspective of D-Day which deserves to be added to the historical record, in which ordinary German troops struggled to make sense of the onslaught that was facing them, and emerged stunned at the weaponry and sheer determination of the Allied soldiers. We see, too, how the Germans fought in the great coastal bunkers, perceived as impregnable fortresses, but in reality often becoming tombs for their crews. Above all, we now have the unheard human voices of the individual German soldiers - the men who are so often portrayed as a faceless mass.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One needs to read the introduction to get how the 'gist' of the book works. That said, this is

outstanding. I found every account fascinating. Even if what each soldier said is a 'composite', I am confident that the overall reaction was accurate. The only reason that I would think such a thing was a very small section written about a 'artistic liberty' taken about a soldier defending "Gold" Beach with his ability and height when interviewed in 1944 for a magazine for which the author was working. That said, I didn't get the impression that anything was added for dramatic effect. On the contrary, I am sure that some memories would have liked to have been erased. This is a quick read, with each Beach represented and the time goes quickly. I read about a 'Beach and a half a day'. One warning: The accounts are VERY intense and graphic. Be prepared.

If like me, you are still trying to comprehend the causes and devastating effects of World War II, this record of personal battle line experiences is a must read. But be prepared for a very intimate and potentially disturbing experience. Nothing is glorified. It's simply recounted. My most humble thanks to the Eckhertz family for sharing these very valuable and impressive documents.

I recall the scene in the movie Saving Private Ryan where Tom Hanks was pinned down on the beach. Towering high above, we saw this massive concrete bunker housing angry German MG-42 machine guns spraying death and destruction down on everything that moved below. This book gives a name to the man behind that gun: Henrik Naube. His interview tells us, that he was so successful in his endeavor, that for about 5 minutes, he was certain the landings in France were going to be beaten back. His illusions however were short lived when the first Shermans appeared in the beach in front of him and his position was suddenly pulverized by high explosives passing through the windows. The rest is history.

As a fairly respected historian on the Normandy Campaign, with a number of publications to my name, and a lot of time logged on the ground in Normandy, and having spoken with a large number of veterans mostly American, but some German, I was asked what I thought of this book. The idea of someone getting in depth interviews with common German soldiers in the 950's is remarkable. In fact, a little too much so. I consider that these interviews bring real is somewhat remarkable, and thus demand remarkable evidence to prove them correct. In commenting only on the American Sector, as I know that like the back of my hand, I find nothing to make me think these are real interviews. The descriptions of the locations seem a little off; timelines and details are off - not like I find in my own interviews with vets, but more as if they were added in from books after the fact. The content of the interviews just does not ring true. I know what it is like to pull details from

veterans, and to gather this amount of detail in so little time, with such a perfect mix of soldiers defies belief. Too much is explained in detail. It's just too perfect in one way, and yet too many little nagging things that set off my bullshit detector. So my take on them is that these are faked, and based on modern sources, with possibly some taste of German veterans from other places being added in. I think if anyone is to take this seriously, the publisher of these books needs to show us the proof. Where are the documents? Are they based on notes? Full transcriptions? Edited? Or is it just a get rich quick scheme? How hard would it be to show some of the original (1950's era) documents? Clearly that would boost sales enormously. If there was proof of reality, I know a handful of publishers that would beg to be able to publish these as real books. I first set foot on the Normandy beaches in 1969. Everything I have seen, heard, and learned since then scream to me these are constructs. Do not take them at face value until proof is made. And if no effort is made to clear the air, then shame on you for muddying the waters of history.

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