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Hitler's Blitzkrieg Enemies 1940: Denmark, Norway, Netherlands & Belgium (Men-at-Arms)



Synopsis

The armies of Scandinavia and the Low Countries bore the first crushing impact of Hitler's mighty Blitzkrieg war machine in Western Europe, in campaigns that astonished and terrified the world. The German Wehrmacht was millions strong, equipped with the latest guns, tanks and aircraft, and had the priceless advantage of having learned the realities of modern warfare in Poland the previous September. The defenders of Scandinavia and the Low Countries were raised from small populations, and were inadequately funded, trained, equipped and armed. Their modest numbers, inexperience, and largely indefensible borders condemned them to rapid defeat - in a few hours (Denmark), a few days (Holland), a couple of weeks (Belgium), and at most two months (Norway). For this reason they have tended to be neglected by history - in many cases, unjustly. Vastly outnumbered - and, in the case of the neutral Low Countries, with their potential French and British allies reeling under simultaneous attacks - thousands of soldiers fought heroically in the hopeless defence of their homelands against the Nazi juggernaut. Tiny Denmark had only 6,600 troops when it was invaded on 9 April 1940 by six times as many Germans with air and tank support; resistance lasted only four hours. On the same day, mountainous Norway, with 25,000 men mainly scattered in small numbers along its cliff-bound coastline, was invaded by the first elements of seven German seaborne and airborne divisions totalling 100,000 men. A British, French and Free Polish force landed to support the Norwegians, but despite the serious casualties inflicted on the German forces the country was finally forced to surrender two months later on 9 June 1940. In the mean time the massive German Operation Yellow, undertaken by 2.75 million troops backed by strong air forces, had fallen on the neutral Netherlands and Belgium (10 May), and on France (16 May). The 250,000 Netherlands troops put up unexpectedly stubborn resistance, but were ordered to surrender on 15 May after the German bombing of Rotterdam. Belgium had mobilised some 900,000 troops, and received some help from Britain and France, but the resistance faltered as Panzergruppe Von Kleist outflanked them through the supposedly impassable Ardennes; Belgium requested an armistice on 26 May, and surrendered on the 28th. Between 26 May and 4 June the survivors of the British Expeditionary Force were evacuated from Dunkirk. On 10 June the Germans crossed the Seine; the French government fled Paris on the 12th; on the 17th Marshal Pétain requested an armistice, and France finally capitulated on 22 June. Informed by the latest research and drawing upon archival records and period photography, this absorbing study explains the organization and combat performance and depicts the appearance of the armies of Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands and Belgium as they sought to counter overwhelming German forces in the fateful spring of 1940.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In the spring of 1940, the lightly armed European states of Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Belgium fell within hours to weeks to Nazi invasion. The Norwegian Army resisted longest, thanks in part to Norway's distance from Germany and to intervention by British and French troops. The struggles of these small states were soon forgotten in the much larger and more horrific fighting to come. "Hitler's Blitzkrieg Enemies 1940" is an Osprey Men-at-Arms Series book, authored Nigel Thomas, with illustrations by Johnny Shumate. It attempts to shed a little light on the militaries of the four countries that fell in spring 1940. The text proceeds by nation, with concise descriptions of its military, its brief battle against the Nazis, and especially, their uniforms and equipment. The narrative is much enhanced by a goodly collection of wartime photographs, illustrations, and maps. A collection of color plates at the back of the book provides nice renderings of some typical uniforms. This is a short book, less than fifty pages, with a good presentation on uniforms. It offers some interesting details about the respective armies, nearly all of whom found reason to mount some portion of their forces on bicycles and motorcycles, in addition to horses and light armored vehicles. Recommended to students of the Second World War, especially those interested in uniforms and equipment.

T&A's Rating System 0 to 5 with 0 the lowest score and 5 the highest and NA for not applicable: Books (nonfiction) Content 5 Coverage of topic 5 Adequacy of descriptions 5 Detail 5 Accuracy 5 References 3 Illustrations 5 Size 5 Detail 5 Captions 5 Sufficient Maps 3 Sufficient

Drawings 3 Sufficient Photos 5 Product worth the price - Yes, 5. Small book with some of the more obscure details on these three countries in 1940 that you will not find in other books.

This fills in a gap you usually have to deal with in WWII coverage. I've got books that give you great paintings of the uniforms, but no thought to the orders of battle of these countries, and they even have Luxembourg, which you never hear about. It makes a great addition to the great body of work by Osprey.

Let me say that its about time to have a book on this subject. So much has been printed on the German Army that this will help with a lot of history. This will fill a lot of holes in uniform worn then.

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