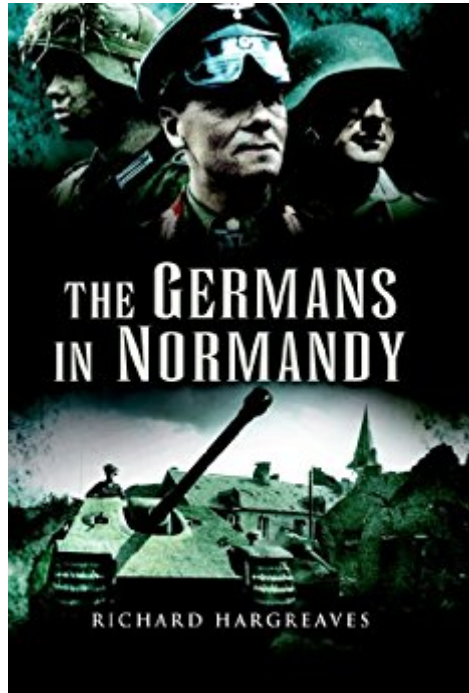




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THE GERMANS IN NORMANDY



Synopsis

"The Allied invasion of Northern France was the greatest combined operation in the history of warfare. Up until now it has been recorded from the attackers' point of view whereas the defenders' angle has been largely ignored. While the Germans knew an invasion was inevitable, no-one knew where or when it would fall. Those manning Hitler's mighty Atlantic Wall may have felt secure in their bunkers but they had no conception of the fury and fire that was about to break. After the initial assaults of June established an Allied bridgehead, a state of stale-mate prevailed. The Germans fought with great courage hindered by lack of supplies and overwhelming Allied control of the air. When the Allies finally broke out the collapse was catastrophic with Patton's army in the East sweeping round and Montgomery's in the West putting remorseless pressure on the hard pressed defenders. The Falaise Gap became a graveyard of German men and equipment. To read the war from the losing side is a sobering and informative experience."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Death Reaped a Terrible Harvest," is the sub-title of Richard Hargreave's amazing book, "The Germans in Normandy," that lucidly tells the story of the Germans' buildup and defense of Normandy to the D-Day invasion in June 1944, through the breakthrough by the Allies and the

carnage of the Falaise Gap, to the retreat to the Reich in August 1944. The story is comprehensively told, apparently for the first time, primarily from the point of view of the German defenders, especially the common soldiers on the ground, the "Landser" (German enlisted men). (For those wanting strictly a more strategic viewpoint, a more lofty and ponderous view can be found in "The German Army at D-Day", a collection of post-war reports by captured German generals for their American captors that is rife with fingerpointing and based solely on their selective memories.) Perhaps more importantly, the story is clearly told in an engaging and informative writing style that pulls the reader in so that one is given a good sense of what it was like for the German forces during this period. The author does this by cogently interspersing the already well-known "big picture" of what was going on (e.g., the Fuhrer's directives, the lack of air support/defense for the German forces, the failure to put in skilled troops as first-line defenders, the ferocity of the defense put up by the 12th SS Panzer Division - the Hitlerjugend - and other elite forces) and the exploits of familiar names (e.g., tank ace Michael Wittman, the actions of Kurt "Panzer" Meyer) with personal accounts, including fascinating quotations from diaries and correspondence, of common soldiers.

Being a member of the same World War II forum, Feldgrau, that the author belongs to, I have been following the progress of this book and looking forward to it. I am pleased to say that I was not disappointed. This work is in a style I've not come across before. It is not a history book in the normal sense. It is not a story of a campaign, and it is not a memoir. Somehow, the author has managed to split the difference between the two, producing something more of a hybrid. Through the extensive use of personal letters sent home by German soldiers, this is the story of the men who defended Occupied France against the Allied invasion of June 1944, and the battles that followed which culminated in the defeat of Nazi Germany, mostly in their own words. Starting in the front matter, it is readily apparent that Mr. Hargreaves has done considerable research. He has culled his material from a wide range of sources, promising a historically accurate book. The book is divided into twelve chapters. Each corresponds to a different phase of the battle for France. The first two chapters lead up to the invasion. Here one reads about the sense of anticipation felt by the average German soldier. The author provides background material on the units, as well as the preparations made by the Germans to defend against invasion. This helps the reader understand how so many of these men still felt confidence in themselves, their leaders, and their defenses. While one can feel the trepidation, one can still see that the soldiers honestly felt they had a good chance of throwing the Allies back into the sea. Chapters 3 & 4 introduce the Allies. Here you will learn of the confusion and disbelief rampant during the first hours of the invasion, when the Allied parachute divisions

dropped in France.

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