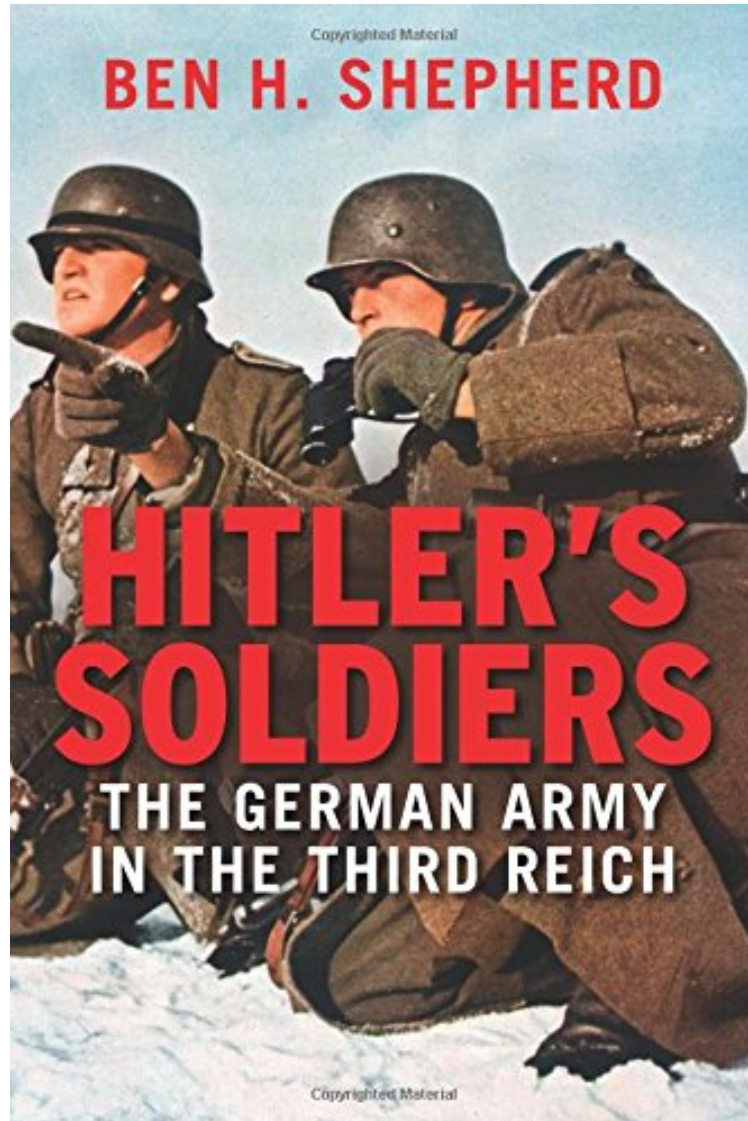


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Hitler's Soldiers: The German Army in the Third Reich

Ben H. Shepherd

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Ben H. Shepherd : Hitler's Soldiers: The German Army in the Third Reich before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hitler's Soldiers: The German Army in the Third Reich:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Focus on the Army More Than the SoldierBy MickMVery readable account of the development and decline of the German Army under the Third Reich, despite its somewhat daunting length. This book is more of a history of the WWII as told through the perspective of the German Army, rather than a personal, anecdotal account of individual soldiers, which is what I expected from the name of the book.

There are excerpts from letters from soldiers in the field, but the life of the individual soldier is not the subject. Although written in a popular history style, the book has a scholarly analytical approach to the subject of the performance of the German Army, looking at why individual units performed better than others, training issues, political indoctrination, rivalries with the SS and other Nazi organizations, etc. Worth the read, especially as a broad overview. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. *Magnificently Written Analysis of Germany's Actions Pre and During World War II* By Irwin Gray One of the best-written books I have ever read--in any historical context. The author lays out the results of what could only have been a stupendous research effort that was mined extraordinarily deeply and well. I learned more about the history of Germany in the days of the rise of Adolf Hitler and then his role (and that of the high command of the military) in creating a country built around a military threat to all its neighbors--in particular, Poland, then France, and the other countries in Europe. The author lays out the details of German military planning and Hitler's feelings about the inferior race of Russia that he expected would collapse on invasion and let his armies drive all the way to Moscow before the winter would even set in. His coverage of the pre-war and war periods against the Soviet Union is so thorough, you get the feeling that you are immersed in every significant detail, from a discussion of tank strengths to the faults of the commanders on both sides of the invasion of Russia (and all that happened until the Russian conquest of the eastern part of Germany. I have been reading books about various developmental stages of WW II from the initial mobilization of Germany until its downfall. This book lays out just about every facet of what happened where and when (and the details of the underlying events) re the battles that ended the war. And it was all laid out in a magnificently organized manner--by chronology and by the theater of events. The book is loaded not only with new material based on the latest revelations of documents about the Third Reich and conquered countries but each of the elements is backed up by concise discussions of the history that lead to its 'present' state. It also covers material on how the German army of WW II treated the civilians of the countries it occupied--full of factual material that is so well organized you will understand not only what happened, but also why it happened, the German leaders who made it happen, and the military that carried out the edicts emanating from the Fuhrer's headquarters. I am simultaneously reading the book from page 1 towards the end--it's a big book. I also use the index and dive into the reading about particular battles and battlefield sites. Rewarding--no matter how you read it. It has a big picture section with some special scenes of battle areas, but I found the pictures of the top ranking generals, colonel generals, field marshals, and others, that you do not find in other books, to be most engrossing. 4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. and his generals were able to adopt modern tactics that overwhelmed superior forces, especially in France. By M. Cowan This a book for those who still buy the story that only a few Germans (e.g., SS and Gestapo people) were responsible for the Holocaust and other crimes (e.g., the deliberate destruction of the dikes in Holland after D-Day in a fit of revenge and hatred that had no military purpose but killed hundreds of thousands of innocent Dutch citizens), and that the German armed forces (Luftwaffe and Wehrmacht) were uninvolved, Shepherd makes clear that they were all participants, and that knowledge of what they were doing was widespread--and largely approved--by virtually the entire German population. Apart from that reportage, the book also presents a fascinating story of how Hitler built up the army in preparation for war, and his generals were able to adopt modern tactics that overwhelmed superior forces, especially in France, whose military leaders were still trying to fight against WWI weapons and tactics. It also describes in great detail the futile and desperate efforts to stave off the increasingly powerful forces assembled against Germany (mainly Russian and American). It also discredits any thoughts that the generals who tried to kill Hitler opposed what he was doing on moral grounds. They had concluded that the war was lost and that they needed to reach a peace agreement with the Allies. However, they realized that Hitler would not agree to that, so they needed to remove him, and the only way to do that was to kill him. No great moral epiphany, just a realistic military decision. But the main lesson in this book is still the description of the wide spread participation of those armed forces in the crimes of the century.

A penetrating study of the German army's military campaigns, relations with the Nazi regime, and complicity in Nazi crimes across occupied Europe For decades after 1945, it was generally believed that the German army, professional and morally decent, had largely stood apart from the SS, Gestapo, and other corps of the Nazi machine. Ben Shepherd draws on a wealth of primary sources and recent scholarship to convey a much darker, more complex picture. For the first time, the German army is examined throughout the Second World War, across all combat theaters and occupied regions, and from multiple perspectives: its battle performance, social composition, relationship with the Nazi state, and involvement in war crimes and military occupation. This was a true people's army, drawn from across German society and reflecting that society as it existed under the Nazis. Without the army and its conquests abroad, Shepherd explains, the Nazi regime could not have perpetrated its crimes against Jews, prisoners of war, and civilians in occupied countries. The author examines how the army was complicit in these crimes and why some soldiers, units, and higher commands were more complicit than others. Shepherd also reveals the reasons for the army's early battlefield successes and its mounting defeats up to 1945, the latter due not only to Allied superiority and Hitler's mismanagement as commander-in-chief, but also to the failings—moral, political, economic, strategic, and

operational—of the army's own leadership.