



## *Divided on D-Day: How Conflicts and Rivalries Jeopardized the Allied Victory at Normandy* by Edward E. Gordon and David Ramsay.

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The Normandy Invasion continues to inspire books written for both general readers and specialists, all the more as its seventy-fifth anniversary approaches. The authors of *Divided on D-Day* represent the principal parties of the Western Alliance: Edward Gordon is an American expert in business, economics, and history, while David Ramsay is a British scholar of history and economics.<sup>1</sup> The first Anglo-American team to produce a general history of the Normandy Campaign, they aim to analyze “the quality of leadership and the relationships among [Operation Overlord’s] principal commanders” (17), while offering “fresh perspectives” on the greatest military invasion in history. Their chronological narrative addresses several controversies that occurred before, during, and after D-Day, in a kind of “after-action review” of Allied performance. The questions they ask include the following:

- What caused the Allied failure to implement their beachhead breakout strategy?
- Why was Caen, a top D-Day objective, not captured by the British?
- How could Rommel’s Omaha Beach orders have defeated the Allied D-Day invasion?
- Why did Eisenhower refrain from issuing direct orders to his commanders?
- What decisions forced the Americans to fight in the bocage/hedgerow hell?
- Who issued the “phantom order” stopping Patton from closing the Falaise Pocket?
- Why did Eisenhower stop Patton’s drive to outflank Germany’s West Wall?
- Why did Montgomery delay opening the vital ... Port of Antwerp, for nearly two months?
- How could have the MARKET GARDEN ... disaster and the Battle of the Bulge been avoided?
- What decisions could the Allies have made to end the war in 1944 or early 1945? (17–18)

Woven into the answers to these questions are some old arguments regarding Eisenhower’s seeming timidity in the face of Montgomery’s relentless self-promotion (205), as well as useful summaries of historiographical disagreements over, for example, the number of German soldiers who escaped from Falaise (267). A great strength of the book is its synthesis of the last two decades of scholarly and popular writing on its subject. The authors are (sometimes too) concise, but almost always adduce sufficient hard data to support their conclusions.

Since the book is emphatically not a critical biography of an individual or a group of individuals, the profiles of most of the figures discussed tend to lack complexity and depth, and too often reinforce existing stereotypes. Thus, in the concluding chapter, Eisenhower is the “arbitrator,” Montgomery the “rogue,” and Patton the “maverick”; Bertram Ramsay is “affable” and Omar Bradley “dependable.” This facile taxonomy of neutral, negative, or positive does little to humanize the leading actors in the book or bolster the authors’ arguments. But precisely this “reinforcing [of] what we already know” will position *Divided on D-Day* as *the book* to be quoted as we reflect on

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1. And the son of Adm. Sir Bertram Ramsay, the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander in Europe in 1944.

D-Day's anniversary. Its pages teem with just the sort of well-turned, seemingly off-the-cuff pronouncements that will reassure readers without offending any partisan community.

Given their stress on chronological narration, the authors seldom fully examine the backgrounds and relationships of principal figures, often at the risk of adopting a determinist interpretation. For instance, they devote just two sentences to major obstacles to the British Second Army's combat performance in 1944: war weariness and an "I've done my bit; let someone else do it from here on" (174). Instead, they focus on "great men" as the drivers of history.

A leitmotif of the book is the critical importance of logistical planning. In their brief chapter on Lt. Gen. Frederick Morgan's COSSAC<sup>2</sup> staff, the authors echo previous historians by declaring that "Logistics were at the heart of OVERLORD" (39). It is thus surprising to find not one mention of either the European Theater Services of Supply or the US Communications Zone. Also ignored are the vital roles played by Maj. Gen. Thomas Larkin or Lt. Gens. J.C.H. Lee and Humfrey M. Gale in managing logistics for the entire Allied force. The skilled bureaucratic infighter Maj. Gen. Everett Hughes makes just one appearance, as "Eisenhower's 'eyes and ears' during OVERLORD" (188). Operation Bolero, the indispensable twenty-three-month build-up of forces and material in England is touched on (23), but without the provision of any context to make clear its true dimensions and significance.

Gordon and Ramsay have written an eminently readable one-volume study<sup>3</sup> of the planning and execution of the Normandy Campaign from the Western Allies' perspective. Being based chiefly on relevant secondary literature, it contains little that has not appeared before. Nonetheless, *Divided on D-Day* identifies several glaring Allied mistakes in the Normandy Campaign, leaving no lingering doubts that the US-UK alliance was fraught with vulnerabilities that a saner Adolf Hitler could have exploited to Germany's benefit. Indeed, the authors astutely discuss in some detail the disunity within the German high command, thus avoiding the tendency to credit success in Normandy solely to the inherent righteousness of the Allied cause. Their contribution to the ever growing list of publications on Normandy will find grateful readers among undergraduates and their instructors, as well as a reading public inspired by the upcoming anniversary to delve more deeply into long-standing issues concerning the D-Day invasion.

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2. Chief of Staff to Supreme Allied Commander.

3. Equipped with thirty well-chosen maps and thirty-six photographs of principal actors and scenes that will help readers better understand the narrative.