

Zuehlke, Mark, *The Cinderella Campaign: First Canadian Army and the Battles for the Channel Ports*. Madeira Park, BC, Canada: Douglas & McIntyre, 2017.

Those who follow the history of the Second World War in Europe know that the period between August and September 1944 was a time of rapid movement. After exploiting the success following Operations Cobra and Goodwood, the Americans defeated the German counterattack at Mortain and joined with the Commonwealth forces in closing the gap near Falaise. The American Third Army raced towards Lorraine while The First, and British Second moved on a more northward course through Northern France and Belgium, arriving on the German border in September. Simultaneously with these dramatic operations, the Seventh US and First French Armies landed on the Mediterranean coast and proceeded to rush rapidly north in the Loire Valley towards Strasbourg. Often forgotten in this dramatic narrative is the story of the First Canadian Army fighting along the coast. Field Marshal Montgomery assigned the Canadian soldiers the thankless task of securing the ports and anchorages that dot the French coast between the Seine River and Antwerp. Mark Zuehlke, a prolific writer, with more than a dozen books to his credit, reminds readers of the details of this challenging and complicated string of Canadian military operations.

In twenty-five well-written chapters, Zuehlke takes the reader on a detailed tour along France's still-occupied Atlantic wall. He begins his narrative by describing the events immediately after the Allies closed the Falaise Pocket. Unlike the American forces, the Canadians faced a determined German rearguard in places like Liseaux and Pont Eveque. He devotes several chapters to the generally forgotten, but complicated, and confusing battle at the Forêt de la Londe across the river from Rouen. He allocates several more to the discussion of Operation Astonia, the tragic battle at Le Havre, and the needless bombing that caused the deaths of between 1,500 and 2,000 French civilians. Other chapters include accounts of seizing Dieppe, Boulogne (Operation Wellhit), and Calais (Operation Undergo), as well as the reasons for not attempting to storm the fortress at Dunkirk. Zuehlke does a sound job of slicing through the hierarchy of military actions, from the Army down to the smallest combat unit. While not differing from previous authors, his comprehensive presentation superbly links events from the army-level, down to the smallest combat unit.

Zuehlke's thesis is that a small, under-equipped and under-manned, Canadian Army took on some of the European Theater's most critical tasks, and did it well. This combat usually consisted of fierce fighting against enemy units dominating key and well-prepared terrain. He believes it performed these tasks reasonably well. His sources are excellent, using unit orders, after-action reports, and a wide array of interviews and personal monographs. The author gives us the narrative the reader needs to follow the action at the small unit and soldier level. This fighting was often urban combat, and the author explains, in graphic detail, the strengths and weaknesses of the various modified tanks and equipment they had at their disposal. In excellent prose, he describes how the infantry captured the megafortresses in the Pas de Calais area and secured the heights opposite Dover in the UK. It is not all about praise, and he describes the command's determination to use heavy bombers to destroy enemy fortifications before most assaults. Often, these bombs killed more civilians than German soldiers, and he acknowledges it was generally wasteful, generally disagreeing with the traditional heroic narrative. Finally, unlike many authors of combat in the theater, he notes that civilians were present in these cities and, on occasion, influenced how the Canadians and Germans fought the battle. His description of the fighting at Calais is a good example of this recognition. (387)

Mark Zuehlke generally answered most of the questions I had about these coastal operations. One that I would have liked to have learned more about was the capture of the German vengeance weapon installations. Hundreds of permanent and semi-permanent V1 and V2 launching sites littered the Canadian operational zone. While he does briefly discuss them, I had hoped for more detail in the soldier's experience when they encountered them. Eliminating these dreaded weapons was one of the Canadian Army's most important tasks, I hoped for more of a description of their capture.

But this is a minor issue, as the author has done an excellent job of explaining the details of these generally ignored, but bloody, encounters. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in the war in Europe and especially those attempting to understand the problems facing soldiers in conducting operations in cities and against fixed fortifications.

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