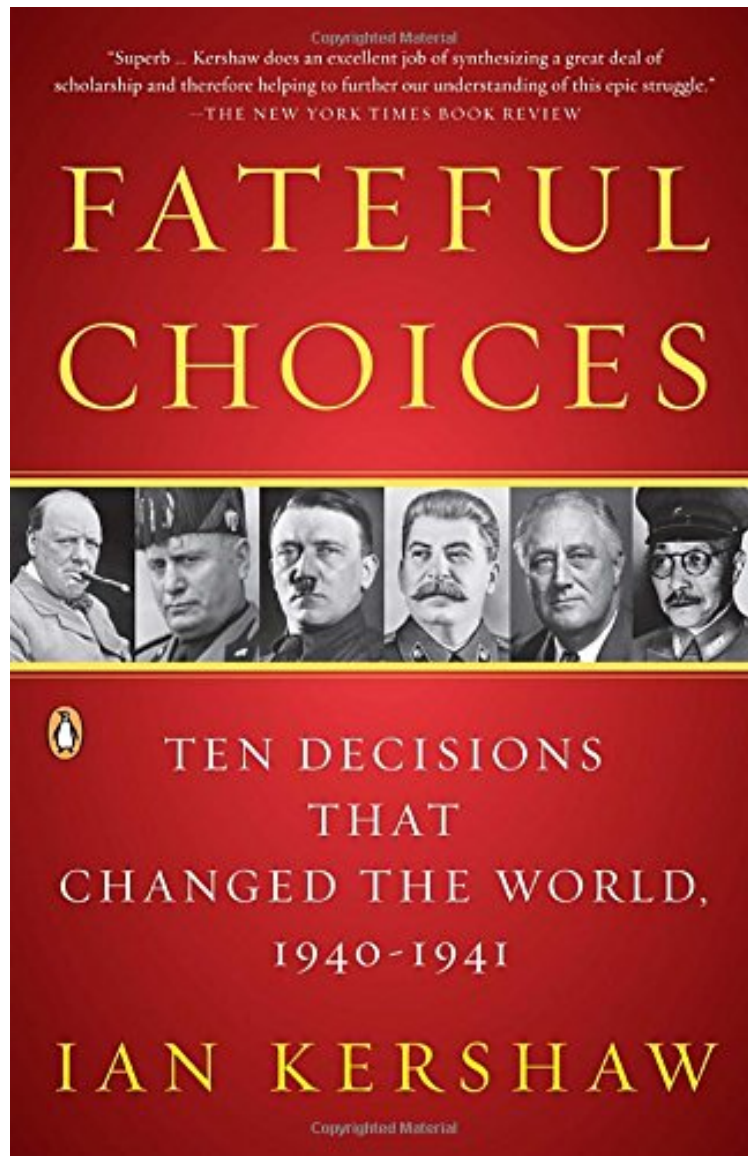


[Free read ebook] Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions That Changed the World, 1940-1941

Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions That Changed the World, 1940-1941

Ian Kershaw

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Ian Kershaw : Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions That Changed the World, 1940-1941 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions That Changed the World, 1940-1941:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. What if. By exurbanite Ian Kershaw, the British historian renowned for his authoritative biography of Adolph Hitler has, in Fateful Choices, widened his scope. He reexamines the critical decisions made in 1940 and 1941 by the major participants in World War II and asks what might have happened had

they been made differently. What if is, of course, hardly a rare question asked by historians, amateur and professional. It is an integral part of the game. What if Halifax rather than Churchill had been chosen wartime Prime Minister?. What if Hitler had stuck with his plan to invade Britain rather than turning on the Soviet Union instead?. What if Mussolini had not foolishly decided to invade Greece?. What if the paranoid Stalin had not purged his Red Army leadership in 1939 and then, in early 1940 acted on, rather than ignoring, multiple intelligence reports of an imminent German invasion? What if the Japanese had decided to invade Siberia rather than Indochina and attacking Pearl Harbor?. What if Roosevelt had acted more decisively in support of Britain in 1940 and 1941? Kershaw examines these and dozens of related questions in great detail over the course of almost 500 pages. The speculation makes for entertaining reading despite a fair amount of repetition. At the end, as is so often the case in the game of What if?, he concludes that the personalities of the key players and the circumstances under which they operated, made the decisions reached inevitable. In a brief Afterthoughts chapter at the end of the book he concedes that what if scenarios are a harmless but pointless diversion from the real question of what happened and why. His preceding chapters, he suggests have shown in each case why alternatives were ruled out. So much, then, for all the what ifs.

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. An interesting thesis

By 1. According to Ian Kershaw the main decisions made by the Axis and Allied powers were not planned in advance but improvised as battlefield successes and failures changed. This book needs to be read alongside Hew Strachan's new book about Clausewitz's "On War," because according to Strachan's interpretation of Clausewitz, tactical successes or failures ultimately shape strategy. This was seen in Kershaw's view of why Hitler choose to attack the Soviet Union. Kershaw states that Hitler attacked the Soviet Union because he could not defeat Britain during the Battle of Britain, and by overthrowing the Soviet regime maybe the English would plead for a settlement. Meanwhile the Japanese attacked the United States due to the German victories in Europe and their own defeat to the Soviet Union in 1939. The Japanese military successes in Asia persuaded Hitler to declare war against the United States because he thought that the Americans would be too distracted in the Far East. Kershaw disagrees with the think tank strategist of the fifties and sixties who believed that democracy hindered the decision making process. Mussolini, Hitler, and the Japanese military leaders led their nations to defeat because they failed to hear conflicting advice. But Churchill had a unified front because he had the support of the cabinet and Roosevelt's sensitivity towards public opinion prevented him from making any rash decisions that were detrimental to the Allied effort. The only weakness of this book is that in his section about Stalin, Kersahaw ignored traditional Russian and later Soviet suspicions of England, that made Stalin ignore British intelligence warnings that Hitler was going to attack the Soviet Union. Also Kershaw does not write about how Hitler's strategic decisions reflected his Austrian upbringing as mentioned by Martin Van Creveld.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. excellent overview of the war

By David Tooke Kershaw is one of the best of our WW II historians -- for me, he writes at just the right level of detail and sophistication, without losing sight of the big issues. And you learn a lot -- he clamly disposes of many of the tropes of received wisdom on "grand strategy" issues, political ones and (the area I am least capable of judging) military ones.

The newest immensely original undertaking from the historian who gave us the defining two-volume portrait of Hitler, *Fateful Choices* puts Ian Kershaw's analytical and storytelling gifts on dazzling display. From May 1940 to December 1941, the leaders of the world's six major powers made a series of related decisions that determined the final outcome of World War II and shaped the course of human destiny. As the author examines the connected stories of these profound choices, he restores a sense of drama and contingency to this pivotal moment, producing one of the freshest, most important books on World War II in years -- one with powerful contemporary relevance.

From *Publishers Weekly* Tracing the thought processes behind crucial turning points in WWII's most crucial 19 months, Kershaw, the author of a major biography of Hitler and professor of modern history at the University of Sheffield, reminds us that nothing in that titanic struggle was predetermined. Events might have run a very different course had Great Britain decided to negotiate peace with Hitler in June 1940, or if Japan had attacked the Soviet Union from the east as Germany invaded from the west in June 1941. Kershaw shows that Germany's war on two fronts and Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor, though ultimately disastrous for those countries, were the results of chains of reasoning based on political and military goals, however despicable. Though the author makes deep, intelligent use of archival materials, he provides little new information. Rather, his analysis focuses on the structure of decision making and its consequences. Kershaw depicts Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union as severely hampered by one man giving the orders, getting input only from subordinates too fearful to say anything he didn't want to hear. The slower democratic process enabled many voices to be heard and better informed judgments to be made by Churchill and Roosevelt. This subtext adds a note of hope to a text depicting one of humanity's darkest periods. (June) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From *Bookmarks Magazine* In *Fateful Choices*, Ian Kershaw, professor of history at England's University of Sheffield and author of multiple volumes on Hitler, including the acclaimed two-volume biography *Hubris* (1999) and *Nemesis* (2000), has done his research, and his arguments here possess the same reasoned analysis that he brought to the Hitler books. Not all key decisions were

made in the opening months of the war, of course, and critics wonder whether the author might have chosen other events to examine, including the offensive attacks by Japan and Germany that were catalysts for the war in the first place. Nonetheless, Kershaw offers a solid primer on the war's early history and a fresh perspective on the events that avoids the "terrible bog of counterfactual history" (Guardian) so popular these days in history books. *Fateful Choices* is engaging, and its insights into the decision-making process valuable. Copyright 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc. From Booklist

Kershaw is an esteemed British historian, best known for his definitive two-volume biography of Hitler. Here he examines a series of decisions that was instrumental in determining the course of World War II, including the one made by the British cabinet to refuse to make a deal with Hitler after the fall of France, Hitler's decision to invade the Soviet Union, and Stalin's choice to ignore strong evidence that a German attack was imminent. Kershaw has loaded his account with fascinating details. As he illustrates, British popular opinion generally supported compromise (or appeasement) with Hitler before Munich; even within the cabinet, there was support for an understanding with Hitler after the defeat of France. And on the eve of the German invasion, a Russian agent, code-named "the Corsican," provided clear and specific proof of the coming attack, which Stalin discounted. This is a well-done, riveting, and often surprising examination of these critical choices. Jay Freeman Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved