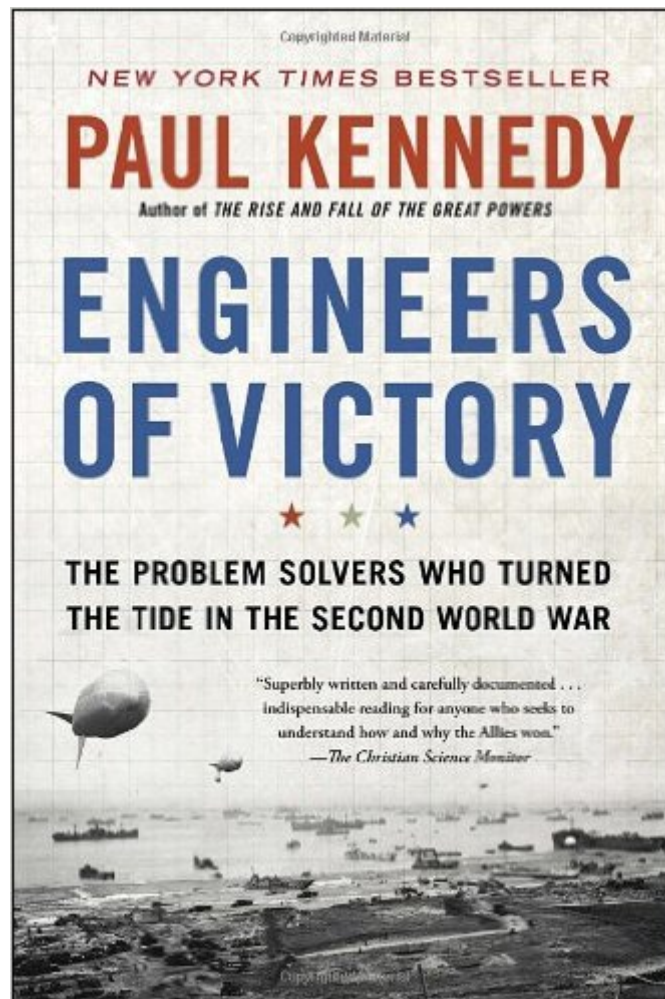# Engineers Of Victory: The Problem Solvers Who Turned The Tide In The Second World War

Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLERPaul Kennedy, award-winning author of The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers and one of today's most renowned historians, now provides a new and unique look at how World War II was won. Engineers of Victory is a fascinating nuts-and-bolts account of the strategic factors that led to Allied victory. Kennedy reveals how the leaders' grand strategy was carried out by the ordinary soldiers, scientists, engineers, and businessmen responsible for realizing their commanders' visions of success.In January 1943, FDR and Churchill convened in Casablanca and established the Allied objectives for the war: to defeat the Nazi blitzkrieg; to control the Atlantic sea lanes and the air over western and central Europe; to take the fight to the European mainland; and to end Japan's imperialism. Astonishingly, a little over a year later, these ambitious goals had nearly all been accomplished. With riveting, tactical detail, Engineers of Victory reveals how.Kennedy recounts the inside stories of the invention of the cavity magnetron, a miniature radar "as small as a soup plate," and the Hedgehog, a multi-headed grenade launcher that allowed the Allies to overcome the threat to their convoys crossing the Atlantic; the critical decision by engineers to install a super-charged Rolls-Royce engine in the P-51 Mustang, creating a fighter plane more powerful than the Luftwaffe's; and the innovative use of pontoon bridges (made from rafts strung together) to help Russian troops cross rivers and elude the Nazi blitzkrieg. He takes readers behind the scenes, unveiling exactly how thousands of individual Allied planes and fighting ships were choreographed to collectively pull off the invasion of Normandy, and illuminating how crew chiefs perfected the high-flying and inaccessible B-29 Superfortress that would drop the atomic bombs on Japan.The story of World War II is often told as a grand narrative, as if it were fought by supermen or decided by fate. Here Kennedy uncovers the real heroes of the war, highlighting for the first time the creative strategies, tactics, and organizational decisions that made the lofty Allied objectives into a successful reality. In an even more significant way, Engineers of Victory has another claim to our attention, for it restores "the middle level of war" to its rightful place in history.Praise for Engineers of Victory "Superbly written and carefully documented . . . indispensable reading for anyone who seeks to understand how and why the Allies won."—The Christian Science Monitor "An important contribution to our understanding of World War II . . . Like an engineer who pries open a pocket watch to reveal its inner mechanics, [Paul] Kennedy tells how little-known men and women at lower levels helped win the war."—Michael Beschloss, The New York Times Book Review "Histories of World War II tend to concentrate on the leaders and generals at the top who make the big strategic decisions and on the lowly grunts at the bottom. . . . [Engineers of Victory] seeks to fill this gap in the

historiography of World War II and does so triumphantly. . . . This book is a fine tribute.â •â "The Wall Street Journal Â â œ[Kennedy] colorfully and convincingly illustrates the ingenuity and persistence of a few men who made all the difference.â •â "The Washington Postâ œThis superb book is Kennedyâ ™s best.â •â "Foreign AffairsFrom the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

I must admit, I started with a bias predisposed to like this book. Yet I was profoundly disappointed - in some chapters the author simply failed do sufficient research, in others he simply got the facts wrongs (other reviews have pointed out that no, the Seabees didn't build the Mulberry Harbors.)One of the main arguments of the book is that in five crucial areas (convoys, command of the air, Blitzkreieg, etc.) it wasn't just one event or one technology that solved the problem it was many. Yet in chapter 2, "How to Win the Command of the Air" the author says the air war over Europe was won by the P-51 Mustang and the Merlin engine. That is so profoundly wrong as to be embarrassing.There's no doubt the P-51 Mustangs were a critical part of winning the air war. However, the reality is that British and American bombers were destroyed by both flak (anti-aircraft guns,) and fighters. Depending on the phase of the air war, more were lost to flak and at other times fighters.By 1943 the German air defense system had evolved into an integrated electronic air defense network. It's early warning network consisted of 250 long-range radars and had feeds from German signal intelligence. There was a dense network of 1,000 short-range radars all feeding the equivalent of a modern air traffic control system. The air defense system controlled 15,000

radar-guided flak (anti-aircraft guns,) that used 5,000 radars. It also controlled all German fighters by vectoring them into the bomber streams using 1,500 Ground Controlled Intercept radars. And German night fighters who went after the British had onboard air-to-air radar.The U.S. and British thought the best way to degrade the German Air Defense system was to jam and confuse it.

I was first moved to pick up this book by reading its review in The Wall Street Journal. That review raised my eyebrows since it referenced certain "facts" that were simply not true. I cannot comment on the "engineeering feats" relative to the other topics of the book like the aircraft or the tanks, but as the author of four books on the invasion of Normandy, I can speak to the subject of the artificial harbors called "Mulberry."The WSJ reviewer wrote, "...CBs or "SeaBees" ...under Adm. Ben Moreell...built the vast Mulberry Harbors that were towed across the English Channel to the beachheads established in Normandy on D-Day." This stunning proclamation was bad history at its worst. American Seabees had no such role. This was a British venture that consumed the energy of more than 300 British companies and a consortium of close to thirty British engineering firms employing over 45,000 British workers. They were towed across by U.S. and British tugs and assembled at their two locations under the direction of the British Navy. The Seabees contribution was a few hectic days working to clear and grade Omaha Beach to receive the pontoon and trestle roadway that would dovetail into the existing French roads on June 10. By June 19, the Mulberry A at Omaha Beach was destroyed in a great storm.But then, there was more distortion of the facts. The WSJ reviewer continued saying, "1.5 million Allied soldiers stepped ashore on them, which obviated the need to capture the heavily defended Norman port of Cherbourg."In fact no Americans landed at Mulberry A at Omaha Beach, or at Mulberry B in the British Sector at Arromanche, and the British Army landed only 200,000 of its entire one million man force at Mulberry B.

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