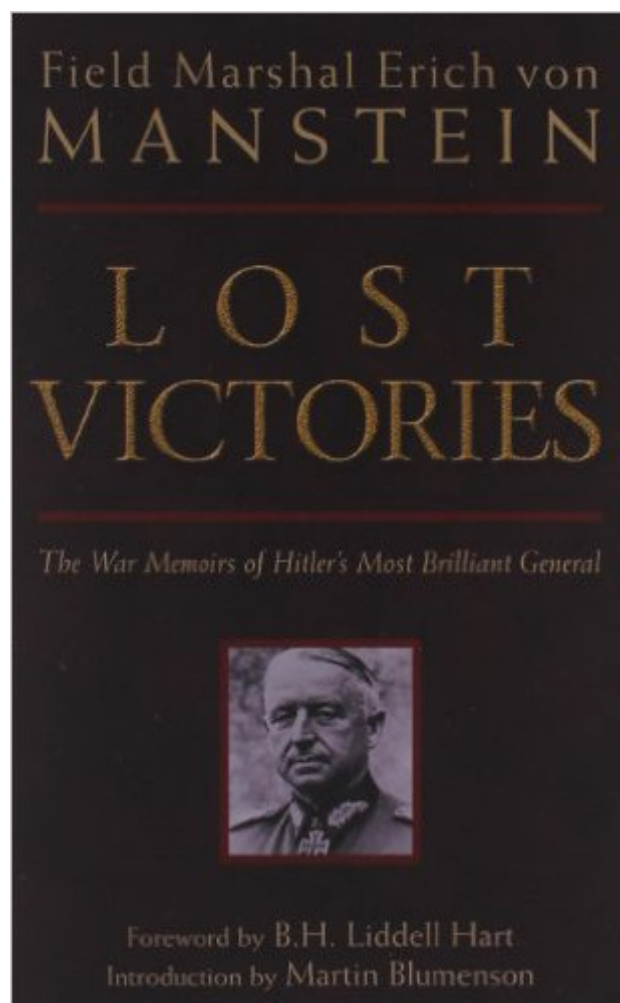


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Lost Victories: The War Memoirs Of Hitler's Most Brilliant General



Synopsis

Originally published in Germany in 1955, and in England and the United States in 1958, this classic memoir of WWII by a man who was an acknowledged military genius and probably Germany's top WWII general, is now made available again. Field Marshal Erich von Manstein described his book as a personal narrative of a soldier, discussing only those matters that had direct bearing on events in the military field. The essential thing, as he wrote, is to "know how the main personalities thought and reacted to events." This is what he tells us in this book. His account is detailed, yet dispassionate and objective. "Nothing is certain in war, when all is said and done," But in Manstein's record, at least, we can see clearly what forces were in action. In retrospect, perhaps his book takes on an even greater significance.

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Customer Reviews

By the end of WWII, General von Manstein was widely recognized by most German soldiers as the Wehrmacht's most brilliant strategist, a man of honor, and easily the most obvious choice for the Wehrmacht's Commander-in-Chief. Manstein was responsible for formulating most of the strategy that won Germany its great early victories using blitzkrieg tactics in Poland, France, and the Crimea. From Fall 1942 - Spring 1944, Manstein's heroic efforts against hugely overwhelming odds consistently frustrated every attempt to cut off and destroy Germany's armies in the Ukraine. With tight battlefield coordination, he focused his armies' efforts on the decisive point in each desperate Russian Front battle and ALWAYS snatched a tantalizingly close victory away from huge encircling Russian army groups. Manstein recalls the internal struggles within the Wehrmacht regarding

strategy formulation, internal organization, and resource allocation. He was apparently one of the few German generals to seriously and openly challenge many of Hitler's decisions. His analysis of Hitler as a military leader is quite fascinating and unusually balanced. Manstein actually gives Hitler some credit in his strategic analysis. But, Manstein also rightfully and strongly critiques Hitler's disorganized, dictatorial leadership and his increasingly blind faith in the power of will versus massive, well-supplied Soviet armies. Time and time again, Hitler's interference in Manstein's army group operations left much of Manstein's forces perilously exposed to Soviet encirclement. By Spring 1944, Hitler tired of Manstein's repeated demands for a Wehrmacht C-in-C and feared his increasing personal prestige - forcing Manstein's resignation and retirement from the army.

The five stars is for what it is supposed to be-- a detailed military memoir by an exceptional leader of German armed forces. Manstein was by any judgment a first rate staff officer, who excelled with troops and shone in use of combined force tactics and strategy on a large scale. His impact in WWII was immense -- on both the Western and Eastern Front. He was also convicted for war crimes and served four years of an 18 year sentence noted in a 1981 introduction. That is not noted in the original edition which I also have. He was not a political general, i.e. he was not a Nazi Party member and had long credentials as a professional soldier and offspring of professional soldiers. He had Hitler's ear frequently and stood up to him more than most. Evidence (from other sources) indicated that one of his orders referred to a need to eliminate "Jewish Bolshevism" once and for all. There's no point in retrying his case here, but it does affect the way some of his writing is interpreted. Some of his comments should be read knowing that he had only recently been released from prison. Manstein had a stellar reputation before the war, although he angered some old guard when he waffled on a plan to confront Hitler. In a critical phase at the opening of the war, he was chief of staff to von Rundstedt and took part in military planning. Some of his innovative proposals were passed over. As the Germans planned their attack into France, the Belgians captured some of the Fall Gelb, or Code Yellow plans, essentially another revision of the basic Schlieffen used in WWI. The allies were pleased because it confirmed their basic planning in reaction to such an invasion. The Germans, however, knew that the Allies knew. So the plan was revised again.

It is generally recognized that the greatest military mind produced by any nation during World War II belonged to Erich von Manstein. His qualifications for such a laurel are numerous, and include the detailed plan which led to the conquest of France in six weeks in 1940, the conquest of the Crimea in 1942, and Germany's last major victory on the Eastern Front, the recapture of Kharkov in 1943. It

is Manstein's record as a "defensive" general, called in to restore the collapsing southern wing of the Eastern Front after Stalingrad, however, which cemented his reputation. Any general can win brilliant victories with first-rate troops, air superiority and unlimited supplies, but it takes a very special type of brain to be able to repeatedly fight off a numerically superior enemy who enjoys all these advantages. As von Moltke the Elder once commented, when told by an admirer that he was destined to go down as one of the greatest marshals in all history: "No, for I have never conducted a retreat." Manstein did, under the most difficult circumstances imaginable, and in doing so probably saved the whole southern wing of the German army in Russia from annihilation. "Lost Victories" is Manstein's own testament of his involvement in the Second World War. He makes no attempt to discuss the events before the war or the after his own removal from command, and generally keeps his pen focused on his own personal experiences: his struggle to get the "Ardennes Plan" accepted by the High Command prior to the invasion of France; his own minor role in the invasion; his march on Leningrad in 1941; his conquest of the Crimea; his abortive attempt to relieve Stalingrad; the long, brutal defensive battles which followed.

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