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Dieppe Revisited: A Documentary Investigation by John P. Campbell [Review]

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4. Copp, *The Brigade*, Preface.
5. John A. English. *Failure in High Command: The Canadian Army and the Normandy Campaign* (Ottawa, 2nd Edition, 1995).
6. John A. English. *On Infantry* (New York, 1981), pp.121-54.
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Dieppe Revisted

John P. Campbell. *Dieppe Revisited: A Documentary Investigation* (London: Frank Cass, 1993) 247 pages. £30.

“Another book about Dieppe?” This is the question everyone will wonder since the tragic 1942 Dieppe raid has been examined so often previously. It is also the title of Professor Campbell's first chapter. The aim of his work is to analyse the raid's operational aspects, such as intelligence, radar, deception, naval and air operations, in the context of activities in the English Channel as a whole in 1942. He uses mainly Allied and German unpublished primary sources, many of the latter hitherto unused war diaries and after action reports, although all previously available for many years to the public. In doing so Campbell demonstrates his knowledge of the period by pointing out gaps in the documentary record resulting from loss, destruction or continued classification. The Dieppe raid, he explains, “was simply the obvious peg on which to hang such an investigation.”

This investigation examines all the myths and misconceptions that usually flourish as a result of a military failure such as at Dieppe. Campbell puts these in their

operational context and attempts to explain or, more often, disprove each scenario to the reader, acting like a detective/historian. Although this reviewer usually agrees with his conclusions, Campbell does not always address all the issues fully, and the process he takes the reader through is often extremely confusing.

The most commonly-held myth about the operation is that it did not achieve surprise and that the Germans received forewarning, resulting in the massacre on the beaches. All the investigations into the possibility that some kind of agent report gave forewarning are not merely inconclusive. They are pointless because they do not establish a link between any leak and the massacre on the beaches. They assume that the leak was listened to and that this explains the disaster but this ignores the fact that the Dieppe garrison was not at alert readiness.

Campbell takes the reader through a very difficult process of canvassing each of the many supposed reports received by the Abwehr, the German intelligence service, only to discount each one in the end. One agent, code-named Tate, was controlled by the XX or Twenty Committee, the organisation responsible for running double agents usually for misinformation purposes. Campbell asks could Tate have been allowed to send a warning in order to build up the credibility of XX agents with the Abwehr? Campbell adds that Tate would not have been useful in this role since, as opposed to the controlled agents reporting to Madrid and Lisbon, his traffic passed by landline between Hamburg and Berlin, and therefore could not be intercepted and deciphered by the Government Code and Cipher School (GC and CS). Here Campbell errs. GC and CS was not interested in what Tate sent since they already knew what it was. At the very least they had some input into all of his reports and sometimes even compiled them. They were interested in the German reaction to his reports

which they could read through Ultra decrypts. This complicated story is confused further by the oft quoted agent report, T 1022 1677 of 29 October 1942. This he unfortunately refers to under several different dates.

Could Ultra could be relied on to warn that the Germans had advance knowledge of the raid? Although he does not directly answer, undoubtedly it is yes. The Naval Section of the GC and CS read all German naval signals intelligence in the Channel and this, as Campbell himself says, provided “a ready check on the occasions when the German defensive machine reacted to the threat of an Allied operation.”

On the question of German foreknowledge Campbell concludes that with all the Allied and German documents available, it is obvious that the Germans received no warning and were surprised. If any reports were received before the raid, they were either not passed on to the local garrison or ignored by the respective authorities in Berlin. This is shown by the fact that after receiving reports in May, June and July of an intended landing the Germans sounded the alarm dozens of times, at many places along the coast from Norway to France, but did not do so for the 18/19 August in the Dieppe area. The bulk of two long-range bomber groups, the only torpedo bomber unit in the Luftwaffe and an E-boat unit, the latter two extremely effective in the anti-raid role, were also moved away from the operational area before the raid.

Campbell gives a good analysis of the strategic context in which Jubilee was decided on and effectively impresses on the reader the atmosphere of semi-crisis prevailing at that time in Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ). He contends that revival of the cancelled operation took place “at a highly secret meeting on 11 July,” although his only evidence is the very dubious post-war memoirs of Hughes-Hallett, COHQ Naval Advisor at the time.

Campbell correctly states that deception, using the XX organisation, was not being practised actively until the end of September 1942 but does not explain why. The reason was that the security authorities were not fully convinced that all German agents in the United Kingdom were under control. Campbell also states: "That the raid might have been somehow saved by a cover plan remains doubtful, as will be argued later." Unfortunately, he never addresses the point again.

He asserts that Sir John Masterman "regretted" Jubilee had not been properly covered, which meant using the XX system to gain surprise, by referring to an earlier quote by Masterman that: "It is sad, but interesting, to speculate whether the Dieppe raid might have been more successful, or at least less costly, if it had been effectively covered." This is not "regret" on Masterman's part but actually pure, worthless speculation. It is pointless regretting or speculating whether Jubilee might have been more successful if covered using the XX organisation, since Jubilee gained surprise without it. When Masterman asks whether it would have been "less costly," he is assuming that Jubilee might not have been defeated if the German strategic reserves had not been redeployed. Campbell does not comment on this, possibly because it is an irrelevant question, although the answer is definitely no. The operation was defeated by the static coastal defence forces, no strategic reserves were involved, the latter being the only units that would have been affected by any cover or deception operation. Besides the strategic reserves would have taken too long to get into action to be of significance to operations of such short duration as Jubilee. Campbell raises the point that the collision of Jubilee with a German coastal convoy actually proved to be a "stroke of good fortune" since it "provided a form of cover." The German radar operators ignored the radar plots

of Jubilee since they had a convoy of their own in the area. This would have been the case, though, even if Jubilee had not collided with the convoy. Here Campbell is using confusing language for it was the presence of the German convoy that deflected the German operators from their important radar plots, not the convoy's collision with Jubilee. Actually, the collision was a stroke of misfortune because the German defenders of Puys who, Campbell correctly states, had been on a night exercise, "did not stand down before dawn because of the gunfire at sea."

Whether this convoy was picked up by British shore radar stations is a matter of on going debate and Campbell still has not clarified it. He also does not adequately explain the difference in timings between the various warning signals supposedly sent to Jubilee. He records Hughes-Hallett and apparently the Admiralty, through Mountbatten, as asserting that the inshore convoy was never plotted by shore radar. Although Campbell says this was "misleading" he does not critically comment further. He also ignores the fact that the Admiralty report contradicts the above assertion: "The enemy was, however, located by shore radar stations, and was plotted by Portsmouth...."

An interesting revelation is that the move of the 10 Panzer Division from Soissons to Amiens, within striking distance of Dieppe, was actually known by British intelligence in June, earlier than the 13 July quoted in the wartime official history of British intelligence. Campbell proves that the movement of this division earlier was the main reason for the initial Rutter plan being changed on 5 July from a two-tide to a one tide operation. The final chapter examines the controversy over the relationship between Jubilee and the successful Normandy landings almost two years later. All the supposed lessons learned are examined in the light of historical evidence and rarely is there more

than a bare mention of Dieppe. One of the main reasons according to Campbell is the long time gap between the two operations, and that many other large-scale landings, such as in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and the Pacific Islands, happened in between for the raid to have contributed much to future invasion planning. Campbell also shows that by 1944 the Germans would have fortified all the Channel ports anyway, as a matter of strategic principal and because of their experiences in Italy. Also for certain is that D-Day would have occurred in 1944 without Jubilee. Campbell does admit to lessons learned at the sharp end, one example being the impetus given to development of the Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers.

Looking at the book as a whole, although the research has been meticulous and the conclusions, when reached, are accurate, the presentation is unfortunately lacking. Overall it is very haphazard, confusing and complicated to follow. Leaving these criticisms aside, the book is recommended to anyone who is interested in the Dieppe raid or the Normandy landings, and no doubt it will become a standard work.

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The Unknown Navy **Canada's World War II** **Merchant Navy**

Robert G. Halford, *The Unknown Navy: Canada's World War II Merchant Navy* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell Publishing, 1995) 288 pages, \$29.95, (ISBN 1-55125-016-0)

It is with good reason that a recent book on the Canadian Merchant Navy, written by Robert G. Halford, has been titled *The Unknown Navy: Canada's World War II Merchant Navy*. One of the keys to the survival of Britain during the