



War Diaries 1939 - 1945

Field Marshall Lord Alanbrooke

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For most of the Second World War, General Sir Alan Brooke (1883–1963), later Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, was Britain's Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) and Winston Churchill's principal military adviser, and antagonist, in the inner councils of war. He is commonly considered the greatest CIGS in the history of the British Army. His diaries—published here for the first time in complete and unexpurgated form—are one of the most important and the most controversial military diaries of the modern era. The last great chronicle of the Second World War, they provide a riveting blow-by-blow account of how the war was waged and eventually won—including the controversies over the Second Front and the desperate search for a strategy, the Allied bomber offensive, the Italian campaign, the D-day landings, the race for Berlin, the divisions of Yalta, and the postwar settlement.

Beginning in September 1939, the diaries were written up each night in the strictest secrecy and against all regulations. Alanbrooke's mask of command was legendary but these diaries tell us what he really saw and felt: moments of triumph and exhilaration, but also frustration, depression, betrayal, and doubt. They expose the gulf between the military and the politicians of the War Cabinet, and how often military strategy was misguided and nearly derailed by political prejudices. They also reveal the incredible strain on Alanbrooke of the Allied conferences in Washington, Moscow, Casablanca, Quebec, and Tehran, as he tried after intense and exhausting argument (not least with Churchill) to match Allied strategy with the reality of British military power and the fragility of the British Empire. These diaries demonstrate the true depth of Alanbrooke's rage and despair at Churchill's failure to grasp overall strategy. This was particularly acute in the winter of 1943–44 when Churchill, fueled by medicine and alcohol, no longer seemed master of himself.

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