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Six Armies in Normandy

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command vehicle. In the foreground are two soldiers operating an Enigma coding machine, the device through which the Germans unwittingly furnished the Allies a continuous stream of sensitive information throughout the war. Since *Lost Victories* and *Panzer Leader* were written, much new information has come to light about World War II and better books are available about the overall conduct of the war. Neither has been surpassed, however, for an understanding of the inner workings of the German military machine that produced remarkable victories and a catastrophic defeat.

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Keegan, John. *Six Armies in Normandy*.
New York: Viking Press, 1982.
365pp. \$17.95. Paperback by Pen-
guin Press, \$6.95

John Keegan's second book *Six Armies in Normandy* is a puzzling work. It deals with six armies: American, British, German, Canadian, Polish, and French during the Normandy Campaign. It seeks to show how these armies, while resembling each other on purpose, nevertheless, mirrored individual national values. Keegan's technique is to describe one operation of each army. For example he deals with the American airborne drop prior to the invasion, the Canadian landing at Juno Beach, British operations

Epsom and Goodwood, the German counterattack at Mortain, the Polish stand near Falaise, and the French role in the liberation of Paris. A clear concise operational narrative helps prevent the individual engagements from being too episodic.

However, the book is strangely unbalanced. Though undeniably courageous the Poles and French formed but a small portion of the allied forces and their role, though important, was hardly decisive. The American forces included more than two airborne divisions, and the German army in France was larger than any single allied contingent. Yet Keegan treats these armies, as well as the British and Canadian forces, as roughly equal in terms of their contributions to the campaign. Nor does the author deal with differences in tactics, doctrine or command style, and unlike his first book, *Face of Battle*, *Six Armies* does relatively little with the reactions of individual soldiers. The reader does not get a sense of what it was like to be a Panzer Grenadier or Canadian foot-soldier during the Normandy Campaign and subsequent breakout.

Yet despite the shortcomings Keegan's book is worth reading—the tactical scenes are well done, and the strategic narrative is clear and concise. If little that is new about the campaign emerges, Keegan has still provided a sound and occasionally exciting view of one of World War II's major operations.

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