

John A. English. *Monty and the Canadian Army*. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2021. Pp. 372.

John A. English in *Monty and the Canadian Army* successfully argues that Bernard Montgomery exerted a significant influence over the Canadian Army during the Second World War as well as in the years following the conflict. English clearly shows how Montgomery had both a direct and indirect influence on the development of First Canadian Army at various points throughout the war: from helping plan operations that Canadian soldiers took part in, to dispensing leadership lessons to Canadian officers and even reviewing Canadian units and providing feedback on the quality of Canadian officers and other ranks. English further shows how in the post-war years several Canadian disciples of Montgomery rose to senior positions within the Canadian Army and thus Montgomery's teachings and influence continued. The book is the first of its kind to provide such an impressive and well-written examination of Montgomery's influence over the Canadian Army and is an important contribution to both Canadian Second World War historiography and to the volumes of work already written on Montgomery.

The opening four chapters of the book succinctly identify the origins of Montgomery's command doctrine while also detailing the declining professionalism of the Canadian Army during the interwar years. English effectively presents Montgomery's command doctrine as one that emphasised extensive training as well as an approach to battle that stressed saving lives through meticulous planning. He then shows how much of this command doctrine was adopted by First Canadian Army. The Canadian Army was clearly unprepared for war in 1939 and, argues English, even by 1941 it still was not ready for a role which many hoped would be like that of the Canadian Corps' impressive Hundred Days Campaign in 1918. As English explains, the quality of the Canadian Army began to improve when Harry Crerar, only recently appointed commander of the then Canadian Corps, accepted Montgomery's offer to conduct a review of Canadian troops. This was carried out in February and March 1942 and Chapters 6 and 7 detail this process and are perhaps the most effective in showing Montgomery's influence over the army. Chapter 6 is devoted to a detailed account of this review with many of Montgomery's recommendations for personnel replacement implemented in the aftermath. Chapter 7 then explains that while Montgomery thought

of Canadians as first-rate troops, he lamented their lack of training and the general weakness of Canadian officers (though he certainly identified some excellent officers such as Guy Simonds). Many of Montgomery's recommendations regarding increased training and better tactics were adopted by Crerar and his subordinates throughout First Canadian Army. From Chapter 8 onwards, English details Canadian operations in Hong Kong, Dieppe, Italy and throughout northwest Europe, ably displaying how Montgomery both directly and indirectly played a role in shaping Canadian operations.

There is no question that English is effective in showing how Montgomery had a continued and impressive influence over both the development of the Canadian Army and its operational history during the war. From Dieppe to the Netherlands, Montgomery seemed to have a part to play in almost everything the Canadian Army did. The only issue one might take with English's work is that of a lack of balance in his approach to his subjects. English is highly critical of First Canadian Army commander Harry Crerar throughout the book and even when Crerar finally grasped army-level operations during the battles for the Rhine, English is limited in his praise. Conversely, criticisms of Montgomery are generally absent. English spends little time on any of Montgomery's well-known errors or misjudgments. Most surprising is that he almost completely ignores Montgomery's fault in failing to reinforce First Canadian Army during the operations to clear the Scheldt. Instead, English blames Crerar's decision to assign II Canadian Corps responsibility for the entire area from Boulogne to Antwerp instead of accepting Montgomery's suggestion that John Crocker's I Corps control operations in that area, leaving II Canadian Corps to focus on Antwerp (pp. 178-180). Historians with more knowledge of Montgomery than this reviewer may take umbrage with the way English has uncritically assessed Montgomery's leadership. However, it must be pointed out that this book was not intended to be a biography of either Montgomery or Crerar.

What this book intended to do, and what it achieves, is to shed incredibly important light on Montgomery's influence over the Canadian Army during both the war and post-war period. Of particular interest to this historian was Montgomery's early influence on the Canadian Army as it was expanding, training and conducting exercises in Great Britain prior to the invasion of northwest Europe. As well, English's novel discussion of Montgomery's influence in the decade and a half after the war is an incredibly important addition

to our understanding of the development of the Canadian Army in the Cold War years. This book, like most of English's work, is well-written and well researched and is a must read for any historian attempting to better understand the Canadian Army from 1939 to 1961 and is a welcome addition to the historiography of Canada's Second World War.

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