



# Usborne Introduction to the Second World War, The

Books Reviewed:

[Usborne Introduction to the Second World War, The](#) [1]

Issue:

[155](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Ted Percy](#) [3]

[New to Choice:](#)

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

There are still plenty of us about who owe our magnificent physiques, objective view of life and unquenchable optimism to a diet of dried egg, Woolton pie and a complete absence of bananas. To us, it seems barely credible that WW2 ended sixty years ago. But it was so, and that means that 10-year-olds who read this book may well have grandfathers to whom the events are just as much history as they are two generations later.

It's a big subject, and one that during, and for a long time after its currency, underwent highly dramatic presentation. All credit then, to the Usborne assembly team (impressively short by prevailing standards) for its low-key factual approach. Progress is basically chronological ? charting the rise of fascism in an atmosphere of fragile democracy, the expansion of hostilities out of Europe and then the two toe-to-toe slug-outs that led to eventual ?victory?. The relentless march of well-handled and informatively illustrated military and political facts is occasionally interrupted by glimpses of the human side of things; one spread, for instance ? ?Entertaining the troops?, shows a Russian George Formby strumming his balalaika (?Madam Moskvich? perhaps?) to an enthusiastic crowd while leaning not on a lamp-post but on the gun-barrel of a T-34 tank. While the ?T-34? information is cribbed from the caption, the picture alone tells us that a balalaika has but three strings (well, this one does). But if you're looking for information about the home front, you'll be well disappointed.

So, it's a dead serious book about a serious live (yes still, 60 years on) subject whose story may never be fully told, and those of us who still know that Beer is Best, Biscuits Keep You Going but that Careless Talk Costs Lives will be glad that there's very little of that here. TP

Running Order:

8

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[2] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/155>

[3] <http://typo3.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/ted-percy>