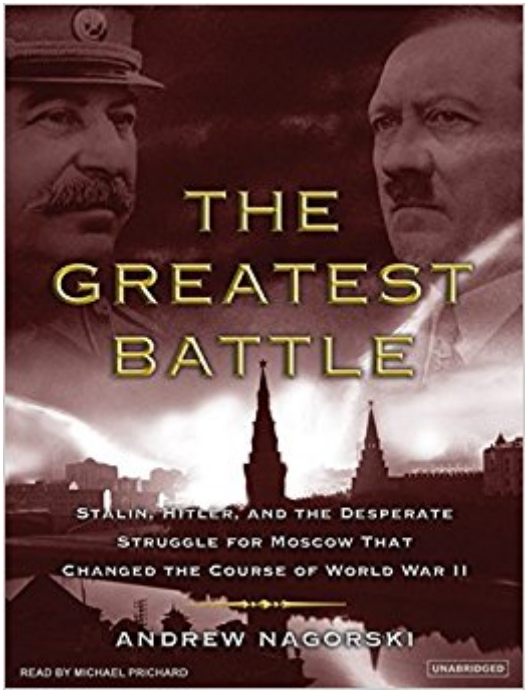
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The Greatest Battle: Stalin, Hitler, And The Desperate Struggle For Moscow That Changed The Course Of World War II



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Synopsis

Based on previously secret documents and eyewitness testimony, this is the shocking account of the most massive and deadliest battle of World War II, which ended in Hitler's defeat and changed the course of the war. Andrew Nagorski, Newsweek's former Moscow bureau chief, reveals that 2.5 million of the battle's 7 million troops were killed, taken prisoner, or severely wounded. Stalin and Hitler squandered the lives of their own soldiers by second-guessing their generals. And, while Stalin's army was barely armed, Hitler's soldiers had no winter clothing during the Russian winter. Historically, this was the first time the German blitzkrieg was halted in Europe, shattering Hitler's dream of a swift victory over the Soviet Union. And, although America was not yet in the war, President Roosevelt realized the importance of supporting the Russian war effort. This was the beginning of the Allied wartime alliance and Stalin's push for a postwar empire, which ended in the cold war. Because Stalin suppressed records of his near-fatal mistakes in this battle, its story has never been fully told. Now, Nagorski has studied recently declassified documents from Soviet archives and includes interviews with many survivors-including the son of the man in charge of removing Lenin's body from the besieged city-to provide the fullest view yet of this key battle.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Journalist and foreign correspondent Nagorski combines published sources and interviews in this history of what he calls the largest, deadliest and most decisive battle of WWII. The often cited Russian winter did not account for the battle's outcome, he asserts, nor did German military overstretch. The tide wasn't turned by Hitler's increasingly erratic command decisions either.

Moscow, Nagorski argues, was won by the Soviet government, the Red Army and the Russian people. Stalin's decision to stay in the city provided a rallying pointÃ¢â ¬â •otherwise his mistakes as a commander and his brutality as head of state might have handed the Germans a victory they couldn't win in combat. A Red Army still learning its craft lost more than two million soldiers before Moscow, many of whom were victims of teenaged officers and obsolete weapons, failed tactical doctrines and logistical systems. Even the vaunted Siberian divisions were short of everything, including winter clothes, as they fought in sub-zero temperatures. Nor were Moscow's residents the united folk of Communist myth. Nagorski's sources luridly describe panic, looting and wildcat strikes as the Germans approached. Still, he concludes that whatever the shortcomings of Moscow's defenders, their deeds don't require heroic myth: the truth is honorable enough. (Sept.) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

The war on the eastern front during World War II was the greatest land war in history, and it was unprecedented in its savagery and slaughter. Westerners usually think of the battle for Stalingrad as the obvious representation of that savagery. However, Nagorski, a senior editor at Newsweek, makes a convincing assertion that the battle for Moscow, which raged from September 1941 to April 1942, was the most destructive and most important battle of the war. The broad outlines of Nagorski's chronicle are familiar, including the rapid initial advance of the Germans after the invasion of June 1941, the early snows that bogged down the advance, and the brilliant counterattack of the Siberian reserves that drove the Germans back from the gates of Moscow. What makes Nagorski's account special are his skill at conveying the devastating human costs of the conflict and his integration of individual experiences with the broader strategic goals of each side. Freeman, Jay --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

This book provides a fascinating selection of quotes, anecdotes, and details concerning the battle for Moscow, many of which I've never seen before, despite extensive reading about the war in general and this battle in particular. While the book is entitled "The Greatest Battle...", there is actually relatively in the book about the battle itself, in other words about troop movements and fighting, and you'd be hard-pressed from this book to determine how the fighting actually unfolded.That said, the book does an excellent job describing the overall context of the battle, including diplomatic issues, events leading up to the battle, the tragic fate of many civilians caught up in the fighting, atrocities by both sides (including self-inflicted atrocities), etc. While most of the

anecdotes are from the Russian side (based on interviews conducted by the author), he also includes a fair number from the German side as well. Much of the book is devoted to the topic of how Hitler’s and Stalin’s policies were responsible for killing many of their own men.While I’ve subtracted one star from this book, it is mainly because it is difficult to use as a research resource. For instance, the author is generally frustratingly very sparing with details about the context of his interviews and usually, for instance, does not even bother to identify which unit the interviewee served in. Also, while the author includes copious source notes, they are without footnotes so are difficult to use, because they are not footnoted.If these issues don’t bother and you are just looking for an interesting read, I would probably give this book five stars.

Talk about false advertising: this book is presented as an account of the Battle of Moscow, but that particular battle is only one of many subjects covered. Sure, some background information is needed in any such book, but in this case the background information far exceeds the coverage of what is supposed to be the main subject: The Germans don’t approach Moscow until literally halfway through this book. The rest deals with everything from Stalin’s purges of the 1930 (one chapter) to Russian diplomacy with American and Britain (one chapter each), to Germany’s secret preparations for the invasion and Stalin’s stubborn refusal to see the signs (two chapters), to the fighting between Germany and Russia other than in Moscow (many, many chapters). So a more accurate title would be "An Overview of Soviet Political, Military, and Diplomatic Affairs, 1930-1945." Don’t get me wrong: this is all fascinating stuff, but the book is still sold in a misleading way. Also, the author seems to possess only a cursory understanding of military strategy and tactics, and in-depth examinations about the conflict tend to focus on, for instance, lengthy first-hand accounts by surviving soldiers, not analyses of the chesslike maneuverings of Hitler and Stalin (or, more accurately, Zhukov). Even worse, the author interrupts the chronology of the military conflict with asides so long that you forget where the fighting left off. If this is your first book on the war between Russia and Germany, it will provide a solid overview of the big picture. But if you are looking for an insightful, in-depth account of the Battle for Moscow, then this book is not what you are looking for.

I cannot match the other reviewers in their talent for words. However, I will add a few things. First, this book is a five start book. Second, what makes the book so good is it’s starting to turn the tide of history. Prior to about 2000 the conventional wisdom was Stalingrad broke the back of the German Wehrmacht. This book shows it’s just not true. Moscow stopped the German Army. Stalingrad was the first defeat of a taken position. Kursk was when the German Army was wrecked. All of these

accomplishments were done by the Soviets.First, did Hitler come close to winning against Russia? I would say yes and this book explains the reasons. Germany would have destroyed the Communist nerve center of Russia if Moscow had fallen in October of 1941. Second, there may have been a fair chance that Stalin would have been either captured by the Germans or arrested by his own people. The former had a chance, the latter really none (except in the paranoid mind of Stalin). But the fact remains that the Soviet Union would have died if Moscow had been lost. The loss of the rail and communication lines would have added another two years to the war effort; it's doubtful if Russia could have had the resources to really wage a war itself.This book gives more stories from the Soviets (Russians) than the Germans. Why? Simple, the German Army of the early 1940s was largely exterminated fighting against the Russians. And the Russians simply didn't have enough guns, ammo, or tanks to do the job. So, the Russians did what the Russians do best: they tossed people at the problem. One German machine gun crew figured that the local commissar calculated the amount of ammo a typical German crew could carry, recruited the number of soldiers for the machine guns bullets, and sent human waves to capture the position. It worked but at a ghastly cost in human life.Two people helped save Moscow in 1941. The first being Hitler when he sent his army into a pointless invasion of the area of Southwest if Moscow, Kiev. That battle gave no real fruit to the Germans and gave the real savior of Moscow, Zukov, time to prepare the city against the Nazi siege.The books is full of stories, mostly about Stalin, or about the hardship the local people felt under both the Nazi or Soviets. Stalin is the ultimate dictator of the 20th Century. And this book explains another facet to the most ruthless man in the last Century. Hitler is talked about. But Hitler's blitz against Russia is like a large wave hitting an endless beach. The army could advance and advance but the huge countryside would swallow the Wehrmacht whole. When the German supply system breaks down then they start to rob the local people of both food and clothing. Stalin orders the Russian Army to destroy every home near the front. More Soviet people are lost to this than any depravation done by the Germans.Where the book falls a little short is it fails to show that only Russia under Stalin could stop the Nazi armies. Poland had a good army (it beat Russian in a war from 1919 to 1920). But the Germans and Soviets made short work of it in less than four weeks. Both the British and French armies lost to the Germans.But it was the Russians that used simple, brutish tactics that beat the Germans. It was the Russians who stopped the Nazis. It took a nation with an insanely paranoid dictator - Stalin - who made his nation into the largest armed camp in the world. That was the nation that actually defeated Germany.I wish the author had explored that Stalin made a paradox of Russia. Russia had to go through the worst abuse of any nation in order to stand the assault of Germany. If anybody less that Stalin had been in charge of the Soviet Union it would

have fell. This is the point the book really does not make.

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