

BOOK REVIEWS / BOEKBESPREKINGS

1944. *The Canadians in Normandy* Reginald H. Roy (Canadian War Museum Historication No 19. MacMillan of Canada 1984); 368 pages plus preface. (Price unknown)

The story of the Allied invasion of France in June 1944 has been told in countless military-history books. Previous publications on the Allied invasion and the subsequent Normandy campaign have, however, tended to concentrate on the British and American role in the fighting, while the Canadian contribution has received scant attention. This in itself is surprising, as the Canadians played a far from peripheral role in the invasion and the campaign which followed in the hinterland of Normandy. The Canadians eventually fielded an entire Army under own Command (the First Canadian Army) comprising nearly 100 000 troops in the Normandy campaign, and they were frequently allocated a central and crucial role in the overall Allied strategy by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in France, Gen Montgomery. Indeed, on more than one occasion, the Canadian contribution was decisive to the successful achievement of the Allied strategy.

Dr Roy, who himself served as an infantry officer in the Canadian forces during the war, has gone a long way towards redressing this serious historical imbalance by bringing out the first comprehensive account of the role played by the Canadian forces in Normandy.

He describes in detail the assault by the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, under command of the Second British Army, in the initial D-Day landing on the beaches a few miles west of the Orne River – an assault which cost the Division 340 officers and men killed. Dr Roy then deals with the rapid build up of the Canadian forces in the congested beach-head in the days immediately after the invasion, and the central role played by Canadian forces in the capture of the strategically vital town of Caen. Thereafter, the formation of the First Canadian Army, comprising the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Infantry Divisions, 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, 4th Canadian Armoured Division and 1st Polish Armoured Division, is described with careful attention to detail and with colourful accounts of the prolonged and bitter fighting against determined and sometimes fanatical German opposition which was the feature of the relentless Canadian advance during July southwards from Caen over the Orne to the Verrieres Ridge (Operation Spring). The central

chapters deal with the Canadian advance towards Falaise during August (Operation Totalize), and the book concludes with a vivid description of the Canadian role in the final battle for Falaise and the closing of the “Gap” which saw over 200 000 Germans from the shattered 7th and 15th Armies captured in the Allied net. (Operation Tractable).

Dr Roy succeeds admirably in presenting a balanced and objective account of the performance of the Canadian forces in the Normandy campaign. He does not attempt to hide or down-play the mistakes that were made, or the shortcomings of the inexperienced, largely volunteer troops who made up the bulk of the Canadian Army. Likewise, he does not hesitate to discuss the lack of combat experience of most of the senior Canadian commanders (including the Army Commander himself, Lt Gen Crerar), and the effect this had on the performance of the Canadian forces. This objectivity naturally makes the account all the more credible, leaving the reader quite prepared to concur with Dr Roy’s ultimate assessment of the Canadians as brave, dedicated and innovative soldiers who overcome combat inexperience, serious natural obstacles, and a determined and desperate enemy to emerge within a few short weeks as a formidable fighting force. Dr Roy reminds us that the D-Day invasion itself, for all its breathtaking scale and grandeur, was merely the prelude to a drawn-out campaign in the hills and valleys of Normandy lasting several weeks which unquestionably involved some of the most bitter and hard-fought battles of the entire war. The Canadians emerged from this campaign with a greatly enhanced combat reputation and the profound respect of both friends and foe alike. Inevitably, it was a respect and reputation won at great cost. The Canadians suffered 18 444 casualties between the invasion and the end of August. Of these 5 021 were fatal.

All in all, *The Canadians in Normandy* is very readable, and well supported by maps and photographs. If there is a criticism, it is that the overall thrust and perspective of the campaign is often obscured by over-detailed description of the battle line-ups, dispositions and tactical plans of individual combat formations. Furthermore, the

precise relationship between the Canadians and the rest of the Allied forces is not always fully spelt out. Finally, glimpses into the “human element” of the fighting – the feelings, experiences and first-hand descriptions of the individual Canadian soldier – are fragmentary, with an over reliance on the rather dry accounts of the unit war diarists.

These relatively minor criticisms apart, there is little doubt that Dr Roy’s book will come to be regarded as the definitive account of the Canadian role in the Normandy campaign.

Capt W.A. Dorning

**“Management in the armed forces: An anatomy of the military profession”:
deur J.C.T. Downey**

Deel I: Veranderde rol van die militêre milieu

Hierdie deel handel hoofsaaklik oor die veranderde rol wat die militaris speel, asook die verantwoordelikheid van die politici om militêre verdedigingsbeleid te formuleer. Die beklemtoning van die belangrikheid van die invloede wat internasionale, nasionale, politiek en tegnologie het op die militêre beleid.

Hy beklemtoon die feit dat militêre aksie ondergeskik is aan politieke of regeringsbeleid en nie andersom, soos in die dae van Napoleon en Frederick nie.

Die militêr is sonder enige twyfel altyd afhanklik vir sy ontwikkeling van die nasie se stand van ontwikkeling tov tegnologie, ekonomie, politiek en sosiaal.

Hy beskou soldaat wees as ’n professie en heg baie groot waarde daaraan. Verder stel hy sekere kriteria waaraan ’n weermag moet voldoen om geag te wees ’n professionele militêre sisteem nl, eerstens moet dit permanent wees, of ten minste ’n voltydse nucleus hê van ’n bepaalde grootte. Tweedens moet die nucleus hom ten doel stel om tegniese doeltreffend te wees, wat verkry kan word dmv eksperimente of oorlog. Derdens moet dit ’n diens wees onder die wil van die mense deur die regering.

Die belangrikheid van uitbreiding van kennis van soldate en offisiere word beklemtoon en daar

word gewys op die vordering wat daar gemaak word in die opleiding van die offisier. Die ontstaan van militêre akademieë soos bv West Point en die tegnologiese tred hou deur die militaris is hier ter sprake.

Hy wys ook op die kentering wat tot stand gekom het, waar die vroeëre leërs daarop ingestel was om oorlog te maak, beweeg die hedendaagse weermagte in die rigting van “limited war” waar nasies hul bes doen om konfrontasie te vermy.

Daar word verder breedvoerig uitgewei oor hoe die weermagte te werk gaan deur te beplan, dirigeer, beheer, koördineer en hoe hul, hul taak benader, wanneer ’n regering opdrag gee om oorlog te maak. Dit word daarop gewys dat weermagte nie baie geneig is om die burgerlike gebruike van bestuur, slaafs toe te pas nie. Daar word egter deeglik gebruik gemaak van die bevel en bestuurskonsepte, maar sodra hulle in ’n oorlog situasie betrokke raak, word daar weer grotendeels gesentraliseer en outokratiese militêre beginsels kom weer baie sterk na vore, weens die wenslikheid van koördinerende en samehorigheid. Klem op streng militêre dissipline is onontbeerlik.

Strategie en taktiek word bespreek en daar word tot die volgende gevolgrekking gekom dat strategie in al sy vorms, nl “grand strategy, total strategy and operational strategy” almal uiters nou saamgeweef en afhanklik is van die staat se beleid. Die strategieë is ook soms so nou aan mekaar verbonde dat dit uiters moeilik is om te beslis waar die een begin en die ander eindig. Wat taktiek betref is hy redelik en verwys na die groot gaping tussen strategie en taktiek en beweer: “In war tactics are in touch with the enemy and with the means of outwitting them”.

Lesse geleer uit vorige wêreldoorloë word bespreek en hy lig duidelik uit dat lande wat tot die laaste geveg het bv (WOI), dié lande na die oorlog totaal uitgeput, en ekonomies sowel as politiek geruïneer was. Daarom word bespiegel dat toekomstige oorloë nie deur soldate geveg sal word nie maar deur die politici en die doel van weermagte sal wees om oorloë te verhoed. ’n Verdere aspek wat wel deeglik aandag geniet is die soort bemanning van weermagte en die verhouding tussen soldate tot burgerlikes en tussen vegtende elemente en nie vegtende elemente. So bv het die “RAF” soos volg saamgestel, 18% offisiere met 8% daarvan as gevegspersoneel, 82% manskappe waarvan slegs 5% gevegspersoneel is.