



Five Years, Four Fronts: A German Officer's World War II Combat Memoir

Georg Grossjohann , Ulrich Abele (Translator) , Theodore C. Mataxis (Footnotes by)

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After Hitler's invasions of Poland and France came the Russian Front—and that's when the real war started.

An infantryman who rose from the enlisted ranks to regimental command in combat, Georg Grossjohann fought on four different fronts during World War II, but saw most of his fighting—from 1941 to 1944—against Russians in the Soviet Union and Romania. He provides shattering glimpses of the horror and chaos of the war, as well as profound insights into everyday life in the *Wehrmacht*.

Five Years, Four Fronts chronicles the combat experiences of Grossjohann and his men as they triumphantly roll across Poland, France, and the sunny steppes of the Ukraine, only to ultimately sustain grinding defeats in the endless, freezing plains of the Soviet Union and the grim, dark Vosges Mountains of France. Grossjohann was a soldier's soldier, respected by his men, undaunted by his superiors, and, as can be observed in this raw, brutally honest account, not afraid to call the shots as he saw them.

Five Years, Four Fronts: A German Officer's World War II Combat Memoir Details

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From Reader Review Five Years, Four Fronts: A German Officer's World War II Combat Memoir for online ebook

Jessica says

This memoir is interesting for its focus on a German enlisted soldier-turned-officer and his experiences on the western and eastern fronts in Europe during WWII. He was not active in the Nazi Party, but instead conveys his view of the war from the men who tried to carry out what were often surprisingly badly-planned or coordinated missions. We often think of the German military, particularly early in the war, as an unstoppable force, but Grossjohann makes clear that there were many layers of miscommunication and frictions of war between Hitler and actual implementation. One frustrating aspect of this volume is the brevity of the passages in Grossjohann's own voice. While the historical interludes by way of explanation are useful, without any background on when Grossjohann wrote his memoirs or when and how they were translated the reader is left to wonder if this is merely a selection of his memoirs translated for an English-reading audience or if there are more detailed (and additional interesting) sections of the memoir we do not get to see here. Still, it serves as a good counter-balance to the plethora of American mass-produced paperback narratives of WWII.

Mark says

Fascinating book where written by Mr Grossjohann. The flow is broken by pointless exposition by the editor. This would have been a better book without it to be honest.

Maybe some more detail from the major would be welcome. Poland, the Battle of France and the war in Russia seem to be covered far too quickly. Is this because the author was involved in incidents he wasn't proud about?

David says

A personal and candid account of what someone's daddy did in the war. And that the author survived throughout, including two tours on the Eastern Front, is remarkable in itself.

Gave it three stars because I was feeling generous by the end. At points, I wondered if it would merit two stars. So maybe let's settle on 2.75 stars for a book that's interesting just because it's so different. It seems like (and is confirmed when one reads the epilogue by the author's son) a rambling reminiscence by someone not skilled in exposition. The "historical commentary" ties all the first-person material together, creating a context that isn't always clear in the author's tales. Without the "historical commentary," this would simply be a ragged primary source for someone's research, not a publishable book.

Most interesting take-away of all -- the manner in which the army kept running even in the face of utter chaos. By the end, most of the German troops weren't trained for the job, and still they put up a fight. Also, the administrative apparatus kept working -- the author was sent off to a school for regimental commanders just days before the final collapse.

The personal photos from the author's collection add a nice touch, and the publishers have attempted to

provide useful maps -- some are too small to be clear, but at least there's an effort to illustrate the sites of the author's experiences.

This is not a book I'll keep.

Sally Ashmore says

That was a powerful epilogue, and should be read as a forward to the book.

Daniel Brown says

The historical events and details were very good, but the "memoir" portion was not very captivating. If anything, it seemed to be more of a self-promotion writeup. Since he had written another book prior to this one, maybe that was better and he didn't want to repeat things. I was just expecting more out of this.

Andrew Herbert says

Interesting history of a German officer in WW2. The writing (translation?) is a bit awkward at times, but it's an engaging read. There are relatively few 1st person accounts of their career in the German army in WW2. It compares well with books like Hills' "By Tank Into Normandy", but covers a longer time period.

Larry says

Reasonable book. Fascinating story of Author's life during WWII. The undercurrent of sarcasm and disdain at crackpot commanders is rather amusing throughout. Like all good biographies during this period, the author remains unapologetic. Light read.

Richard says

A quick read, and as the title suggests an interesting topic.

Bob says

There aren't many books available written from the perspective of a Nazi soldier. This is one written from the perspective of a simple footsoldier in the German army. I enjoyed the reverse viewpoint here.
