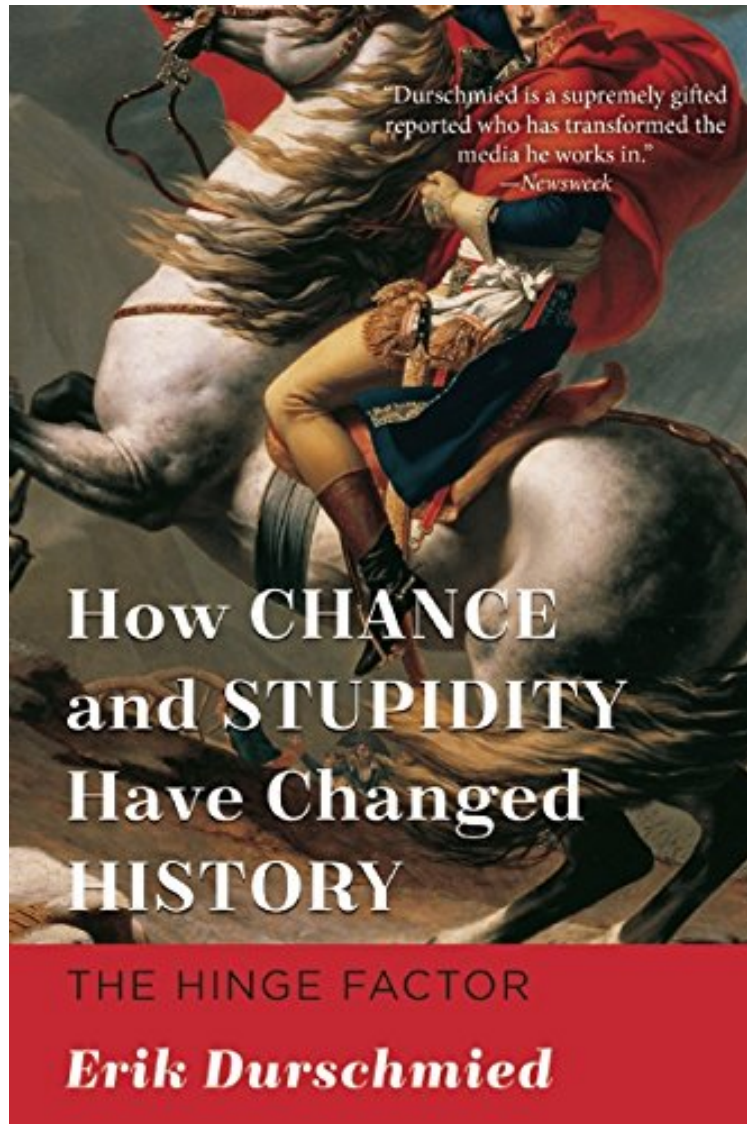


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# How Chance and Stupidity Have Changed History: The Hinge Factor

*Erik Durschmied*

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**Erik Durschmied : How Chance and Stupidity Have Changed History: The Hinge Factor** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised How Chance and Stupidity Have Changed History: The Hinge Factor:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Thought provokingBy Bob GI have always been amazed how being in the right place and time could affect your life for better or worse. One or two seconds difference could save your

life. On a grand scale, throughout history, proper timing and positioning could have saved millions of lives or changed our historical path completely as you so aptly pointed out in this book. Well written examples of what happened but could have had such a profoundly different outcome if decisions by those in authority had been timed and coordinated oh so slightly differently. What if?????0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Insightful but inconsistentBy Hungry BillThis book has many insightful revelations and discussions of historical turning points, especially with the twentieth century. It suffers, however, from trivial and tedious listing of a lot of tactical military moves in earlier battles. I found myself annoyed as often as informed. I don't recommend the book for either scholars or casual readers.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Scary and DepressingBy Wendell H HowellSo will mankind go on killing each other or we ever stop this madness? Probably not. North Korea, ISIS, Jews vs Arabs? And the lists goes on. Will our grandkids go through even worse trials? Scary and depressing.

From the Trojan Horse to a photograph snapped in Vietnam, world history has been shaped as much by chance and error as by courage and heroism. Despite impossible odds, invincible armies fall in bitter defeat to weaker opponents. How and why does this happen? What decides the fate of battle? In this fascinating book, Erik Durschmied takes us through the major conflicts of history—from Agincourt to the Civil War, from Crimea to the Gulf War—and reveals how, in war, it is the improbable and the inconceivable that determine events. Writing with the style and flair that made him an award-winning war correspondent, Durschmied explores the fistful of nails that could have won Waterloo for Napoleon; the barrel of schnapps that proved disastrous for an Austrian emperor; and the three cigars that changes the course of Antietam; and many other instances when chance decided history's path. Conflicts are decided by the caprice of weather, erroneous intelligence, unlikely heroism, strange coincidence, or individual incompetence—in short, by the unpredictable “hinge factor.” Skyhorse Publishing, as well as our Arcade imprint, are proud to publish a broad range of books for readers interested in history--books about World War II, the Third Reich, Hitler and his henchmen, the JFK assassination, conspiracies, the American Civil War, the American Revolution, gladiators, Vikings, ancient Rome, medieval times, the old West, and much more. While not every title we publish becomes a New York Times bestseller or a national bestseller, we are committed to books on subjects that are sometimes overlooked and to authors whose work might not otherwise find a home.

.com What if it hadn't rained at Agincourt in 1415 and the French had, as expected, won the day? What if one of Napoleon's most trusted commanders had spiked Wellington's guns with a handful of nails at Waterloo in 1815, providing his emperor with victory? What if Hitler hadn't paused for three vital days during his invasion of France in May 1940, allowing the British Expeditionary Force precious time to evacuate from Dunkirk? Moments like these, argues Erik Durschmied, provide the hinge factor in history: examples of stupidity, chance, or accident that have irrevocably changed the outcome of human history, for better or worse. Drawing on his extensive experience as a war correspondent with the BBC and CBS, Durschmied moves from ancient Troy and the Trojan Horse to Iraq and Operation Desert Storm, offering a persuasive and at times wry account of the ways in which chance affects the unfolding of history. Recounting 17 key moments in human conflict and warfare, *The Hinge Factor* is not just an amusing meditation on what might have been; it is also a poignant and vivid account of the brutality and stupidity of war. More than just an account of accidents in history, this is a thoughtful and absorbing book. --Jerry Brotton, .co.uk From Publishers Weekly What decides victory in battle? Superiority--in numbers, leadership, strategy or fighting ability--is certainly a factor. Military historian and war correspondent Durschmied, who lives in France, reminds us that chance--known in military terms as the Hinge Factor--can also play a decisive role. In this fast-paced study, Durschmied (*Don't Shoot the Yanqui*, etc.) analyzes battles both famous and obscure, showing how chance has enabled inferior armies to defeat superior opponents, thus changing the course of history. Serious readers will approach some chapters with tongue firmly in cheek. Few might accept, for example, that a slap on the face set in motion events that brought on the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia or that a parcel containing three cigars extended the American Civil War for four years. Other episodes are more plausible. Durschmied makes a good case that a swarm of angry bees decided the outcome of a key battle between British and German forces in German East Africa in 1914. Similarly, he shows how weather, which has bedeviled field commanders throughout the ages, played a decisive role in the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. The author concludes each chapter with a series of provocative questions designed to draw armchair strategists into a spirited game of What-if? More entertaining than scholarly, this will nevertheless please military buffs. Maps. (Mar). Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal In the fog of war, a battle can be won or lost in an instant owing to a fluke, a mistake, a trivial detail undone, stupidity, or simply the capriciousness of fate or bad luck. Durschmied, a war correspondent with three books under his belt, provides a refreshingly lively look at 17 battles and campaigns, from the Trojan War to the Gulf War, that turned on a seemingly insignificant event with far-reaching impact. The outcome of great events can hinge on the smallest detail--the mud at Agincourt, the lack of nails at Waterloo, the stupidity at Balaclava, and the lost cigars at Antietam. Best, however, are the chapters on lesser-known but equally fascinating battles and their hinges--the barrel of schnapps at Karansebes in 1788, angry bees at Tanga in 1914, and how a slap in the face in Manchuria in 1905 decided the epic World War I

Battle of Tannenburg nine years later. World War II, Vietnam, Berlin, and the Gulf War are not nearly as well presented as earlier conflicts, and the epilog is sappy and melodramatic, but the overall effect of this book is both entertaining and informative. Recommended for all public libraries.-William D. Bushnell, USMC (ret.), Sebascodegan Island, ME Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.