Challenging previous accounts, Geoffrey Megargee shatters the myth that German generals would have prevailed in World War II if only Hitler had not meddled in their affairs. Indeed, Megargee argues, the German high command was much more flawed than many have suspected or acknowledged. Inside Hitlers High Command reveals that while Hitler was the central figure in many military decisions, his generals were equal partners in Germanys catastrophic defeat. Megargee exposes the structure, processes, and personalities that governed the Third Reichs military decision making and shows how Germanys presumed battlefield superiority was undermined by poor strategic and operational planning at the highest levels. His study tracks the evolution of German military leadership under the Nazis from 1933 to 1945 and expands our understanding of the balance of power within the high command, the role of personalities in its organizational development, and the influence of German military intellectuals on its structure and function. He also shows how the organization of the high command was plagued by ambition, stubbornness, political intrigue, and overworked staff officers. And his a week in the life chapter puts the high command under a magnifying glass to reveal its inner workings during the fierce fighting on the Russian Front in December 1941. Megargee also offers new insights into the high command crises of 1938 and shows how German general staff made fatal mistakes in their planning for Operation Barbarossa in 1941. Their arrogant dismissal of the Soviet militarys ability to defend its homeland and virtual disregard for the extensive intelligence and sound logistics that undergird successful large-scale military campaigns ultimately came back to haunt them. In the final assessment, observes Megargee, the generals strategic ideas were no better than Hitlers and often worse. Heinz Guderian, Franz Halder, and the rest were as guilty of self-deception as their Führer, believing that innate German superiority and strength of will were enough to overcome nearly any obstacle. Inside Hitlers High Command exposes these surprising flaws and illuminates the
process of strategy and decision making in the Third Reich. This book is part of the Modern War Studies series.

My Personal Review:
Dr. Megargee overturns decades of conventional wisdom about the responsibility for Germany’s loss in the Second World War. Although unsparing in his criticism of Hitler, on any number of subjects, he goes further than any author that I am aware of in portraying the lack of strategic vision on major issues of national political and economic goals, the short-sighted and self-serving carving-out of personal empires in the byzantine structure of the German High Command, inter-office and inter-service rivalry, and the the emphasis on the spiritual over the material that manifested itself most dangerously in the long-standing institutional disregard for intelligence work and logistics that made Germany’s loss nearly a foregone conclusion upon the launch of Operation Barbarossa in 1941.

Extensively researched and thoroughly documented, as well as clearly and engagingly written, this book is a significant addition to the scholarly literature on the German armed forces in WWII, as well as a refreshing antidote to the tiresome rehashing of the Führer’s blunders and the self-exculpatory memoirs of numerous German officers that appeared in the wake of Germany’s defeat. Strongly recommended for those interested in the subject, and another fine work of military history from the University Press of Kansas.

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