



Barbarossa: The Russian-German conflict 1941-1945

Author: Alan Clark
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This, is the definitive account of the greatest military campaign in history.

I've always loved a good bit of military history. Before I started reading this book, I knew (probably like most people) that the Germans fought the Russians through most of the war, and spent most of their time and effort focussing on them rather than we Brits on our little island. I never knew the details though, not all of them. Enter Mr. Clark, the maverick MP that was famous for living in a castle (and writing a diary) and writing in his spare time; writing rather well as it's turned out.

Divided into four 'books' spread over about 550 pages, this volume is a fair old size, but then it needs to be. It offers a blow by blow account of Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of what was then Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union. Proceeding chronologically, every notable action, from the campaigns' beginning in summer 1941 to its end amongst the flames of Berlin four years later is described in detail. There are photographs, detailed maps and diagrams of the progress of the advancing forces as well as detailed transcripts of many conversations in Hitler's inner circle, offering a new insight into why the 'German' leader (Hitler was actually Austrian by birth, and Stalin was not Russian but Georgian), really launched the campaign that destroyed not only his regime, but also himself.

For me, the most interesting aspect about this book is how the politicians - on both sides - consistently get in the way of the 'real' soldiers. One finds oneself feeling genuine sympathy for 'honest' soldiers like Guiderian, who are forced to fight a war of two fronts: firstly against the Russians also against his own political masters. Indeed, this is such a good book (originally published in 1965) that more than 20 years later the beautifully flowing text was re-released without any major revision. It was (and for the most part remains) just that good.

9 sausages out of 10

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